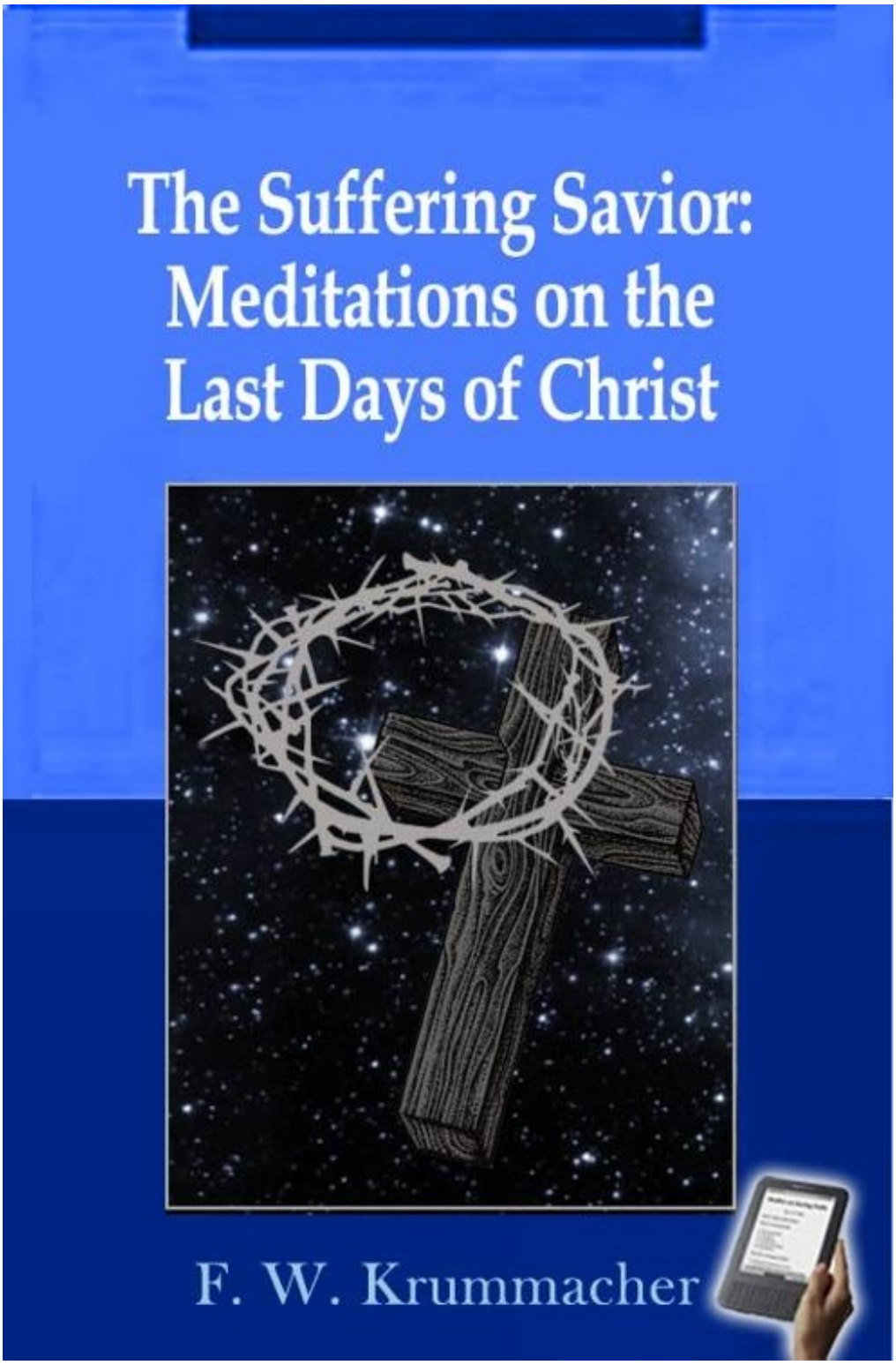
The Suffering Savior: Meditations on the Last Days of Christ



F. W. Krummacher





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by F. W. Krummacher

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PREFACE

In the following meditations I trust I have succeeded in displaying to my readers at least a portion of those riches which are contained in the inexhaustible treasury of our Savior's sufferings. Unmutilated scriptural truth, such as I believe I promulgate, still finds a favorable reception in the world, which I have been permitted to experience in the most gratifying manner. I mention it, solely to the praise of God, and for the satisfaction of those who are like-minded, that my writings, or at least a part of them, are, as I hear, already translated into English, French, Dutch, Swedish, and as I am assured, though I cannot vouch for the fact, into the Danish language also. My "Elijah the Tishbite" has even appeared in a Chinese attire. But that which is of greater importance, is the news I am constantly receiving of the manifold blessing which the Lord of his great and unmerited favor has bestowed upon my labors. That in his condescension and loving-kindness, He would also deign to bless this my most recent work is so much the more my heartfelt wish and ardent prayer, since it has for its subject the chief supporting pillar of the whole church—the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The division of the work into the "Outer Court," the "Holy Place," and the "Most Holy Place," is intended merely to point out the different stages of the Redeemer's sufferings, from their commencement to their close, but by no means to attach a less or greater importance to them. Had the latter been the case, I would naturally have assigned the institution of the Lord's Supper its appropriate place in the "Most Holy Place," instead of the "Outer Court." But in the plan of this volume, it falls among the class of events, which immediately precede the propitiatory work of the Mediator.

THE OUTER COURT

The Announcement

The history of our Savior's passion is about to display before us its bleeding mysteries and its awful vicarious scenes. The "Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world," submissive to the council of peace, which was held before the foundation of the world, approaches the altar of burnt-offering. Bonds, the scourge, the cross, and the crown of thorns, present themselves to our view in the distance; and the "seven words," uttered by Jesus on the cross, sound in our ears, like the funeral knell of the kingdom of Satan, and like intimations of liberty and joy to the sinful race of man.

It was said to Moses from the burning bush, "Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stands is holy ground."—Exod. 3:5. With still stronger emphasis are these words uttered to us from the sacred spot, where that much-implying type found its actual fulfillment. O what wonders are we about to approach in our meditations! From the most appalling scene the world ever witnessed, a paradise of peace springs forth. From the most ignominious sufferings, we see the most glorious triumph emerge; and from the most dreadful of deaths, a divine and never-fading life arise!

May devotion, humbleness of mind, and child-like faith accompany us in our meditations, and penitential tears become our eye-salve! But do You, who have the key of David, unlock for us the gates to the sanctuary of your sacred passion, and in the awful scenes of your sufferings, enable us to discover the mystery of our eternal redemption!

Almost immediately after our blessed Lord had performed perhaps the most stupendous of his miracles, in raising Lazarus from the grave, after he had been dead four days, we are informed by the Evangelist, that "the chief priests and the Pharisees took counsel together to put Him to death." What an humbling view does this circumstance give us of the depravity of human nature as exemplified in these men, who, while

obliged to confess the fact of the miracles which Jesus wrought, not only refused to accept him as the Messiah, but even conspired together to rid themselves of him by condemning him to death! Thus confirming the words of Abraham to the rich man in torment, "Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

"Jesus, therefore," we are told, "walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. But when the time was come, that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."

With this object in view, the Lord takes his twelve disciples apart. He has matters of importance to disclose to them. Destined, as they were, to lay the foundations of his Church, it was requisite that they should not be deficient in a comprehensive acquaintance with the counsel of God, for the redemption of the world. They soon perceive his intention, and hang upon his lips with increasing eagerness. They probably reckon on some cheering intelligence, and expect to hear, that the triumphant development of his kingdom is at hand. But what short sightedness and simplicity do they display! O the mighty chasm which intervenes between their thoughts and God's thoughts! As though the restoration of fallen man were a thing of such easy accomplishment! As if sin had caused only a transient disturbance in the relations between God and man, and occasioned a breach which could be healed, either by a voluntary declaration of mercy from on high, or by a confession of sin on the part of the fallen!

The Lord opens his mouth, and to the astonishment of the disciples, announces to them in plain terms his approaching offerings, and at the same time his subsequent victory. "Behold," says he, "we go up to Jerusalem; and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished."

Observe, first of all, how these words convey our Lord's fixed resolution. His heart, under the impulse of love, is firmly and immutably bent on taking the way to the cross. You well remember with what impressive earnestness he rejected the advice of Simon Peter to spare himself, and

not to go up to Jerusalem. "Get you behind me, Satan," was his reply; "you are an offence unto me; for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." So evident was it to him, that the sufferings he was going to meet, were not merely an efflux of human depravity, but also the express will and counsel of his heavenly Father, that in the contrary advice of his disciple, he could recognize nothing but a temptation from the bottomless pit, and Simon as the unconscious instrument of it. No affectionate entreaty any longer restrains him in his course; no menace dictated by hatred deters him from it. The bloodthirsty council has already assembled at Jerusalem, and is concocting its plan of treachery and murder. But the watchword of Jesus continues to be—"Behold, we go up!" and though another Red Sea were foaming at his feet, and though a hundred deaths awaited him, yet the only sentiment of his heart is—"We go up." For it is his Father's will, and the path to the great and ardently longed-for aim of the world's redemption. O what resignation, what obedience, what love to sinners is here exemplified by our adorable Immanuel.

"Behold," says our Lord, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished." Here we are informed what was his staff and his stay on the road to his sufferings. He found it in the "sure word of prophecy," in which he read what was recorded of himself, and the counsel of God respecting him. And if any one still requires a definite authority for the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, it is here presented to him. Christ, the King of Truth, recognizes in the Scriptures nothing less than the infallible record of the revelation of his heavenly Father; he bears it, day and night, on his heart; he decides according to its statutes, as the Canon Law, which puts an end to all strife respecting the vital questions of human life, and directs his steps wherever it points the way. It is to him the infallible guiding-star of his life. Whether the voice of his heavenly Father is heard direct from heaven, or sounds to him from this venerable record: it is the same to him. The one is as important as the other; and he reverentially bows to every title and iota of it. It is thus his ways are established; and every moment's experience seals it to him, that he is actually obeying a divine command. Everything that the word enjoins becomes reality, and the most delicate trait assumes life and substance.

"Certainly," some one may say, "it ought to strengthen our determination to proceed upon the path prescribed for us by the word of God, when, like Christ, we are aware that our way through life is not only divinely ordered and superintended, generally speaking, but also when we can survey it, from step to step, in the light of an infallible and divine revelation, even to its glorious termination." But is not this really the case, if you have believingly and sincerely given yourself up to God? For can there be any situation in which the divine word, with its counsel, leaves you at a loss? Is it not also written respecting you, "The Lord will not suffer you to want any good thing?" "Through much tribulation you must enter into the kingdom of heaven." But "when you pass through the waters, they shall not overflow you; and through the fire, the flame shall not kindle upon you, for the Lord is with you." It may indeed be the case that men will revile and persecute you; but if you faithfully endure, your reward shall be great. The light shall always rise upon you after the darkness;—and after sorrow, joy shall again visit your threshold. Nor shall any one be able to snatch you out of the Lord's hands; but after having fought the good fight, you shall finally receive the crown of righteousness, shall not see death, but pass from death unto life, and triumph eternally. Does not all this, and manifold more stand written of you; and is not therefore your path pointed out and prophetically indicated? May you not also say, in your measure, with the Lord Jesus, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all shall be accomplished, that stands written by the finger of God, respecting me, a poor sinner, since I am no longer my own, but belong to Christ?" O certainly you may say this! How ought we not, therefore, with such a consciousness, to put on a cheerful courage, during our pilgrimage, and feel as if heavenly triumphal music preceded us on our path through life!

My dear readers, let us only place a firm reliance on the word of truth, and, in its light, ascend the precipitous road; according to its instructions, proceed forward with firm and steady steps, unmindful of the tumult of the world, and not deviating a hand-breadth from the way prescribed. Let us meet him who would direct us otherwise, with a voice of thunder, and exclaim, "Get you behind me, Satan, for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of man!" The Almighty will then be favorable to us; we shall then carry the peace of God, that choicest pearl! in our

bosoms; and literal accomplishments of the divine promises, which we have taken for our compass, and for a lamp unto our feet, will daily fall upon our path, like lights from heaven.

The Lord's face is toward Jerusalem; and we have already seen for what purpose. His intention is, to suffer and to die. O there must be something of immense importance connected with his passion! It appears as the crisis of the work for the accomplishment of which he left his Father's bosom, and came down to earth! Were this not the case, to judge of it in the most lenient manner, it would have been tempting God thus to rush to meet death, after having completed his prophetic office in Jerusalem; and the over-ruling Majesty on high would have exposed his justice to well founded reproach, in giving up the Holy One, who had fulfilled his commands, to the horrible fate of a malefactor and reprobate, in the most glaring opposition to the axioms of his own government. But the Eternal Father had included in his counsels the cross, the scourge, and the crown of thorns, long before the sons of Belial thought of having recourse to these instruments of torture; and all his prophets, however reluctantly, were compelled in spirit to interweave these horrid emblems along with the majestic image of the Messiah, which they portrayed. Thus the Lord could say with profound truth, "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished; for he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, and they shall scourge him and put him to death."

Such were the ingredients, deducible, from the prophetic writings, which filled the cup that Satan, in accordance with the counsels of Eternal Wisdom, was to present to the Son of the Most High. And believe me, these counsels went far, very far beyond all that we understand by martyrdom, chastisement, purification, or trial. The immaculate and righteous Savior did not require correction as for himself; and if a purification had been salutary for him, it needed not—unless some gigantic shadow had for a time obscured divine justice—to have come upon the Holy One of Israel in the form of such degrading infamy, unheard-of reproach and humiliation, and such unparalleled suffering. The passion of our Lord has an infinitely more profound significance; and

it requires only a cursory glance at the narrative to discover that this was the case. Observe what the Evangelist informs us respecting the way and manner in which the Twelve received their Master's communication. He states, that "they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

How striking is this circumstance! Who can resist inquiring what it was they did not understand? They could not possibly have mistaken what their Master said respecting his suffering and dying at Jerusalem. That he intended to seal the truth of his doctrine by his death, was an idea which must also have occurred to them. Yet Luke assures us that "they understood none of those things, and knew not what it was that was spoken." Is it not obvious that the Evangelist's meaning is that he who would only apprehend the history of Christ's sufferings, and regard his passion as a martyrdom, not essentially different from the bloody testimony borne by other saints, does not understand its true signification? We have here an evident reference to an infinitely deeper cause of the tragical termination of our Savior's life before us.

It is confessedly true that the Eternal Father, by an almighty decree, might have annihilated the fallen race, in which sin had taken root, and thus have put an end to the evil. But we were to live and not die. And thus he has not only caused the sin of man to act as a foil for the display of the full radiance of his attributes, and especially of his love; but has also, by the offering up of his Son, provided a means of salvation by which we might attain to a much higher stage of glory and relationship to God than we once possessed in our progenitor, or than we should ever have attained if we had not fallen. Our fall afforded him the opportunity of showing that in the destruction of sin he could not only manifest his justice, but also glorify his mercy in remitting and forgiving sin, without infringing upon his righteousness. We sinned, and were exposed to the curse. The word that was with God, and was God, then was made flesh. The eternal son became our brother; took upon himself our sin, in the way of a mysterious imputation; paid our debt to the majesty of the inviolable law; covered our nakedness with his righteousness; presented us, as those in whose stead he appeared, unblameable and acceptable to the Father; excited the hallelujahs of angels at our exaltation; elevated us

to a participation of his own riches, blessedness, and privileges; pitched tents of peace for us around the throne of God; and connected us with himself by the bonds of eternal gratitude and affection. Such is the edifice which the Almighty reared upon the ruins of sin; and of which the disciples, at that time, had not the remotest idea. In the sequel, they recognized the divine method of salvation and of peace; and how happy were they, subsequently, in the knowledge of this "great mystery of godliness!"

The Anointing

Six days before the Passover, and, consequently, four before the awful day of crucifixion, we find our Lord in the peaceful village of Bethany, on the other side of the Mount of Olives, where He was accustomed so willingly to stay. We meet with him this time in the house of a man named Simon, where his followers had prepared him a feast. He appears before us in the unassuming form of a guest, invited with others; but look a little more narrowly, and you will see him, even there, as John afterward saw him in vision, only in a somewhat different sense, as "walking amid the candlesticks."

The Lord Jesus has no need to testify of himself; for those who are present bear witness of him in the most eloquent manner. Look, first, at Mary and her sister Martha. They are women possessing true nobility of soul, respected by all, sensible, clear-sighted, and sober-minded. Martha, cheerful, active, and busy; Mary, thoughtful and contemplative. Both, however, recline with all their hopes on Jesus. He is, to both, the living pillar which supports their heaven; their prospects of a blissful futurity arise solely from his mediation; and the peace and comfort, which refreshes them in life and death, they derive from Christ alone as the source. What a high idea must this fact alone afford us of the Man of Nazareth!

Look around you further. There are the disciples. Peter, Andrew, John, James, Nathanael, Thomas, and the rest. You formerly saw them listening to the Baptist in the wilderness, like a flock of scattered and

helpless sheep. You learn to know them as people who were incited to seek for help, by a very different motive than a mere thirst for knowledge. You found them to be men whose hearts were grievously burdened by sin, and by the anticipation of "the wrath to come," and whose inward peace was entirely at an end, after having seen God in the fiery splendor of his law, with its requirements and threatenings. Neither man nor angel was able to comfort them; but since they had found Jesus, their thoroughly humbled souls were like the sparrow which has found a house, and the swallow a nest, where they may drop their weary wings. They are now elevated above all anxiety. What bright rays of light does this fact also shed upon Jesus! How highly does it exalt him above the idea of being a mere mortal!

But alas! among the disciples we still find Judas, the child of darkness, the son of perdition. He, indeed, was never, in his own eyes, a helpless sinner; he had never thirsted after God; he was never truly devout; nor had ever set his affections on things above. It may be asked, what induced him to force himself into the immediate vicinity of Jesus? Assuredly, first, the irresistible and overpowering impression of the superhuman greatness and dignity of the Son of David, and then, doubtless, also, an ambitious desire of being called to act some important part in the new kingdom, to establish which the former had evidently come. Thus, the presentiment of the traitor aided in glorifying the person of the Lord Jesus. The divine majesty of Immanuel shone so powerfully through his human form that its rays penetrated even into the darkness of Iscariot's soul.

But let us further inspect the circle of guests. Who is the master of the house? He is called Simon, and bears the surname of "the Leper." He bears it to the honor of Jesus; for the name betokens what he was, before the Lord pronounced over him the almighty words, "Be clean!" Simon had once been infected with that horrible disease which no earthly physician was able to heal, and which he alone could remove who had inflicted it—the Almighty, and he who could testify, saying, "I and my Father are one." Simon, stand forward, and show yourself to every skeptic as a living monument of the divine fullness which dwelt in Christ! All Bethany knows that he had prepared this feast for the Lord Jesus, solely

from feelings of gratitude for the marvelous cure which he had experienced through him; and even his enemies cannot deny that, in this man, a monument is erected to the Lord Jesus, which speaks louder and more effectually than any inscription is able to do.

But look! Who is it that sits next to Jesus?—the young man with piercing eye and sunny countenance. Oh, do you not recognize him? Once you saw him lying shrouded on the coffin. You were present when his corpse was carried out, followed by his weeping sisters and a mourning crowd. You looked down into the gloomy vault into which it was lowered. But you were equally witnesses of that which took place four days after, when One approached the grave who called himself "the Resurrection and the Life," and then commanded the stone to be taken away from its mouth. You heard the words of Martha, "Lord, by this time he smells," and the majestic reply, "Said I not unto you that if you would believe you should see the glory of God?" And then, after the stone had been removed, how the Lord, lifting up his eyes toward heaven, over the putrefying corpse, exclaimed, "Father I thank You that You have heard me. And I knew that You hear me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent me!" and then how, with a loud, commanding, and creating voice, he called down into the sepulcher, "Lazarus, come forth!" and you know what followed.

He who was once dead, now sits among the guests, having escaped from the adamantine prison of the tomb. He lives, and is vigorous and happy; and it never occurs, either to friend or foe, to deny that Lazarus once lay as a corpse in the grave, and now lives again at the omnipotent word of Jesus. We find abundant traces that the Pharisees were beside themselves with rage and envy at this miracle, but not the smallest that any one ventured to deny or even to doubt the fact itself. There he sits, and completes the row of lights amid which Jesus walks. No herald is here required to testify of Jesus; no harper to strike his chords to his honor. He who looks at Lazarus hears in spirit a whole choir exultingly exclaiming, "Judah, you are he whom your brethren praise!" No sacred melody is needed to chant the glory of Jesus; Lazarus is a sufficient hymn of praise to the King of Glory from the world above.

Oh, then, go to Jesus, my dear readers, as the Lord from heaven, the

Prince of Life, the Conqueror of Death, for such he is, when regarded even in the light that streams upon him from the circle which surrounds him at Bethany. And he is still some thing more than all this.

He is staying at Bethany. He has now accomplished his public ministry. Several times has he given his disciples of late to understand that such is the case. He has told them and revealed to them as much as they were able to bear. The Comforter, who is to succeed him, will instruct them further. According to the views of those who call themselves "the enlightened" among us, he ought now to have completed his work, and fulfilled the whole of his mission. But in his own eyes, this is by no means the case. For we do not see him now retiring into silence, nor returning to his heavenly Father; but saying, on the contrary, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" He knows that the principal task assigned him has still to be performed. He is on the road to Jerusalem, with the full consciousness of all that is passing and concerting there; that his enemies are now in earnest to seize him, and get rid of him; that the chief priests and Pharisees have already "given a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him." All this was known to him; but far from seeking to escape the snare which was laid for him, he goes directly toward it. He was now—according to his own words—to be delivered to the heathen, crucified, and slain; and there was a necessity for it. "The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world," was not yet sacrificed. His assertion, that "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many," was not yet fulfilled. The blood, to which the whole of the Old Testament had pointed as the procuring cause of all remission of sin, had not yet stained the fatal tree, but still flowed through his veins. And for this he prepared himself on the evening he spent at Bethany.

Above all things, therefore, let us draw near to Jesus as our sole and everlasting High Priest, as our Mediator, Surety, and Ransom. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." The saints above "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." O delay no longer, therefore, to follow their example! Jesus, in his crown of thorns and bleeding

wounds, must be the object of your love and the ground of your hope, or else he is nothing to you, and you are in danger of eternal perdition.

The Lord has just placed himself at table, when Mary approaches, deeply affected by gratitude, veneration, and love, and with a foreboding of what is about to befall him. She feels impelled to display to him her inmost soul once more, and to manifest her reverential and devout attachment to him. But how is she to do this? Words seem to her too poor. Presents she has none to make. But what she has that is valuable—possibly a legacy left by her mother—is an alabaster vessel, of pure oil of spikenard, much valued in the East, and used only on peculiarly festive occasions. She brings it with her. She does not intend to pour out a few drops only, but that it should be wholly an emblem of her profound devotion to the Lord of Glory. With the utmost reverence she approaches her Divine Friend, breaks unobservedly behind him the well-closed vessel, sheds the spikenard upon his head and feet, then humbly bends herself down and wipes the latter with her loosened tresses.

"And the whole house was filled with the ointment." Yes, we may well believe that this odor ascended up even into the throne-room of heaven, and was inhaled with delight by the holy angels. For the earthly anointing oil was only the symbol and vehicle of that which the wise virgins possessed in their vessels, when they went forth to meet the bridegroom. In this affectionate and symbolical act, a degree of devotedness was manifested such as is rarely exhibited. Mary desires to belong to Christ for time and eternity; to cleave to him by faith, like the ivy to the tree, round which it entwines itself. She wishes to live in his light, like a dark planet in the beams of the sun, which lends it its radiance. Mary knows no anchor of hope, no ground of consolation, no way to heaven, except through his mediation; and were she to imagine existence without him, she could only think of herself as in the jaws of despair, and irrecoverably lost. He is her last resource, but at the same time all-sufficient for her eternal salvation. Hence she cleaves to him with all her soul, and nothing is able to divide her from him. He is always in her thoughts, her sole delight, and the supreme object of her affections—all which she expresses in the act of anointing just mentioned.

The whole circle of the guests at Bethany are deeply touched by Mary's

significant act. Only in the case of one does its sweet harmony sound as discord; only one of them with repugnance rejects the grateful odor. Ah, we imagine who it is! No other than the unhappy Judas, the child of darkness. Never, probably, has frigid self-love stood in such horrible contrast with warm and sacred affection, as was the case here, in the cold and really offensive expression, "Why this waste? Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Alas, how deeply is the miserable man already fallen! "The poor?" O you hypocrite! As if the reason was unknown to his Master why he would rather have the ointment sold. "For three hundred pence!" He knows how to value the spikenard, but is unable to appreciate the love that provided it, for he is wholly destitute of such a feeling.

O let the example of Judas serve as a warning to any of my readers who betray a strong inclination to mistake the love of a soul like Mary's to her Savior; and when it is manifested, can speak of it with a certain inward disgust and bitterness; and if not of waste, yet of enthusiasm, cant, hypocrisy, etc. Know, that on such occasions, a slight similarity to the features of the traitor Judas passes over the face of your inner man. You have need to be most carefully upon your guard, not to let that which you feel at such moments extend itself until it gradually makes you brothers of the traitor. O, when once the scales fall from your eyes—and God grant that this may be the case before long!—and your souls awake from their Pharisaic dreams, at the awful thought of eternity; when pursued by the curse of the law, terrified at the judgment to come, and severely pressed by Death, the king of terrors, you learn to thank and praise the Almighty that, as a last resource, the bleeding arms of Jesus still stand open to you: you will then no longer knit your brows, when you meet with one who has presented his whole heart to the Lord; nor feel repugnance at the fervor with which Asaph exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides You!" O no! you will then weep in secret penitential tears, that you could ever have so mistaken the most precious thing on earth, the love of Christ, and lament, with us, that we do not love him as we ought.

Observe how the Lord Jesus appreciates the act of Mary. Like a faithful advocate, he immediately enters the lists on her behalf, against Judas and

the transient impression made by his dark spirit upon the disciples, and says, while intimating to Judas that he was well aware of the cause of his displeasure, "Why trouble you the woman? Let her alone (do not confuse her); she has wrought a good work on me. The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always. Against the day of my burying has she kept this" (or, according to another Evangelist, "She is come before hand to anoint my body to the burying.") "Verily, I say unto you, wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Do but notice, how He, who was otherwise so spare in commending human works, mentions, with a particular emphasis, Mary's work as good. All the world is to know that such devotedness as Mary shows him is considered valuable, and how highly he estimates this feeling as being the source of Mary's act. All the world is to be informed that the affectionate relation in which Mary stands toward him, is nothing overstrained or enthusiastic, but that which alone beatifies its possessor. And that every one may know it, he has caused this act of Mary's to be repeatedly inserted in his Gospel. What he then predicted has taken place; and wherever this gospel is preached in the world, that which she did, is mentioned as a memorial of her, even to this day.

Scarcely had our Lord ended this remarkable speech, when, as Matthew relates, "One of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time, he sought opportunity to betray him." Horrible! Where, in all the world, can we meet with a contrast so striking, so appalling, and beyond measure dreadful, as is here presented to us in Mary's tender and affectionate act, and the horrible procedures of this unhappy son of perdition? He is already so far gone that words of compassion, which might have tended to his eternal salvation, when reaching the atmosphere of his soul, transmute themselves into a baneful essence, and producing vexation and bitter hatred instead of repentance, completely pervade the unhappy man as with a mortal poison. "He went out." Horrible departure! He turns his back upon his only Savior, because he now feels that He sees through him. He rushes out into the night, to which as a child of darkness, he belongs—no, he rushes out into a more

awful night than the natural one; and the divine "Woe!" follows him upon his way.

We shudder. We shrink from the idea of accompanying the wretched man, and return with increased fervor to Jesus. "Against the day of my burial has she kept this," says our Lord. We understand his meaning. He sees his death and resurrection at one glance. An embalming of his body was to take place while he was still alive, since there was no time afforded for it after his death. It is not to be supposed that Mary had any idea of this; but a presentiment of his approaching departure certainly affected her heart; and anticipation of its saving significancy fanned the holy glow of her love to a brilliant flame, and contributed to impel her to that effusion of affection in Simon's house which we have been just contemplating. Her Master's love, which was even unto death, excited hers to him in the highest degree; even as the love of his people is accustomed to be enkindled, most of all, by the remembrance of Christ's sufferings.

But wherever the love of Jesus finds room, there will never be a want of activity in relieving the distresses of others. "The poor," says our Lord, while casting the words like an arrow into the soul of Judas, "the poor you have always with you;" by which he means that Mary will not be deficient in her charity to them. "But me," he adds, in conclusion, "you have not always," and these words are addressed to all my readers, who cannot yet call Jesus their Savior.

O take them to heart, my friends! Him you have no longer, when the wings of death suddenly overshadows you, or when your senses depart under the influence of disease, and the message of salvation no longer penetrates through the crowd of unbridled imaginations. You have him no longer, when God, the Righteous Judge, gives you up at length to "strong delusions," and permits them to take up their permanent abode in your minds, because you have long enough hardened yourselves against his calls to repentance. You have him no longer, when the last great "hour of temptation," with its infernal delusions, as well as with its persecuting horrors, shall break in upon you, and when to use a prophet's words—"Your feet shall stumble upon the dark mountains." You have him no longer, if, in the abundance of your prosperity, you are ready to

exclaim, with the man in the Gospel, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink, and be merry!" to whom the horrifying announcement was made, "You fool! this night shall your soul be required of you." Therefore "flee from the wrath to come!" Hasten to save yourselves. Stay not in all the plain. Let nothing hinder you from immediately repairing to the blessed Savior, who has so graciously assured us, that whoever comes unto him, he will in no wise cast out.

The Entry into Jerusalem

"Are you he who should come, or do we look for another?"' Questions like this lie heavily on the hearts of many in the present day, whose intentions, in other respects, are honest and sincere. "Is he the Lord from heaven? Is he the King of Israel?" "No!" is the response of an apostatizing world; and, alas! the lamentable condition of his Church on earth seems only to confirm this negative assertion. For if he fills the throne of omnipotence and glory, why do the people rage? If he governs all things, why does Satan so frequently triumph? If his arm reaches from heaven to earth, why does he not close mouths of blasphemers? If he wields the sword of Divine justice, why does he not immolate those who defy him and lay waste his vineyard? If all power is at his command, why does he not compel, by signs and wonders, the glory which is his due? And if he only need put forth his breath to reanimate dead and refresh the wilderness, why have not the wastes of heathen world long ago flourished, and the deserts blossomed as the rose?

O how often do these and similar questions urge themselves even upon believers; and how inclined they are to doubt whether he is that which they think him to be! But doubt is the worst enemy to peace; and hence nothing is more acceptable to those who are sincere than that which disables and destroys the former. To such, the narrative of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem will be, therefore, extremely welcome, since it scatters every cloud of uncertainty, displays a Divinely-sealed attestation of the Messiahship and kingly dignity of Christ, and again loosens our tongue-tied hearts, reanimates our faith, and causes us joyfully to exclaim, "Yes, You are the Christ! Blessed are You who come in

the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

That he is the Christ, the Son of God, and that we have every reason to trust in him, is confirmed to us, first, by his own consciousness of being so. We find him proceeding to Jericho on his last visit to Jerusalem. On arriving at the Mount of Olives, he requests two of his disciples, in a commanding tone, to go into the village over against them, where they would find an donkey tied, and a colt with her. These they were to loose and bring him.

Observe here that he sees the animals he is in want of at a greater distance than the eye could reach. Even in this circumstance we see something superhuman breaking through the lowliness of the Savior's form. He then gives instructions respecting the donkey and her colt, with a decision which betrays to us the Governor of all things. He tells them, "If any man say anything unto you, you shall say, the Lord has need of them, and immediately he will send them. He says, "the Lord," and not "the Master" only, or "Jesus of Nazareth." This is a title of majesty, a name of dignity, by which he elevates himself high above every creature, and declares himself to be Jehovah's other self. "The Lord has need of them." As the mere Son of Man, he never could have spoken this of himself without being guilty of blasphemy. But he knows who he is, and how he may call and entitle himself, and he utters the words with firmness and dignity.

But will the owner feel induced, at the mere expression of the disciples —"The Lord has need of them"—to resign the animals to them? Assuredly he will. The Lord has no doubt of it, but is perfectly confident that, as the Lord from heaven, there was nothing which was not his own, that he had power over all things, and that his Eternal Father would grant such a power with his words that, as he expressly says, the owner would "immediately" send them. Oh, let us revive from our state of despondency by the consideration of our Lord's self-consciousness, as here manifested, which substantiates his superhuman glory infinitely more than the whole weight of anti-christian objections to prove the contrary.

But hold! unbelief finds even here a back way by which it expects to be able to escape. It says, "The owner of the donkey and its colt might have

been a friend of the Prophet of Nazareth; and presupposing this, the fact of his willingly parting with the animals loses all its importance." Still, the all-seeing eye of Jesus is not closed by this, and his majestic expression —"the Lord"—likewise remains in full force. But though unbelief may bring forward additional objections, yet still stronger and more evident confirmations appear. The donkey's colt is led away with its parent. The disciples lay their garments upon it as a covering, and the Lord seats himself upon the animal, in order to ride into Jerusalem. This seems a trifling feature in the case, and scarcely worthy of notice; but look a little deeper, and its importance will increase. Our Lord, by this act, testifies something infinitely greater respecting himself than would have been the case had he suddenly placed himself upon a royal throne, or had made his entry into the Holy City beneath gilded canopy, and arrayed in a purple robe. It is evident, so the Scriptures expressly inform us, that our Lord had in view, at that moment, an ancient divine prophecy. You will read it in Zech. 9:8, 9. Jehovah there says—predicting the future—"I will encamp about my house because of the army, because of him that passes by, and because of him that returns (those that act as sentinels), and no oppressor shall pass through them any more; for now I have seen (its wretchedness) with my eyes." After this general reference to a future deliverance, it is said, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king comes unto you; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an donkey, and upon a colt, the foal of an donkey."

This is a delightful prediction, at which the whole world of sinners ought to rejoice. It is a gracious star of hope in the hemisphere of the Old Testament, greeted for centuries by the saints of God with tears of ardent longing. More than four hundred years had elapsed after these words had been uttered, when, on the summit of the Mount of Olives, the Man of Nazareth appears, and calls to mind this ancient prophecy. On the point of approaching Jerusalem, he orders an donkey and its colt to be brought him, seats himself upon one of them, and publicly enters Jerusalem upon it, in the presence of assembled multitudes.

But what does he testify by this mute but significant action? What else than that the prophet's words are being fulfilled in his own person? What

else than that he is the promised King of glory, just, and having salvation, and bringing peace to his people? What else than as if he had said, "It is I, whose dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth? It is I; therefore rejoice, O daughter of Zion! and shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!" Yes, he announces this as loudly as with a voice of thunder. No other meaning can lie at the bottom of that scene. If Jesus were not the promised King of Peace, with what epithet should we be compelled to designate that act? But he knew what he did, and how far he was justified in it; and hence, in his entry into Jerusalem, we have a new, powerful, and actual proof that Christ was the true Messiah announced by the prophets, and at the same time, the only-begotten Son of the Father, our Mediator, and eternal High Priest.

My readers, doubtless, feel how extremely striking is this trait in our Lord's history, and, in fact, the passage on which we are meditating has never been sufficiently appreciated from this point of view. The disciples, and even many of the people after this event, had no doubt whatever that he was no other than the Mighty Prince of Peace so long before predicted. Observe how he is attended. A more than regal entry is prepared for him. The people cast their garments in the way, bestrew the road with verdure, and precede and follow him with palm-branches in their hands, as in a triumphal procession, and there is no end to their exulting hosannas. "Hail," they cry, "to the Son of David! Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Only think of such homage being paid to a simple individual, devoid of all regal insignia! But it explains itself. The rider on the lowly beast of burden was seen, in part at least, by the ancient prophets, surrounded by this homage. It could not fail that Zechariah, in particular, whose prophetic vision of the King of Glory enabled him to describe the scene as minutely as if he had really witnessed it, fully dispelled from their minds any remains of obscurity, which might still envelop the person of him who was thus entering Jerusalem. But that which elevated their ideas of him to perfect certainty was the stupendous miracle which he had performed at Bethany, in raising Lazarus from the dead. After such an occurrence, how could they be silent, or cease exultingly to exclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The Pharisees heard the rejoicing with secret indignation, and morosely

said to him who was thus applauded, "Master, rebuke your disciples." But why did not they rebuke the rejoicing multitude themselves? Why did they not accuse them of being under a delusion? Why did they not adduce as a proof that the raising of Lazarus by their rabbi was only a tale, as well as that one born blind had been restored to sight by him? O had they been able to do so they certainly would not have refrained! But this was out of their power. The facts were too generally known and acknowledged. In despair, therefore, they apply to the master himself to rebuke his followers. O how does this significant trait tend also to strengthen our faith! But does the Savior comply with their wishes, and reprove the enthusiastic crowd? On the contrary, he rides on, surrounded by a thousand hosannahs; thus letting the ancient prophecy of Zechariah develop itself in all its aspects in his procession, and calmly received the homage as his due, while remarking to the Pharisees, "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." My friends, what more can you desire? Nothing under heaven is more fully proved than that the Lord Jesus knew himself to be the God-man, who had been promised and expected for thousands of years; and this is in itself a sufficient weapon for us victoriously to repel and overthrow all objections which might be raised against our belief on him.

The whole scene of the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem has both its typical and prophetic side. The progress of our Lord, so destitute of pomp, neither clothed in purple, nor on a gayly caparisoned war-horse, nor accompanied by ribboned magnates or dignitaries, but in the simplest attire, on the foal of an donkey, and surrounded by poor fishermen and tradespeople, gives us a hint in what manner Christ, for centuries together, will manifest himself on earth until his second coming. And the expressly quoted, and now accomplished prophecy of Zechariah, confirms and attests this, in the words, "Behold, your king comes unto you *lowly"*—a word which implies at the same time the idea of an entire absence of display, pomp, and dignity; and this is the attribute which is peculiar to his government to this hour.

"But where do we discover him?" O descend into the basements of human society; become initiated into the privacy of experimental religion in the cottage; listen to the narratives of "the quiet in the land." Read the

missionary records, which, like Noah's dove, fly toward us with the green olive leaf of refreshing intelligence from the regions of the home and foreign missions. Inquire of the many thousands, who, in every quarter, and in quiet concealment at Jesus' feet, are healed of their heartfelt maladies, and are desirous of salvation, or else, already comforted, fall asleep in his name to awaken to life eternal. Do it, and you will no longer ask, Where is Christ, the King? Truly he is still among you, with the same power, love, and miraculous grace by which he was formerly accompanied. The "Hosanna to the Son of David," has not yet ceased upon earth, and never will.

"But will his kingdom prosper in the world?" O be not anxious on this account! The passage we have been considering, affords a powerful panacea against such apprehensions. Observe, first, what our Lord commissions his disciples to say to the owner of the donkey and its colt: "Say to him, that the Lord has need of them, and immediately he will send them." "The Lord has need of them;"—more is not necessary. If he requires them, all must be at his command. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. "The Lord has need of them!" What a glorious encouragement for missionaries; what valuable consolation for the Church, when fears are entertained for the supply of faithful witnesses! What an incomparable assurance that he can never be deficient of means for the accomplishment of his plans! Hide these words in your spiritual treasury, my friends, and refresh yourselves with them as often as you feel your courage fail.

Observe, further, how the Lord, while fulfilling to the letter the prediction of Zechariah by the manner of his entrance into the Holy City, confirms at the same time, the whole of the prophecies respecting him. You know what these passages predict. According to them his foes shall eventually become his footstool; the ends of the earth shall be his inheritance, and the Lord shall be one, and his name one. Jerusalem, cleansed and purified, shall become a praise in the earth; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd; and whatever else the Eternal Father may have sworn to give him. As infallibly as the one was accomplished, so surely will not the other remain a mere type and shadow. The literal fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy is a most striking pledge of the eventual

accomplishment of the vision of John in the Revelations. "Behold, a white horse, and he who sat upon him is called Faithful and True, and has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." And in like manner shall be fulfilled that other vision in which he beheld, around the throne of the Lamb, that host of adoring saints "which no man could number."

Finally, consider another expression of Immanuel's, which Luke records. When enraged at the loud rejoicings of his disciples and the people, the Pharisees called upon the Lord Jesus to reprove them, he uttered the following significant and ever-memorable words: "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The Lord, in these words, could not have more clearly evinced his inmost conviction of the invaluable blessing the world enjoyed in him, and the object of his mission. For what else do they imply than that 'I am such a Savior and bring you such aid, and offer you such felicity, that if it produced no exultation and rejoicing among mankind, the Almighty would animate the lifeless creature to celebrate his love and compassion!' The Lord, in these words, gives us also, the assurance, that on earth, men shall never be silent concerning him and his salvation; for should Israel and Christendom be silent, he would animate the sons of the desert, the dead heathen world, to sing hosannas to him.

This he has done, is still doing, and will continue to do. Earth's whole population shall eventually spread their garments on his path, and, strew it with palm branches, even as the people did on this occasion. As thousands did then, millions will hereafter shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" O let us mingle with the adoring crowd, and once more take our Lord's assertion to heart, that the salvation which God has prepared for us in him is so infinitely great that if we could keep silence, the very stones would cry out.

Christ Washing His Disciple's Feet

We are approaching, in our meditations, a very solemn section of our

Lord's history. Jesus has completed his sojourn on earth, and the eve of the great and awful day of atonement has arrived. He assembles his followers around him once more, in the social chamber of a friend's house in Jerusalem. Once more they are permitted to look into their Master's faithful heart, and to feel how much God has given them in him. Never was the recollection of the affecting circumstances which took place that evening erased from their memory. The tranquil majesty displayed by their Lord and Master—the astonishing degree of ardent affection which manifested itself in every look, and every word—the heavenly peace which shone forth in his whole deportment—his cheerful and filial resignation to the will and counsel of God; and with all his dignity, such amiable condescension, while in every expression of his lips, and in all his actions and conduct, there was something divinely profound, consoling, and mysterious. The whole scene was overpowering and heart-cheering in a manner they had never before experienced. They felt themselves translated, as it were, into an outer-court of heaven, and would have felt infinitely greater blessedness than even in the glory of Mount Tabor, had it not been for the anticipation of their Master's approaching departure, which threw a melancholy gloom over their joy.

The Evangelist John informs us, that "before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." What a wonderful style of writing is this! Does it not seem as if the Evangelist's heart beat audibly through the whole passage? Does not His manner remind us of a mountain torrent, which rushes along, with irregular impetuosity over the rocks? Is it not as if the feelings, which overpowered the beloved disciple would not permit him to reflect on the proper disposition of the words—no, as if he had written under the influence of tears of adoring rapture, and with the consciousness of utter inability to record that which presented itself to him like a vision from another world, in language which might in any degree correspond with it? But that which so powerfully affects his heart above everything else, is the fact that the Lord Jesus, although he was then clearly conscious that his hour of return to the bosom of the Father was near at hand, and although he had already lived in spirit more above than on the earth, and heard from a distance the hymns of praise, amid

whose echoes he was soon to re-ascend the throne of Divine Majesty—yet he did not forget his followers, but still retained so much room for these pilgrims in this valley of death, in his affectionate solicitude and recollection.

And yet how much sorrow of heart had these very disciples occasioned him only a short time before, by their lamentable strife for precedence, and especially by their conduct, when Mary poured the costly ointment upon him; just as if they grudged their master such honor, and, infected with the gloomy sentiments of the traitor, had even ventured to term the love-offering of the deeply affected woman, in a repudiating tone "a waste;" and had suffered themselves to be so far misled as to make the cold and heartless observation that it would have been better to have sold the ointment, and have given the money to the poor, rather than have spent it so uselessly. You remember the mild and gentle reply which our Lord then gave them; but so far was it from humbling them, and causing them to acknowledge their fault, that it created discordant feelings within them and even closed and estranged their hearts from him for a season. And yet—O comprehend this depth of fidelity and compassion! and yet—the Evangelist writes as if the tears were bursting from his eyes—and yet "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end." For it was to this end—is the Apostle's meaning—that he associated with sinners, that he might bear them eternally on his heart. Those whom his Father had given him, were more the objects of his affection than the holy angels around the throne of God and his love to them increased as the end drew near. O how he loved them, when he took their sins with him into judgment, and cast himself into the fire which their transgressions had kindled! How he loved them, when his own blood did not seem to him too dear a price to be paid for them, although it was they who were the transgressors! He loved them to the end; and to this day he loves them that are his in a similar manner. If a feeling of heavenly rapture thrilled through the apostle John at such a thought; let our hearts, my readers, vibrate in like manner! Whatever may befall us, his love continues the same; "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, that has mercy on you."—lsa. 54:10.

We return to the chamber at Jerusalem, and find the company already reclining around the paschal meal. It would seem that at the commencement, little was spoken. But when the Lord is silent, his disciple speaks. Unveiling the heart of the incomparable Redeemer, like a sanctuary, he says, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." What a knowledge is this! Had such an idea sprung up in the heart of any one who was a mere man, though he were the most excellent of his kind; he must either have been an idiot, or the worst of blasphemers, that ever called down the curse of the Almighty upon his guilty head. We see the Lord Jesus, sitting at table, in the consciousness of his eternal majesty and godhead, of his being the King of kings and the Lord of lords, as well as the Mediator, to whose hands, for his work's sake, the Father has committed all things, including the divine authority to forgive sins; and, regarding the shedding of his blood, as having already taken place, to whom nothing more stands in the way of his acting as the high priest and intercessor of his people, at the bar of the Thrice Holy, in the heavens.

In this sublime and twofold consciousness, we see him unexpectedly rising up from supper; and for what purpose? To appear in his dignity? To display the splendor of his divine glory? To constrain his disciples to bow the knee in the dust before him? One might imagine so; but no, he has something very different in view. Look, what means that? He lays aside his upper garments, takes a towel and girds himself with it; pours water into a basin, bends down to the feet of the disciples, and begins to wash them in their turn, and then to wipe them with the towel. What a spectacle! It is enough to make one start, and to hold one's breath with astonishment! Are we not ready to exclaim aloud, "Lord, Lord, what are you doing?" Think of the Holy One, who came down from heaven, thus engaged with sinners; the Majestic Being, whom angels adore, abasing himself to the occupation of a menial servant! No, we should never be able to make such an action agree with his high dignity, were we not acquainted with his wonderful and peculiar sentiments. He no longer knows his followers "after the flesh;" he sees in them those whom his Father has given him—those whom God so loved, that he gave his only-begotten Son for them—the objects of an eternal and paternal council of mercy—beings, who, notwithstanding the sin which still cleave to them,

carry in their bosoms the work of the Holy Spirit, and in it the seed of God; and still more than all this does he behold in them. They are to him the spiritual bride, clothed with the sun; for they stand before him arrayed in the royal robe of his righteousness; and ravished at the wondrous brilliance of his own glory, which he beholds reflected in them, he lovingly inclines toward them, and washes their feet! O great and significant symbol! O powerful exposition of the words "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister!" O important testimony to that which is of value in his kingdom, and to that which is not! O impressive condemnation of all selfishness and self-exaltation in the children of men! O deeply affecting commendation of humility and self-denial, as the characteristics of his children, and amiable and ennobling instance of that love, which ought to animate us! And how much more than all this is there not comprised in this act of our Lord's? It testifies of the sweetest, most glorious, and most exalted things in store for us, as will now be exposed to our view.

The disciples continue motionless and lost in mute astonishment. Are they embarrassed, affected, or ashamed? All these feelings are mingled in them into one. If anything of an inimical nature still rankled in their breasts against their Divine Master, every trace of it now disappears. Had any mistrust of him arisen within them, it is now wholly erased, and, as it were, washed away from their souls. Every discordant sound with them dissolves into harmony. And how are they now ashamed of ever having striven among themselves as to who should be the greatest! They could almost bury themselves in the earth for confusion and regret. How humbled do they feel and what tenderness and love pervade their hearts! With feelings of blissful astonishment, they suffer their Lord to act as he pleases with them.

The work of unheard-of condescension proceeds in silence, until the turn comes to Simon Peter. Here, as might be expected, resistance is offered and a stand is made. When the Master approaches him, his face flushes with a fiery excitement. He hastily draws back his feet, and, as on a former occasion, he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" so now he cries out in the violence of his feelings, and almost in a reproaching and accusing tone, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" As if he had

said, "No; I can never permit that!" How entirely does this correspond with Simon's character! In one point of view, his refusal seems to have nothing culpable in it. He cannot comprehend how anything so unseemly should take place. The glory of the Lord and the worthlessness of the creature contrast too strongly. How deeply does Peter abase himself in this expression of his feelings, and how highly does he elevate his Lord and Master! "You, the Holy One," is the language of his heart—"I, a worm of the dust! It cannot be."

But however commendable may have been such a feeling in Simon's soul, it was nevertheless, in other respects, culpable and improper. He ought to have remembered his Master's own words: "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." It is his peculiar office to cleanse the polluted and to purify the unclean. What would have become of us had he not condescended to the depth of that depravity in which he found us? Simon thought it would be more befitting for him to wash his Master's feet. Yes, do not cease to wash them with penitential tears; but in other respects let him wash and cleanse you, otherwise how will you escape eternal perdition? But Simon does not understand his Lord, and has no idea of his error. Jesus, therefore, replies to him in the well-known words, "What I do, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter."

But will not this remark of our Lord's induce Simon to resign himself wholly to him? On the contrary, Simon thinks he ought to preserve his Master's dignity, and therefore exclaims, in a very decided tone, "You shall never wash my feet!" Simon, however, forgot that obedience is better than sacrifice. Even to this day, we hear it not infrequently said, "For the honor of Christ, I cannot believe that he receives sinners, as such, without anything further." O, my friends, if you wish to honor Jesus, do so by submitting to his word! He says, "I am come to seek and to save that which is lost." "No," you reply, "I cannot imagine that his Divine Majesty will trouble himself about the prayers of such a worm as I! O unreasonable zeal for the divine dignity! It is the will of God that we should glorify him in this very particular, that we believe him to be the hearer of prayer.

"You shall never wash my feet!" said the mistaken disciple. But listen to the Savior's reply, "If I wash you not, you have no part with me." What an

important declaration is this! O that I could indelibly inscribe it on the hearts of my readers! You perceive how the more profound and mystic meaning of our Lord's act shines forth in these words—namely, as having reference to the blood of atonement, to forgiveness, justification, and purification from sin. You know how much lies concealed in this passage, and how every syllable has its profound signification. "If *I* wash you not." Yes, You, Lord Jesus, must do it; for who ever purified himself from sin? "If I do not *wash* you." Yes, You must wash us; for teaching, instructing, and setting us an example, is not sufficient. "If I wash *you* not." Certainly, what does it avail me, if Peter or Paul is cleansed, and I remain defiled? I must be forgiven, and feel that I am absolved; and it remains eternally true, that he who is not washed in the blood of Christ, has no part with him, nor in the blessings of his kingdom.

It may easily be supposed that our Lord's words excited in Simon a degree of astonishment he had never before experienced; and the idea of having no part with Jesus, the supreme God, humbles him unspeakably. Resigning himself, therefore, without reserve, while guessing the profounder meaning of his Master's expression, he says, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,"—that is, the whole man. When Jesus makes it appear that he is about to depart from us, it then becomes evident how closely and deeply we are connected with him, though for a time he may have been forgotten by us in the bustle of daily life. When it would seem that he is willing to leave us to walk again in our own ways, it becomes manifest how valueless is all beside compared with him. The anxious doubt, whether we have any feeling for him, disappears and the "bond of perfectness," which inseparably binds us to him in our inmost being, is again brought to light, and we feel, with renewed vitality and force, how suddenly the curse, death, hell, and Satan, would again break in upon us, were we no longer permitted to trust and hope in him. And how delightful it is, in the way of experience, thus to become again conscious of our connection with Jesus! How beneficial also may this be to us, when the feeling subsides, and the danger of mistaking our path again presents itself? Experience of this kind then gives "songs in the night," and encourages us in a time of darkness, even as King David was cheered by the remembrance of his former hymns of praise.

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Excellent, but again not altogether correct. Simon now oversteps the line to the right, as he had before transgressed to the left. He had previously rejected that which was indispensable; he now requires what is superfluous. He does not yet comprehend the whole of the matter clearly; and probably the following words of our Lord belonged also to those, the full meaning of which became evident to him only in the sequel; "He who is washed need not save to wash his feet, and is clean every whit, and you are clean, but not all." It is clear that the last words have reference to the traitor. But what is the meaning of this mysterious speech? I believe it to be as follows: he is washed, who, as a poor sinner, enters by faith into fellowship with Jesus. Such a one is then purified from sin, in consequence of being justified by grace. The blood of the Lamb was shed for him. The payment of all his debts was made. He is clean in the sight of God, for the merits of the Surety are imputed to him, and he continues to be thus regarded; for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He ought daily and hourly to rejoice in this his purified state. Peter, in his second Epistle, admonishes us not to forget that we are "cleansed from our old sins." But the individual is also pure as regards his sanctification; since, in consequence of being born again of water and the Spirit, he has forever renounced all that is sinful, and by reason of his new nature, though still assaulted and tempted in various ways by the flesh, he desires that the will of God may be accomplished in him, and that whatever he does may be well-pleasing in his sight.

But what is accustomed to happen in the progress of the life of faith? Unguarded moments occur, in which the man again sins in one way or other. He incautiously thinks, speaks, or does that which is improper, and is again guilty of unfaithfulness, although against his will; for only the devil and his seed sin willfully; while he who is born of God, says the apostle, *cannot* sin. The man's walk is polluted; his feet, with which he comes in contact with the earth, are defiled. What is now to be done? Two by-paths present themselves, and not infrequently one of them is taken. The individual either gives himself up to an excessive feeling of his guilt; openly cries out, "Unclean, unclean!" like one who is excluded from the fellowship of the pure; regards himself as fallen from grace; considers the bond of union with the Lord as rent asunder, and cries out with Peter,

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Or else the man takes his transgressions too easily; persuades himself that the faults he has committed are of no importance; soothes his conscience with the rash and vain idea that the iniquity belongs to the multitude of sins which have been atoned for and annihilated by the blood of Christ, and thus unconcernedly proceeds on his way.

In each of these cases there is a deviation, the one to the right, and the other to the left of the line of truth. In the former, the man gives way unnecessarily to an excessive idea of the fault he has committed, and ascribes to it an influence over his entire state of grace, which according to the word of God it does not exercise. The individual transgressions which a Christian may be induced to commit, are by no means to be compared to an apostasy from Christ. In the single advantages which the flesh gains over the spirit, the regeneration which has been experienced is no more lost than divine grace is withdrawn, or its superintendence and protection discontinued because of the transgression. In the other case, the sin committed is too lightly esteemed; and by an arbitrary act of the understanding, the man forgives himself, instead of letting himself be forgiven. But the little faults, as they are termed, are not thereby rendered less; and so far from being erased from the conscience, in consequence of our persuading ourselves that they belong to the multitude of those for which the atoning blood was shed, they remain in it, on the contrary, as a secret evil which gnaws the peace of our hearts like a cancer, and gradually robs us of filial boldness in our approaches to the throne of grace.

What, then, ought to be our conduct, according to the Scriptures, in situations like the foregoing? First, beware of despondency, by which we only prepare a feast for Satan. Next, withdraw not from the presence of the Lord, as if his heart were closed against us. Thirdly, do not think that it is necessary to make a fresh beginning of a religious life. The seed of the new birth remains within us; and the child of the family of God is not suddenly turned out of doors, like a servant or a stranger. "He who is washed," says our Lord, "is clean every whit; and you are clean, but not all." Who does not now understand this speech? Its meaning is, he who is become a partaker of the blood of sprinkling and of the baptism of the

Spirit—that is, of the twofold grace of absolution from the guilt of sin, and of regeneration to newness of life,—is, as regards the inmost germ of his being, a thoroughly new man, who has eternally renounced sin, and whose inmost love, desire, and intention is directed to God and things divine. When such a one, from weakness, is overtaken by a fault, he has no need of an entirely new transformation, but only of a *cleansing*. He must let his feet be washed. Let this be duly considered by those who are in a state of grace, and let them resist the infernal accuser, lest he gain an advantage over them by his boundless accusations. Hold up the blood of the Lamb as a shield against him, and do not suffer your courage and confidence to be shaken.

The other danger which menaces us here, must be equally cautiously avoided; and we must beware of cloaking or underestimating any new act of unfaithfulness we may have committed. No fault is too trifling or inconsiderable. We must suffer the judge in our breasts to perform his office without hindrance, and not refuse to listen to his convictions. We must draw near to God as grieved, but not as despairing children, and sincerely confess our faults. Let our language be, "O Lord, my God, I have sinned against You afresh, and am grieved at it. I judge and condemn myself; but Your mercy is great, and therein do I trust. Sprinkle my conscience with the blood of atonement, and enable me, by faith, to appropriate, for this my fault, the suffering You have endured for me!" Let the humbled and contrite heart pray thus, and the Lord will graciously incline to it, and impart forgiveness to the soul by his Holy Spirit, and the peace of the heart with the consciousness of adoption will then remain undisturbed in the blood of the Lamb. And O, how do we feel ourselves again united to the Lord, and strengthened anew to fight against Satan, the world, and our own flesh and blood; and how does the joyful confidence bloom afresh in our minds, that we really possess a Savior, after such a renewed experience of his faithfulness! Then we arrive again at Penuel, and exultingly say with Jacob, "I have seen the Lord face to face, and my life is preserved;" and join, with deep emotion, in the words of David, "Return unto your rest, O my soul! for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!"

This, my dear readers, is letting our feet be washed, in the sense intended

by our Lord; and you will observe how blissful, refreshing, and reviving is the act. And in the eyes of him who is possessed of true simplicity, this daily renewed repentance, and the fresh experience of salvation which attends it, is nothing legal, but the real Gospel, and an exercise which is unspeakably sweet. The inward man is thus renewed day by day, and experiences a continued restoration. The flowers of joy and devotedness to God incessantly spring up in the heart, and it is always spring time within. There are many Christians who know of no other nourishment for their inward life than the moldy bread of long past experience. But no true peace results from this. Inward religion does not consist in a life of morbidity, arising from the recollection of having once received the forgiveness of sins. Where a real spiritual life exists, there is also constant activity, unceasing striving against sin, repeated humiliation before God, and renewed experience of his favor. Were it otherwise, why should the Lord put into his children's lips the daily petition, "Forgive us our trespasses!" He who is washed need not be again entirely washed, but only his feet, and that continually.

The inmost meaning of the scene under consideration has thus been unfolded before us. It belongs to the method of salvation, and as regards its whole extent, was certainly apprehended only in the sequel by the understandings of the disciples. That which they doubtless understood better, and at the time, was the exterior of the act, and the example it afforded. To this our Lord's closing explanation is limited, to which we have now in conclusion, to direct our attention.

After the Lord had resumed his upper garments, and re-seated himself at the table with his disciples, he again opens his gracious mouth and says to them, "Know you what I have done to you?" By this question he refers once more to the profounder meaning of his action, which he had brought sufficiently near to the comprehension of his disciples by the remark, "now are you clean, but not all." At these words every doubt must have vanished as to the spiritual cleansing here alluded to. But the Lord prepared the way by them to what followed: "You call me Master and Lord, continues he, and adds, in majestic self-consciousness, "You say well, for so I am." He then says further, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet: you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I

have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he who is sent, greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them."

In these words, that part of Christ's act which is intended as an example, is set before us. The original word, translated in our version "example," includes in it the twofold idea of symbol as well as example, and therefore points out to us a deeper meaning than appears on the surface. It will be known to you that many have supposed our Lord here intended to institute an outward ecclesiastical solemnity for his Church. But there is not the slightest foundation for such an idea; nor is the Lord to blame that the washing enjoined by him, has in some places degenerated into the mere formality of an outward act. In it he recommended no empty ceremonial, much less a cloak for hierarchical pride, to which those make it subservient, of whom it has been justly observed, that "it would be more to be wondered at, if, in genuine humility, they washed the feet of one king, than their washing the feet of a thousand poor people in the manner in which it is now performed."

The Lord, by this act, commended to his disciples that brotherly love which flows from his own heart into ours, which manifests itself in real self-denial, and willingly condescends to the most menial offices. We ought also to wash one anther's feet, even in a literal sense, when necessity and circumstances require it. We ought not to imagine ourselves too high and lofty for any kind of assistance, however apparently degrading, since Christ has left us such a brilliant example in this respect. Acts of love never degrade, however menial they may be. They did not degrade the Lord of Glory; how, then, should they degrade us his unworthy servants?

But it is chiefly in a spiritual sense that we ought to follow the example of our Lord. We are naturally much inclined to accuse each other of faults, and we judge and grieve each other by our severity. But the Lord recommends a washing of the feet, which arises from the charitable intention of cleansing and divesting our brother of some besetting sin. This cannot indeed be done without mentioning the particular offense; but there is a great difference where humility, which never judges others

without first judging itself, shows another his sins, and mercy, which never grieves, but only seeks to heal, discovers infirmities, when contrasted with the self-righteous loftiness and fault-finding Pharisaism, which holds up to the poor sinner the catalogue of his transgressions. He who washes a brother's feet in the sense intended by our Lord, places himself on the same footing with him as a sinner; enters compassionately into his fault; reveals it to him with forbearance and sincere frankness; melts his heart, by gently reminding him of the riches of divine goodness, which he has repaid with ingratitude; and after having thus washed his feet, while inciting him to repentance, he does not forget to wipe them also, by unveiling the throne of grace, depicting to his view the cross of Calvary, announcing to him the mercy of him who has received gifts, even for the rebellious, and by dropping into his wounds the balm of the Gospel.

Certainly we never wash each other's feet in this manner until we know what the Lord has done for us in particular. The mystery of his cross must first have been revealed to us in the light of the Holy Spirit before we are able thus to wash one another's feet. We must first have experienced that in the substantial antitype, which Simon Peter experienced in the type. Christ himself must first wash us before we can wash the feet of any in the manner intended by him. Let the words, then, ever sound in our ears: "If I wash you not, you have no part with me." May they expel all false security from our souls; give us no rest day or night until they cast us down at his footstool, and if he has not yet cleansed us, call forth from our bosoms the words of Peter: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

The Passover

The passover is just being celebrated—the most important glorious, and joyful of the festivals of Israel; the birthday-feast of the chosen people—that festival which has been kept for fifteen hundred years, and annually greeted with fresh delight; upholding, by its mere occurrence, the historical truth of the wonderful deliverance of Abraham's seed from the sword of the destroying angel, by the sprinkled blood of lambs. As the

festive memorial of this great event, it continually called for renewed thanksgiving and humiliation before the Father of Mercies. With the necessity for spiritual deliverance, it equally revived the hope of redemption by the blood of the promised Prince of Peace, of which the deliverance experienced in Egypt was a mere type.

Let us then cast a transient look at the typical feast itself. The angel of divine justice had been sent from the throne of the Eternal Majesty to smite all the first-born in Egypt, and to sweep them away from the face of the earth. To the seed of Abraham, however, a means of deliverance was given, and you know wherein it consisted. Each head of a family was ordered to take a male lamb out of his flock, kill it, sprinkle its blood on his door-posts, and then quietly and confidently remain in his dwelling. "And the blood," said the Lord, "shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt"—Exod. 12:13. And it was done as the Lord commanded.

Who does not perceive in this divine ordinance the symbolic announcement of the eternal redemption projected for sinners in the counsels of God? Who still doubts that the Lamb, on which the deliverance depended, signified Christ, the only Savior—that the slaying of the lamb had reference to Christ's atoning sufferings and death for sinners—that the sprinkling of the door-posts with the blood of the victims, foreshadowed to the believing sinner, the divine imputation of the merits of the great Surety, and that the security of the Israelites who, in child-like simplicity obeyed the divine command, reflected the perfect forgiveness which the Eternal Father would gratuitously grant to all who should humbly submit to his method of salvation, by repentance and faith in the atoning blood of the Lamb of God?

"This great symbolical announcement of salvation was handed down through successive ages; and the wondrous deliverance in Egypt was annually brought to the recollection of the people in a lively manner, by the Feast of the Passover. They then beheld the lambs—those significant types of the expected Lamb of God—led to the slaughter, and at the sight of their streaming blood, the thanksgivings of the people were renewed for the deliverance wrought for their forefathers in Egypt, as well as the

joyful hope of that spiritual deliverance for which they waited. In this hope they encouraged themselves, and exclaimed, with increasing confidence, "He who shall bear our sins, will come without fail, so we have here the seal and pledge of the faithful and true God." And while consuming the paschal lamb in the social family circle, after the observance of the sacrificial rites, they rejoiced to find another divine idea in this unpretending outward act, namely, that a faithful appropriation and reception of that which God would impart to sinners in the blood of Christ should form the only condition attached to a participation in the boundless treasures of grace and eternal salvation.

My readers, we have now arrived at the moment in which Christ connected the institution of his sacred Supper with the Passover. The word "connected," however, does not sufficiently convey our meaning. We designate the matter more correctly when we say that Christ has exalted the Mosaic festival of the Passover or deliverance, by changing it into his Sacrament. It is erroneous to suppose that the Old Testament is abrogated or put aside by the New. For in reality, not the minutest part of the Mosaic rites and ceremonies is abrogated; on the contrary, the whole is exalted from the state of type and shadow to that which is real and substantial. This is the meaning of that saying of Christ's—"Do not think that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled."—Matt. 5:17, 18. Even as the blossom on the tree is not annihilated, but, fading, passes over into the fruit, and experiences in the latter a more substantial life, so all the types and shadows of the Old Testament were divinely ordained to be realized in the New. The Old Testament figure of the priesthood, for instance, received its fulfillment in Christ, as well as the atoning sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple, which were types of his sufferings and death; while the whole of the Levitical ritual, with reference to purging, washing, and purifying, formed its substantial antitype in the spiritual purification by the word, blood, and Spirit of Christ.

This is a remarkable fact, and ought greatly to strengthen our faith. The whole of Christ's work of redemption thus appears in all its parts only as

the vital fulfillment and realization of a cycle of types and figures, presented for upward of a thousand years, to the eyes of the people of Israel and of the whole world. Can this be mere chance, or only the contrivance of human forethought and calculation? Impossible! Here we see the overruling hand of the living and true God. Here is his plan, his work, his performance. He who doubts of this, doubts of the existence of the sun at noon-day. It is only in nature that we meet with God under a veil, while in the connection of his revelation, all veils and coverings are removed. Only seclude yourselves, for a time, for the purpose of biblical study, and send up repeated and heartfelt aspirations for divine enlightenment, and you will unceasingly observe infallible traces of Jehovah, and there will be no end to the discoveries you will make of all that is wonderful and glorious.

Now, as the deliverance in Egypt found in Christ's atoning sacrifice its fulfilled and substantial antitype, so likewise did the divinely-ordained Passover in the Lord's Supper. Come, therefore, and see! The table at Jerusalem is prepared; and all that the feast requires is served up. The mysterious act of the washing the disciples' feet has just been concluded, the bread may now be broken and the food enjoyed. The disciples are deeply affected. The Master, who was made like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted, and in whose bosom beat a human heart, which deeply sympathized with the poor children of Adam, is so no less. He sees before him the paschal lamb, and in it the type of himself: He is "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," even as he had caused himself to be announced by his forerunner, John, at the commencement of his course. As a fresh testimony that he was so, he had made his entry into the Holy City on the same day on which the paschal lambs were accustomed to be brought in for the slaughter.

After they had again sat down at the festive board, Jesus begins, in tones of heartfelt tenderness, to say to his disciples, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." O, observe what a glimpse he here gives us into the sanctuary of his inmost soul! He has heartily desired to keep this feast with them. But for what reason? It doubtless appeared sweet and pleasant to him to pass the last hours of a life devoted to the service of others, in the peaceful circle of those who

harmonized with him, and who were the germinating seed of his Church, away from the discordant sounds of unbelief and the noise of an opposing world. It must also have been consolatory to him to celebrate the close of his career in the bosom of affection, and in the society of his confidential followers, and then take his leave of them in an undisturbed and peaceful manner. But do not suppose that, in what has preceded, you have exhausted the causes of his desire. Beware, especially, of ascribing to the Lord, anything of that sickly nature, which is usually termed sentimentality. As in him all was sound, and full of pith and energy, so he was also a perfect stranger to our morbid sensibility, and our selfish pleasure in effeminate and visionary sensations. That which caused him to long so ardently for this Passover was, doubtless, love; not, however, a love that seeks enjoyment, but which burns to do good, to beatify, and bless.

Our Savior's desire to partake of this last Passover doubtless arose chiefly from his heartfelt longing for the coming of that hour in which he should be able to make an end of our state of condemnation, and nail to the cross the handwriting that was against us. He also cordially rejoiced in anticipation of this peaceful evening, as the point of time when he should be permitted, in his intended and mysterious institution, to make his will, so to speak, in favor of his beloved followers, and with the consent of his heavenly Father, to bequeath to them the fruits of his atoning life, sufferings, and death. In a word, it was for the sake of the Sacrament, to be then instituted, that he longed so ardently and earnestly for the approach of this his last Passover feast. Long had this institution of his love presented itself, as an attractive memorial, to his mind. Hence you may judge of the importance which ought to be attached to this sacred ordinance. An act which had simply reference to the establishment of a returning friendly festive memorial, would never have been to the Son of God the object of such a profound, ardent, and long-cherished desire. The words, "With desire have I desired," are of themselves sufficient to refute not merely the rationalistic, but also the otherwise so estimable Zurich Reformer's view of the Lord's Supper. They impress upon the sacred feast the stamp of a divine mystery—of a sacrament. O, my Lord and Savior, thus ardently did Your heart tong for the moment when You could bequeath this legacy of Your loving-kindness to us sinners! Even the

horrifying night of death, which was so soon to close around You, did not hinder You from thoughts of such compassion! O, how have You loved us to the end! And yet who loves You in return, and thanks You as he ought for the rich inheritance bestowed upon us, or duly estimates this gift of Your grace! O Lord, how are we degenerated, sunk, and lost! Have pity upon us, O Jesus, and create us anew, according to Your promise!

With the expression of heartfelt desire our Lord connects one of a prophetic nature, and soon after adds another of a similar character: "For I tell you," says he, "that I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." As if he had said, "We are about to part; our connection with each other will be henceforth of a different kind. But we shall see each other again, and once more sit at meat together." We ask inquisitively and anxiously, When? and, further, inquire what it is that now presents itself to the mind of our Lord, and elevates him above the pain of parting? The eye of his spirit looks into the distant future. He says, "I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled (the passover) in the kingdom of God." The Lord knows what he is saying, and rejoicing in spirit, sees what he refers to clearly and distinctly before him. We only perceive something of it in the dawning distance; but even this is sufficient to cast a reflection of the Savior's joy into our hearts.

The Passover of the Old Testament, after its transformation into the Lord's Supper, has not yet experienced its final fulfillment. It points prophetically to something further, and even greater and more glorious. A feast of the reconciled and redeemed is yet forthcoming, with which our present Communion stands in proportion only like the copy to the original, or like the foretaste to the full enjoyment. When this feast shall be celebrated, Faith will have become Sight, that which is in part have become that which is perfect, and strife and conflict have terminated in enduring triumph. The high festival, which shall nevermore be interrupted, will be held at the moment when the kingdom of God shall be accomplished and completed, and with the renewal of Nature. Something new will then take the place of our present Communion. Ask me not wherein it will consist. It is certain, however, that our Lord, in the words, "I will not any more eat this passover with you, until it be fulfilled," does not merely intend to say, "until we shall rejoice together in

the perfect glory of my kingdom, with all the redeemed." We are not entitled thus generally to explain his language. The mode of expression he makes use of, does not even admit of this reference to something indefinitely spiritual; and the addition, which the Lord afterward makes, is quite at variance with it.

It belonged to the ritual of the Passover, that in it, four cups should be handed round, having reference to the four promises in the divine announcement of the miraculous deliverance in Egypt, viz.: "I, Jehovah, will bring you out, deliver, redeem, and take you to be my people, and will be your God." After presenting one of these cups, during the social meal at Jerusalem, probably the first of the four, which must not be confounded with the cup after supper, mentioned in Luke 22:20, the Lord thus expresses himself, "I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the day when I shall drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

What does this mysterious sentence mean? Does he only mean to say, "I will drink no more passover wine, but will eventually enjoy that heavenly felicity with you which is signified by the wine, in fall measure, in the Church triumphant?" The Lord could not possibly have intended that we should thus generalize and subsidize the meaning of his very striking language, so solemnly introduced with the words, "I say unto you." But in Christ's perfected kingdom on earth there will be something similar to our communion prepared for us, at which, perhaps, as from the tree of life in Paradise, we shall again eat and where we shall again drink as from the fountains of Eden. Our Lord really seems to hint at something of this nature, although the kind of eating and drinking, for which the glorified creation will furnish the elements, may, for the present, remain a mystery to us.

Suffice it to say that the Savior here undoubtedly points out the passover of the New Covenant—in which he elevates and transforms that which was typical in the Old—as the prelude of a great and festal jubilee, which awaits his believing followers in the future of the kingdom of God. That which exalts the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to such a prelude will appear in the sequel of our meditations. O that it may be manifested as such to the experience of all who approach it, and cause them to exclaim

with delight "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven!" This would assuredly be the case, if they only came duly hungering, thirsting, and filially believing. A single participation of the sacred ordinance would then teach them more of its true nature and object than a hundred theological discourses. They would then leave the holy place inwardly rejoicing in the language of the Psalmist, "You prepare a table for me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over!"

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

The Passover has been kept, according to Israelitish usage, the paschal lamb has been consumed by the guests with feelings of deep emotion, and the festive cup has been several times sent round as was customary. The moment had now arrived when after singing the great of "Hallel," or psalm of praise, the meal should be concluded, and the signal given to the guests to rise up and depart. Instead of this, what occurs? The Master, to whom all eyes were directed, rises from his seat—not, as is soon perceived, to leave the room, but—to commence a new and still more solemn act than that of eating the passover. In the capacity of the head of the family, he again takes the bread, breaks it, and after giving thanks, distributes it to his disciples; and you know the words with which he accompanied this act. He then likewise reaches them the cup, commands them all to drink of it, and what he said at the time you also know. Heaven alone can satisfactorily explain to us why the Evangelists have not transmitted to us the words of institution used by the Savior, in perfect coincidence with each other as to their form and manner.

"But," you say, "have they not done so?" No, my friends. In Matthew and Mark, the Lord, in breaking the bread, says, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." According to Paul (1 Cor. 11:24), He used the expression, "broken for you," instead of "given for you." In Matthew, he says, on presenting the cup, "Drink you all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." In Mark, both the words, "Drink you all of it," as well as "for the remission of sins," are wanting. In Luke, we find the Lord

saying, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Paul expresses it in like manner, but describes the Lord as adding, "This do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Here are, therefore, manifest differences, although anything but opposition and contradiction. Now how are these variations in the four narratives to be explained? A variety of suppositions, as you may imagine, have been suggested during eighteen centuries. But I must protest, on the outset, against the idea, unaccountably entertained by many pious people, that one or other of the Evangelists had made a mistake, and was unable minutely to remember the precise words used by the Lord Jesus. The apostles, in compiling their sacred records, were preserved from every error. For their Lord and Master had expressly promised them that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, should lead them into all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance that he had spoken to them. And can we, for a moment, suppose that this Spirit should have been deficient in his office in such an important matter as the institution of this sacrament, and not rather have attended to it with the greatest exactness? Let whoever will believe it, I never can.

But perhaps you say, "How will you be able to make the deviations which really exist agree?" My readers, I do not for a moment doubt that the Lord uttered all the words which are recorded, and that the four witnesses only enlarge each other's description of what occurred; and it is my conviction, that on distributing the bread and presenting the cup he several times uttered the words of institution, and repeated them, first in one form and then in another.

Certainly, it is not a matter of indifference to be able to place our foot on firm ground in this matter, and with perfect confidence to say, "These are the original words of institution used by our Lord, in their authentic and proper connection. This is their essential and real meaning; this the sacred formula which is to continue in use forever, according to the will of our Lord himself, and to be always uttered at the celebration of his supper." But in order to provide for the real requirements of his Church on earth, the Lord was subsequently pleased to give his apostle Paul, by express revelation, an unambiguous disclosure respecting the formula of the institution of his sacred ordinance. Hear what the Apostle says,—1

Cor 11:23-25: "For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread," etc. The substance of the words of the institution is consequently expressed as to the bread, in the formula, "This is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me;" as to the cup, in the words, "This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

So much with regard to the formula of the institution. Let us now cast a look at the actions with which our Lord accompanied the words:—We read, first, that "the Lord took bread." Observe, he took bread, and not the flesh of the paschal lamb. This he did that he might not countenance, in any way, such crude and gross ideas of the sacrament as those expressed by the Jews at Capernaum (John 6.), and that he might, beforehand meet the error, as if there were still room in the New Testament for the sacrifices of the Old. The bread which he took was the unleavened passover cake, which, however, was not subsequently used; for the first Christians, with the apostles at their head, at their communion, which they were accustomed almost daily to celebrate at the close of their love-feasts, made use of the customary bread; that is, of such as was used at table, and therefore leavened.

"The Lord took bread"—this most indispensable of all the means of nourishment and sustenance, the product of the most valuable of earth's fruits, which presents, at the same time, such an extremely striking image of him without whom we have no spiritual life. But you ask, "Is the bread only an emblem, a figure?" I inquire, in reply, whether you wish to dispute the position, that we must regard the elements of the sacred ordinance, in the first instance, as signs, symbols, and figures? If so, you must overlook the Lord's words in John, 6:51, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven, and give life unto the world;" as well as many other of his expressions of a similar kind. The divine "corn of wheat," which, that it might not remain alone, but bring forth much fruit, fell into the ground, and, by the heat of Gethsemane, and the fire of the cross, was prepared to become the spiritual food of poor sinners, is reflected, like the sun in the dew-drop, in the sacramental bread, and by the latter is exhibited to our view.

After the Lord had taken the bread, he lifted up his eyes toward heaven, and "gave thanks"—that is, he poured out his heart in praise and thanksgiving to his heavenly Father. For what did he render thanks? O my friends, for what else than for the decision of divine mercy, to save such poor sinners as we, which he saw in spirit, as already accomplished in his blood, and for the deliverance of the children of Adam from the curse of the law, the power of Satan, and the gulf of perdition. It was they who lay continually upon his heart; to whose restoration all his cares and anxieties were directed, and whose exaltation and beatification was the object of his highest interest and sweetest hope. He gave thanks. O, with what adoring delight will the holy angels have caught this costly incense in their golden censers, and, have borne it up to God! He gave thanks. We ought also to give thanks. But it is well for us, that in this, as in everything else, he intercedes for us, and covers our guilt with his obedience, and our deficiencies with his fullness.

However he did not merely give thanks, but, according to Matthew's expression, he also blessed. It is true the word used by this Evangelist signifies both thanking and praising, like the word used by Luke and Paul, nor would any greater stress require to be laid upon it, as including the idea of blessing, if Paul, in employing the same word in 1 Cor. 11:16, had not called the cup, "the blessed," or "the cup of blessing." The Savior, however, pronounced his benediction, not only upon the cup, but also upon the bread. And wherefore! Was it in order to separate the elements from a common and profane use to one that was higher, spiritual, and holy? Doubtless, he had this also in view. But where Jesus, the High Priest, blesses, we ought to think of something more substantial than a mere designation and setting apart of the kind above-mentioned. We ought to expect that influence is then exerted, and reality produced. And O, what superabundant richness and fullness of blessing have rested on the bread and wine of the communion from the benediction, which our Lord pronounced upon them! Since that festal evening, how many thousands have received heavenly refreshment, invigoration, and encouragement by their means! How many a wounded heart, in the course of eighteen centuries, has been healed, how many fainting spirits revived, and the passage through the dark and mortal valley illumined, alleviated, and sweetened! and how innumerable are those who, until the

end of time, will joyfully experience all this! Such is the blessing of the Prince of Peace, which extends even to the bliss of the eternal hills.

After our Lord had given thanks and blessed, he "broke" the bread. Nor is this without a deeper meaning, as he himself declares immediately afterward, in the words, "This is my body, which is broken for you." Hence the whole of the apostolic statements of the institution of this sacred ordinance do not fail to record this breaking of the bread. Jesus broke it as symbolic of that which should soon occur to his own body, by which he should become our atoning sacrifice and the bread of life. In the breaking of the bread he depicted his own death to the eyes of the disciples; and the sublime and admirable tranquillity with which he did so, again testifies of the infinite love to sinners which pervaded his heart.

Our Lord presented the bread, thus broken, to his disciples, and it is here that we see him in his proper office and favorite vocation. Giving, presenting, and communicating, is his delight. As then, so now, his hand is stretched out in his feast of love, although at present concealed in the hand of his human messenger and minister. We, his servants, retire, as regards ourselves, entirely into the background, while administering the communion. We are then nothing but his instruments. He himself is always the dispenser and giver. Hence his words alone are heard at the sacred feast; and none else, however beautiful and believing they may sound, are permitted to be used.

At the consecration of the cup, the same formula was repeated as at the consecration of the bread. After renewed thanksgiving and blessing, our Lord presented it to his disciples, and invited them all to drink of it. He calls the wine his blood, even as he designated the bread his body; and, both elements united, indicate and represent the whole Christ, inasmuch as he gave his life, which is "in the blood," unto death, as an atoning sacrifice for us.

That the Lord did not select water but wine, for the symbol of his shed blood, was done from the wisest motive; and only enlarges and diversifies the meaning of the selected symbol. Christ is the real vine, and we possess divine life, only in so far as we, like the branches, grow through him, and are pervaded by his influence. Besides, the wine reminds us of

the wine-press of torture and agony, in which the Son of God was capacitated to become our Savior and Mediator, and signifies the fullness of heavenly encouragement, joy, and delight, which Christ imparts, as an addition and superabundance to his believing people; while the bread represents more what is necessary and indispensable for the deliverance and blessedness, which they possess in his redemption and mediation.

What an incomparable legacy, therefore, has the Lord left us in his sacred Supper! What a fullness of heavenly blessings and mercies has he showered down upon us in this unpretending institution! Let us therefore highly estimate this precious bestowment. Let us often avail ourselves of it by repeated and devout approaches to the sacred table for the sanctification and glorification of our inner man. Only, let us be careful to appear in true communion attire—in child-like simplicity and godly poverty of spirit; and on our return from the holy place, we shall feel ourselves constrained to render heartfelt and joyful thanks unto him, who has bought us with his blood, and be more than ever resolved to live and die to his praise.

"Lord, Is It I?"

We return to the chamber in which our Lord and his disciples had assembled to eat the passover, and previous to the institution of the sacred ordinance of which we have been treating. We find the disciples in a state of great excitement, in consequence of the unexpected announcement, which had fallen from the lips of their beloved Master, that one of them should betray him.

The Lord had revealed to them a painfully affecting secret. He had told them that among them was an unhappy mortal, who would have no part in the kingdom of God, and would never see life. The blood of the Lamb would not cleanse him from sin, nor the righteousness of the Mediator cover him; on the contrary, he would continue what he was, a child of the devil, with regard to whom it would have been better had he never been born. This reprobate would spurn from him the only ground of salvation, betray the Lord of Glory, and thus become irrecoverably the subject of

death and the curse, and hasten to plunge himself into eternal perdition. It was this which Jesus revealed to them; and how do they receive it? Do they say, "Talk as you please, the consequences will not be so fatal. Eternal perdition? there is no one who need apprehend anything of the kind, since God is love." No, they do not think thus. The idea which pervades their inmost souls and retains the upper hand is this: "He, who at one glance surveys heaven and earth, the present and the future, and in whose mouth no deceit was ever found, affirms it;" and hence it is that this expression causes them such anxiety and alarm.

The Lord has also revealed something of a similar kind to us. We likewise hear from his lips, that in all ages, though many are called, yet only few are chosen and find the path to life; while, on the contrary, many, who had likewise better never have been born, walk the road that leads to destruction, and thus become meet for hell. There is therefore no want of such pitiable characters in the present day; for he asserts it who cannot lie.

The peace of the disciples is at an end, after this appalling disclosure. They cannot leave the matter thus; they must ascertain who is intended; and they do not seek the culprit at a distance, but among themselves.

Observe here, that it is no infallible sign that we are not ourselves the sons of perdition, because people regard us as the children of God, and because our external deportment seems to justify their opinion. For among those who are respected, and reputed as blameless characters, among churchmen and those who are apparently devout, no, even among those who frequent the Lord's Table, may be found such as are rushing onward to destruction. In congregations where the Gospel is preached, Satan entraps individuals in the snare of religious self-deception, as well as in the pits of infidelity and ungodliness. Among those to whom the dreadful words will be addressed, "I never knew you," not a few will be found, who, with good reason, are able to say, "Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in your presence? have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name done many wonderful works?" The disciples were aware of this; and hence, on the Lord's informing them, that there was one among them, who was accursed, they were by no means satisfied with being merely in their Master's immediate vicinity. Let us follow their example

in this respect, and not seek at a distance those who shall eventually perish. Let us commence the inquiry within our own walls, and not exclude ourselves from those whom we regard as being possibly the deplorable people in question. On the contrary, let each, first, examine himself. It is not only those who openly revolt, and swear allegiance to the enemies of God and his Anointed, who are hastening to perdition, but there are also others, with the Bible in their hands, and the name of Jesus on their lips, who finally perish.

In order that their investigation may not prove fruitless, the disciples resort to the light—the brightest and most penetrating in the world,—which never deceives nor shines with a delusive radiance. It is to Jesus they refer—to him who tries the heart and the thoughts, and fathoms every depth. "Lord," they ask, one after the other, deeply concerned and grieved, "Is it I? Is it I?" And O, how affecting is this trait, how pleasing and worthy of imitation!

David drew near to this light when he prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me." Those who try themselves by any other light, only deceive themselves like the Pharisees of old, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. O, you all-penetrating light of God, may each one turn to you, that you may aid him in discovering the man of sin, the son of perdition! How soon would he then be tracked, even into his most secret recesses; and how much nearer would he be found to be, to the surprise of the seeker, than the latter could have believed!

Let us now inquire into the result of the investigation, and in so doing, we arrive at the most important and pleasing part of the subject. The son of perdition is discovered. Each of them brings him bound to the Lord, and delivers him up to his judgment. "Each of them?" you ask with surprise. Yes: with one exception, all of them have found the sinner in their own persons. Hear the anxious inquiry which they address to their Master, "Lord, is it I?" and observe the downcast look and tearful eye with which they accompany it. What do they mean by this? They each intend to say —"Lord, I feel my heart so corrupt that I am capable of committing any evil, and when the wind of temptation blows in that direction, it were

even possible for me to betray you as you have said; unguarded, and left to myself, I cannot depend upon myself in any respect. Alas, I feel that I am sold under sin, and with my best resolutions, I find I am only like a reed, shaken by the wind."

Such, we may suppose, were the feelings of the disciples. But while they thus judge and condemn themselves, a gracious look from their beloved Master assures them of their mistake; and this is immediately confirmed to them, still more intelligibly, by his declaration that it was not one of the Eleven, but that he who dipped his hand with him in the dish, was the man that should betray him.

Let us now attend to the important lesson to be derived from this striking scene. They who really perish in the world—the children of wrath—are those who either do not acknowledge themselves to be sinners in the sight of God, or who, when conscious that they have the son of perdition within them, neither judge themselves nor deliver him over to the Lord to execute judgment upon him, but only seek how they may rescue him and disguise him, like Judas among the Twelve, with his hypocritical imitation of innocence and sincerity, while exclaiming with the rest, "Master, is it I?" All those, however, who have discovered in themselves the sinner, who is capable of all evil, and in holy indignation bring him bound before the Holy One of God, and honor the sentence of condemnation pronounced upon him by the Supreme Judge as just and righteous, and imploringly entreat that he may be destroyed by the lightning of the Holy Spirit, and a new man, a man of God, may be produced within them in his stead—such characters we pronounce blessed; for from the moment of this self-condemnation, they are marked out as individuals against whom the judicial sentence of the supreme tribunal is withdrawn, and who have no need to tremble at any accusation either of Moses or Satan "If we judge ourselves," says the word of God, "we shall not be judged;" and in another place, "Those who humble themselves shall be exalted."

Let us, then, listen to the exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah, and "let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord:" And may he grant that "in his light we may see light."

Judas Iscariot

About the same time that the Word became flesh in Bethlehem, and the angels of God sang their seraphic anthem at his appearance, there was joy also in the cottage of Simon of Carioth, in the tribe of Judah, for there likewise had a son, though only a mortal, seen the light of this world. I imagine that the heavenly guardians of the little ones also offered him their greetings of welcome; and his parents, thankful and hopeful, called the boy "Judas," that the praise of God, or the Confessor; and thus with silent emotion dedicated him to the Almighty, who had graciously given him to them.

The little boy was well-formed, and of pleasing appearance; for it was not yet written on his forehead what he should eventually become, and what should befall him in the course of his earthly pilgrimage. Ah! we now regard that domestic event with other eyes, and look upon the unhappy parents with poignant grief, for we know that prophetic passages, such as the following had reference to him: "Yes, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."—Psalm 41:9. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him."—Psalm 109:17. "Let his days be few, and let another take his office."

We are without any tradition respecting Judas's earlier life; but we certainly do not mistake if we take it for granted that his gradual development was such as to justify uncommon hopes. He soon showed himself possessed of superior abilities, acute understanding, strong excitability, and energetic will, and therefore seemed, as he was probably soon conscious of himself, to be capable of deeds of a superior kind than the limited current of quiet, civil life, affords opportunity for performing. Like the electric fluid which pervades the air, and according as the conditions meet either concentrates itself to a destructive thunderbolt, or thickens into sheet-lightning which purifies and refreshes the atmosphere. Such was the alternative which lay in the nature of the man of Carioth. It was to be foreseen that he would eventually render himself conspicuous on the stage of public life in some way or other. Accordingly,

as with the abundance of his talents, he fell under heavenly or adverse influence, he would necessarily develop himself, either as a chosen instrument of God or as an apostle and standard-bearer of Satan. Alas! he took the left-hand road, and we exclaim respecting him, with deeper and more well-founded grief than Isaiah concerning the King of Babylon, "How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

The heathen world is ignorant of a Judas, and could not produce such a character. Such a monster matures only in the radiant sphere of Christianity. It was Judas's misfortune that he was born under the most propitious star. He entered into too close contact with the Savior not to become either entirely his or wholly Satan's. There was a time when, with reference to Judas, "the candle of God shone upon his head, and when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle." Once he was not wanting in susceptibility for impressions of the most devotional kind, and his soul was capable of every noble elevation of feeling. The appearing of the "fairest of the children of men" in the glory of his marvelous deeds, attracted him, though less excited by him in his character of Savior and the friend of sinners. He swore fealty to the banner of Jesus with youthful enthusiasm, though with an unbroken will; and the Searcher of Hearts, perceiving the promising talents of the young man—who was really zealous for the cause of God in a certain degree—confidingly admitted him into the circle of his nearest and most intimate disciples. This favor would never have been granted to Judas if he had attached himself to the Savior simply from interested motives. At the moment when he offered his services to the latter, he was no hypocrite, at least not consciously so. And when he afterward prayed, studied the word of God, and even preached it with the other disciples, it was doubtless done for a time with a degree of inward truthfulness: it was only in the sequel that he resorted to intentional deception and dissimulation.

The Lord appointed him to the office of receiver and almoner in his little circle; and assuredly did so for no other reason than that he perceived he was the fittest for that vocation. Many have profanely supposed that the Lord committed the purse to him in order to tempt him; but such a thought is wholly to be rejected. On the contrary, that circumstance affords us an additional confirmation of the fact that Judas, at the

commencement of his discipleship, possessed the full confidence of his Master, although it could not have been hidden from the latter that the disciple was still deficient in a thorough knowledge of himself, and especially in contrition of heart, to which a participation in the salvation of God is inseparably attached.

Amid the superabundance of pious sentiments, an evil root remained within, which was the love of the world, and especially of its gold and empty honor. And, in fact, Judas deceived himself when he ascribed his admission among the disciples of Jesus to much deeper and holier motives than the longing for the realization of those earthly and enchanting ideas which his lively imagination depicted to him as connected with that kingdom which the Lord had appeared to establish. As, on attaching himself to the cause of the great Nazarene, he fully supposed he was following the attraction of a higher and nobler excitement; so his fellow-disciples believed it no less of him. The latent wound did not escape the Savior's eyes, but the mischief was not incurable, and Christ had appeared in order that, as the Divine Physician, he might heal the sick, and bind up the wounded.

The compassionate love of Jesus left no means untried to accomplish the cure; but alas! the result did not correspond with his tender and unwearied solicitude. It only too soon appeared that the pleasing enthusiasm which had borne Judas on its wings so near the Prince of Peace, was, in its inmost center, anything but pure fire from heaven. For the more his delusive ideas concerning the real nature of Christ's kingdom were dispelled by the Lord's manner of life, as well as by his expressions and discourses, the fainter burned the torch of his specious zeal, and what remained of it in his heart was the impure fire of a selfish, earthly expectation and desire. The observation that "every one has his price, at which he may be bought," seems almost too strong; but the words are actually applicable to every unregenerate man, however long a time may elapse until they are fulfilled. O do not let us deceive ourselves! even the most magnanimous characters, as long as they are not sanctified by Christ, are capable, according to circumstances, of acting not only meanly, but even basely and vulgarly. The natural man, in his most intellectual form, does not lose his centaur-like nature; the consequence

of which is, that after having been engaged in possibly the most elevated pursuits, he is found the next moment creeping, like the serpent in Eden, upon his belly, and eating of the dust of the earth.

The awful period arrived in which Judas actually succeeded in mastering the serious reflections which arose in his still susceptible conscience, against the impious desire of his heart for a self-chosen indemnification for the disappointment he had experienced. Probably, under the deceitful idea that he only intended to borrow, he laid his thievish hand, for the first time, upon the charitable fund intrusted to him; and after he had once broken through the barriers of his moral consciousness, the next and every subsequent embezzlement became easier and less objectionable. But the condemning voice of conscience was now awakened by the sight of his Sacred Master. The Light of the World was to him a burning fire; the Savior of sinners, even by his mute appearance, an inquisitor before whom he must either expose himself as a guilty criminal, or envelop himself in the veil of hypocritical deceit; and he chose the latter.

For a considerable time he thought himself safe in the disguise of his conscious hypocrisy, until the scene occurred in the house of Simon the Leper at Bethany. Mary's devotedness to the Savior induced her to pour the costly ointment upon him. Judas, destitute of feeling for the tenderness and deep significancy of the act, endeavored to depreciate it by the sanctimonious, and yet crude remark, that the ointment had better have been sold, and the product given to the poor. But the Lord, immediately interfering for the aggrieved woman, praised her work as "good," and as an act which should never be forgotten; at the same time reproving the ill-timed censure of the heartless hypocrite with the serious words, which must have penetrated into his inmost soul, "The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always." From those words, and still more from the painfully compassionate look which accompanied them, the hypocritical disciple became fully aware that the Lord saw through him, and knew of his crime.

This was a decisive moment for Judas—a moment in which blessing and cursing were once more offered to his choice, and one which must necessarily exercise a definite influence for good or evil on the further

development of his inward life. The erring disciple must now either cast himself down at Jesus' feet, with streams of penitential tears, and seek, by a frank confession of his lost condition, deliverance and mercy at the throne of grace or his mortified pride must gain the victory, and by urging him to the opposite course of a willful hardening, afford Satan the opportunity of imparting the infernal spark of secret bitterness against him.

You know which of these two courses Judas took. Immediately after his Master uttered these words, which were only mild reproof, and intended to heal, Judas hastened away from the company at Bethany. He now felt himself more at home and more in his element among the adversaries of Jesus than in the sphere of his previous confederates. The bargain of the thirty pieces of silver was concluded—more from a secret thirst of revenge, than from avarice and the love of money. Judas met the remonstrance of his conscience with the excuse that it would be an easy thing for the wonder-working Rabbi, if he chose, to save himself from the hands of his enemies. However, he knew only half of what he was doing. He had plunged himself into a vortex against which he was unable to struggle. He no longer guided himself; another dragged him away behind him. He had reached the horrible state of those whose "feet stumble upon the dark mountains."

It might have been supposed that Judas would have been no longer able to bear the company of Jesus. We nevertheless soon see him again in his old place among the Twelve. I know not whether that which drew him there was the tormenting uneasiness he felt, and the inward curse, or whether it was the apprehension of drawing down suspicion upon him if he were absent; or perhaps he even calculated on the possibility of the Savior's establishing a kingdom, according to his views of it, and was desirous of reserving the part he had to play in such a case. Probably all these motives co-operated to induce him to present himself among them. Suffice it to say that we meet the son of perdition in the last social evening circle at Jerusalem; and we see the Lord again trying everything to save the soul thus sick unto death. From a delicate wish to spare his feelings, he does not require him to give up the custody of the money, but leaves him still in the office assigned him.

It was necessary, however, that the Lord should give him to understand the danger in which he knew the poor man's soul to be placed; and hence, while sitting at table, the Savior begins, with deep emotion and affectionate grief, to say to his disciples, "Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me!" The eleven are struck with inexpressible amazement. They look at each other with alarm and grief, and break out in turn into the anxious inquiry, "Lord, is it I?" The son of perdition does not discover himself. Ah, only a few minutes now remain of his day of grace! A voice from within, as though it were his good angel, says to him, "Reveal yourself, Judas; throw down the mask, and escape from eternal perdition before the door of mercy is closed." But Judas resists, and envelops himself still more deeply in his disguise; for another voice still more powerfully pervades his soul, and drowns every better feeling within him. The Lord then defines his meaning more particularly, and says, "One of the Twelve that dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me," and then solemnly pronounces the Woe upon the man who should commit this heinous crime, and reveals to him his fate.

The hearts of the Eleven tremble. Simon Peter beckons to the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom to inquire who it is of whom their Master is speaking. John then ventures, though timidly, to ask, "Lord, who is it?" The latter now tears away the last shred of the mask from the traitor's face, and says, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon." The disciples shudder, and Judas stands, pale as a corpse, trembling, his eyes wandering, and completely unmanned. "O Judas, there is still time! The sounds that have hitherto smote your ear were all intended to call you to repentance. Bethink you; cast away your disguise; confess, and cry for mercy!" "But shall I confess?"—thinks Judas to himself. "Shall I give honor to him who has so mercilessly exposed me?—condemn myself, in the presence of my comrades, to eternal disgrace, and show myself before all the world as a miserable coward? No, I'll be a man, and act accordingly."

Such was probably the language of his soul, and with a mixture of horrible boldness and profound perturbation, while swallowing the sop, in hypocritical indifference, notwithstanding the unmistakable words of

the Master, he still ventures to stammer out the question, "Master, is it I?" The Lord now giving up the son of perdition, with infinite grief of heart replies, "You say it." That moment, the evil will of Judas overcame the last and most powerful attraction of mercy, and the sin against the Holy Spirit was perpetrated. The day of salvation closed; the hour of the visitation of divine mercy expired; the angels of peace sorrowfully removed from his side, and Satan triumphantly entered into him. The saying of the Savior "One of you is a devil," was now verified. The most terrible specimen of humanity which had hitherto trod the earth, now appeared upon the stage.

Then said Jesus unto him in conclusion, "That you do, do quickly!" thereby giving him to understand that he was fully aware of his intention. He intimated to him at the same time that he henceforth regarded him as the instrument by which his heavenly Father would deliver him up to the sufferings to which he was on the point of submitting from voluntary love to sinners. The Eleven knew not how to explain the words, "That you do, do quickly." Some of them thought, in their simplicity, that because Judas carried the bag, the Lord had said to him, "Buy those things we have need of against the feast:" while others imagined their Master had given Judas a hint to distribute something to the poor—so far were they from having any idea of the crime which one of their number was about to commit. The latter, however, understood the Lord Jesus better. But let us not overlook the circumstance, that Jesus while saying, "That you do, do quickly!" dismissed the traitor from the circle of his confidential followers, and from the chamber in which they were assembled. And probably those expositors were in the right who, on the testimony of the beloved disciple, consider that Judas was no longer present when the Sacrament was instituted.

Scarcely had the son of perdition left the room, on the hint he had received, and the Lord Jesus saw himself alone with his eleven faithful disciples, when the burden was removed from his heart. It seemed as if the whole atmosphere had suddenly changed, and been purified from some noxious and oppressive element. The Savior breathes more freely, and then begins with sublime elevation of soul to say, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God

shall also glorify him in himself, and shall immediately glorify him."

Judas went out. With awful significance--the narrative adds, "And it was night." Yes, night externally and internally. We see the deplorable being now entirely sold under the influence of the powers of darkness, and fitted for committing the most horrible crimes. For what is his object? It is as if a spirit of darkness, in hatred of the light, should prepare, in his wrath, to extinguish the sun which reveals his deformity. As if some insane Titan should undertake to cast down, in the Holy One of Israel, the throne of the moral government of the world, in order that henceforth sin might have no more cause to tremble. And as if one, who is wounded by the arrows of conscience should endeavor to choke and expel from the world its personified light, which was manifested in Christ, and which first impressed the divine seal upon the sentence of individual conscience. Such are the heinous acts for which Judas is preparing himself, although confusedly and half unconscious of what he is doing. The gloomy power to which he has submitted himself, hurries him away in its whirl, and he is no longer able to direct his steps as he pleases.

O Judas, Judas! happy would it have been were you the only one of your kind! But the name of your brethren, even in the present day, is "Legion." They were not, indeed, at any time your like-minded apostles; but, like you, they once inhaled the pure air of the Gospel, and were shone upon, like you, by the rays of the eternal Morning-Star. They were baptized like you; they grew up, nourished by the views of divine truth; and on the day of their confirmation devoted themselves, more or less sincerely, in the most solemn manner, to the Lord and his cause. But unfaithful to their sacred vows, they revolted with the inmost tendency of their hearts to the god of this world; and instead of the kingdom of divine light and peace, the idea of another presented itself to their minds, in which the flesh should have its unrestrained and complete gratification. This object they pursued, but the Holy One upon the throne of David, in the power of religion, interposed in the way to its attainment. He requires the crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts; unconditional submission to the divine commands, and unceasing endeavors after godliness. He protects property, sanctifies the marriage state, introduces order into families, condemns revolt, perjury, deceit, uncleanness,

intemperance, and every offense against the moral government of the world, as the supporter and advocate of which he appears. And they who would gladly elevate their lusts to be the world's law, feel, more or less, in their consciences, the weight of his requirements as the sting of their condemnation; and without confessing it, are inwardly constrained, even against themselves, to justify the warnings and teachings of Christ's religion, as absolute and irrefutable truth. But this fills them with bitterness, and enkindles in them the internal spark of enmity against the Gospel, and against the Lord as its author. Thus they become enemies of God, and join in Satan's colossal attempts to war against the power and majesty of God in the Christian religion, and to bury the whole world of religious and moral sentiments in the gigantic grave of an atheistic materialism, which denies the existence of a future state. They prepare for Jesus the cross of an enthusiast; for his Gospel, the sarcophagus of what they profanely call antiquated ideas; for his whole Church, the stairs of Pilate, on which, in their view, it descends from the scene of reality into a kingdom of shadows; and thus renew the treachery of Judas to his Lord for the wretched reward of an expected state of things, in which, in a short time, every consciousness of a superior fate for mankind would perish by the poisonous nutriment of a base and transitory lust.

Only open your ears, and you will hear from the camp of the world the infernal war-cry, "Away with Jesus and the doctrine of his cross!" Phenomena, such as those which meet us in the present day, were never before seen in the world in such anti-christian atrocity and massiveness. The traitor, Judas, is again visible on the stage, full of deadly hatred to God, in a thousand colossal antitypes: and if there is one doctrine of the Holy Scriptures which finds in the present day its tangible confirmation, it is that of the existence of a Ruler of Darkness, and of a kingdom of infernal powers. It is now that the prophetic expression in the Revelations is fulfilled, "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time." The pentecost of hell is being accomplished, and it pours out its spirit over mankind like a shower of fire and brimstone, and its shield-bearers and apostles shoot up from the earth, like the fungus, in a night.

Let every one beware of being baptized with such a baptism! He who does

not decide for the Lord today, may tomorrow be found opposed to him, and carrying the banner of Satan. Neutrality is a forlorn position. He who enters but half-way into the prevailing tendency of the present day, finishes his course before he is aware and in spite of his best resolutions, in the hatred of Judas, that is in the snare of the devil. And he who reaches the spirit of the times only the tip of his finger, may rest assured that soon his whole hand will be taken.

Let us therefore hasten to the Lord Jesus, and devote ourselves, with body and soul, unto him as an entire offering, which is but our reasonable service. Recourse to his wounds is still open today, but may perhaps not be so to-morrow. Rise up, therefore, and secure your souls; and pray that you may be preserved from the snares of Satan, and from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

The Woe Denounced

Were any one to ask me what passage in the whole Bible I regarded as the most awful and appalling, I should not require to reflect long before giving him an answer. I should neither refer to the words in Deut. 27:26, "Cursed be every one that continues not in all the words of this law to do them;" nor to the assertion in John, 3:36, "He who believes not the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Nor should I call to mind the overwhelming words of the Apostle Paul to Bar Jesus, Acts, 13:10, "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil!" nor the denunciations of our Lord himself against the Scribes and Pharisee, Matt 23. On the contrary, I would refer the inquirer to the dreadful woe pronounced upon Judas, and feel assured that he would confess that nothing more appalling and awful can be found in the sacred volume, than is contained in the woe which Jesus uttered upon his betrayer. Many a one who has passed unscathed by Sinai, has been compelled by it to cry for mercy with a broken heart.

Listen: "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; it had been good for that man that he had never been born!" Who is it that utters these dreadful words? Consider this on the outset, and the words

will then begin to unfold their horrors. O that another had uttered them, and not He from whose lips they emanated! O that they had come forth from the mouth of one like ourselves, a mortal, a human prophet, a poor sinner! Room would then have been afforded for a variety of considerations, which might, in some measure, alleviate the dreadful sentence, and we might think ourselves justified in deducting something from its horrible import, and place it to the account of the irascibility of the speaker, or ascribe it to a well-meant intention, by the appalling awfulness of his words, to deter the sinner, if possible, from his impious purpose. But it is Jesus from whose lips the denunciation proceeds; it is the King of Truth, the Friend of Sinners, who utters it; and it is impossible to state what an enormous weight and dreadful emphasis this circumstance alone attaches to the words. For in them we hear not the voice of passion, but the voice of him who could justly say of himself, "I am meek and lowly of heart." It is, therefore, not blind fury, unconscious of what it utters, that raves and rages here, but it is the considerate testimony of One whose own heart bleeds at being obliged to pronounce such a sentence on the man who had been his confidant.

The speaker, in this instance, is one who is not accustomed to deal in exaggerations; but he who thus pronounces sentence, calls himself the "Truth," and is unequaled for modesty of expression and correctness of language. It is no short-sighted person, nor one subject to error like ourselves, who utters these words; but they proceed from the lips of him who is infallible, of whom it is written, that he needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. Yes, the dreadful anathema is uttered by One, the sphere of whose vision takes in time and eternity, whose spiritual eye pierces through the gloom of the realms of darkness, and before whom, as the future Judge of the living and the dead, the life and fate of every individual, even beyond death and the grave, lies open and exposed. Such is he who testifies concerning Judas Iscariot, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." This must therefore, be the case, and that dreadful sentence cannot contain one syllable more than is necessary. O horror of horrors without a parallel! Who does not tremble here as if hell were open before him?

But it may be asked, "Why was he born, if it had been better that he had

never been born?" Cease such inquiries, lest they should only increase the awful import of the words. Listen to what the Lord says, "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him (he fulfills his destiny according to his heavenly Father's counsel and will); but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"

Observe the Lord's object in these words. He evidently designs to let the whole onus of the betrayal rest wholly upon Judas, as being voluntarily committed by him, and to justify the Almighty, on the contrary, as altogether guiltless of the act, and as in no respect operating to produce it. You may, however, object, and say, "Certainly, we are far from wishing to deny that grace and strength did not stand at the command of the degenerate disciple to withstand Satan, and to enable him to return to the Lord; but the omniscient God foresaw that he would not resist the temptation, but would fall into the snare of the devil, and eternally perish." I reply, that he doubtless foresaw this, and even predicted it by his prophets. "But," say you, "since the Lord knew that it would have been good for that man had he never been born, why did he not prevent his birth? Why did he not hinder the marriage of his parents? Why did he not smite the mother of Judas with barrenness, as he formerly smote Michal? Or why did he not take the babe to himself while in the cradle? Why did he give him time and space to ripen for such a state of reprobation? Why did God do this, since he is Almighty, and love itself?"

Restrain such inquiries, my readers. Be satisfied to remain in ignorance. No human spirit fathoms the depths of God's government of the world. To us it is a sealed mystery how the all-loving God can suffer men to be born whose course of life he sees, by virtue of his omniscience, will terminate in the abyss of eternal perdition. We can only infer from hence that the unsearchable God must love in a different manner to us men, who have no idea of a love which goes hand in hand with justice. Consider, besides, what would become of liberty, if God were, in a compulsory manner, to hinder any one from destroying himself and perishing? What would become of the splendor of his throne, if, in order to avoid punishing, he put aside the objects of his retributive justice, or forcibly restrained their free and active development? Finally, we have no need to be anxious how the Eternal God will eventually account for every

single act of his universal government, but may rest assured that on the great day of revelation, while developing his guidance and his ways, he will constrain all that have breath to join in the words of Moses, "The Lord is a rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he."

Let us now consider, a little more closely, the woe denounced by our Lord upon his betrayer, and let it unfold its horrors to our view. The Lord commences his sentence with a "Woe!" and when Christ pronounces a woe! no one in heaven or in earth can any longer say, "Peace be with you!" or bless with any effect. "It would have been good for that man"—an uncommon mode of expression in the mouth of the Good Shepherd. He does not otherwise call poor sinners thus. That appellation has in it something of a repudiating nature, and a sound of separation pervades it. Judas no longer concerns the Savior. Jesus dismisses him from the circle of his disciples, and regards him henceforward as a stranger. How awful is this, and how overwhelming! What will become of the unhappy man, now that the only one who could have saved him, lets him go? God grant that the Prince of Peace may call us by another name than the strange and icy appellation, "That man!" I cannot imagine anything more horrible than to be compelled to hear him say, "I know you not: I know not whence you are; I never knew you, Depart from me!"

"It had been good for that man had he never been born." The Lord could not have expressed himself in a more appalling manner respecting the desperate condition of the traitor, than he does in these words. A mere denunciation of woe would still have left us some hope for the deeply-fallen being; or, at least, would not have excited in us such dreadful ideas of the misery to which he was hastening as this declaration forces upon us, by which the last prospect of a possible rescue of the disciple is annihilated. O the heart-rending view, which this assertion affords us into the depths of perdition! How horrible must the fate of the reprobate be, when the Lord himself affirms that Judas had cause to curse the day of his birth! O if the fate of the rejected were only partially tolerable, the King of Truth would never have spoken thus. But while giving us most plainly to understand that nothing better could be desired for the son of perdition than a return to nonentity, he thereby gives us an idea of hell,

which ought to make all our hopes to quake. And can we suppose that there really exists a way of escape from such a state of condemnation, and that the angel of hope still lingers in its horrid abyss, or that repentance is still preached and mercy offered to the finally impenitent? If such were the case, would our Lord have made use of language such as he here employed concerning Judas? No, never! We should then have heard milder words from his lips. Then indeed, it would have been better to be born, than never to have been. In this case a man would still have reason to bless God for the hour of his birth, and none to execrate and curse it. But Jesus himself asserts that it would have been good for Judas had he never been born; and we, therefore, know enough to banish the last hope of his recovery. It is dreadful to see ourselves compelled to this alternative; but according to our Lord's words, it is unavoidable. The eternity of hell-torments, therefore, is established. The worm dies not, neither is the fire quenched in those haunts of woe.

Now, let my readers judge whether a more awful inscription could have been written on the tombstone of Judas than that we have just contemplated. He now proves its truth. The flames of eternal despair now blaze around him, and if he is now crying out, as Job once did, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man-child born," he only puts the seal upon his Master's words and denunciation, "It had been good for that man had he never been born."

After having considered the dreadful import of these awful words, let us now inquire respecting their application and limitation. We lament over the unhappy disciple; but let us beware lest the denunciation pronounced against him, be uttered respecting us; seeing that it is possible for the same reasons, as with Judas, that it were good for some had they never been born. It is, of course, not in my power to point out with certainty the individual to whom these appalling words are applicable; but I may say that he who finds within him certain characteristics, has reason to fear for his soul. For he who shares them with Judas, shares also in his condemnation. You anxiously inquire, "What are those characteristics?" I will therefore cursorily bring them before you, that you may examine yourselves by them.

Let me, first of all, point out to you, that a degree of outward propriety

affords no reason for the tranquilizing idea that you do not belong to those who had better never been born. For observe, that Judas had also outwardly forsaken the world, and had been nourished up with the milk of the Divine Word; had lived, subsequently, continually among the children of God, been innocently regarded by them as a brother, had prayed and fasted with them, belonged to the immediate retinue of the Prince of Peace, had been his disciple and confidant, had assisted in preaching his Gospel, had suffered reproach for Christ's sake, had—like the rest—wrought miracles in the name of Jesus; and yet, notwithstanding all this, "It had been good for him if he had never been born." O take this to heart, my dear readers, and beware of regarding your respectability, your devotions, your religious knowledge, your good name among believers, and the like, as a secure defense, behind which you are safe from the flames of hell!

But now turn your eyes inward, and give an account of yourselves, to me, or rather to Him, in whose name I address you. There are those in the world who envelop themselves in the mantle of religion, in order, like Judas, to conceal a devil beneath it. Secured from the judicial eye of the world, they would gladly serve the demons of lust, avarice, or pride; and on this very account they put on the mask of religion. I now ask, are you one of this description of people?

There are those also, who, though often aroused and awakened, still refuse to give themselves to Christ, because they are held in bondage by some secret sin, which they have not the courage to condemn and renounce. Hence, they indulge in it with a gloomy composure, the result of habit; and in time, their guilt increases to such a degree that they would consent to anything rather than it should be brought to light. Are there any of this class among my readers?

Again, there are people who, minutely examined, have only one care, which is, lest they should be seen behind the mask, and lest it should be discovered that they have never been converted, although they have been for years regarded as being so. Hypocrisy has become instinctive within them, and without being aware of it, they are always occupied in disguising their words, looks, gestures, and actions, in such a manner that their true character and sentiments may not be discovered. Is this

the case with any of you?

There are likewise individuals, who have so often succeeded in withstanding, by dint of defiance or intentional dissipation and self-persuasion, the thunders of truth directed against their carnal security, that they have at length attained a facility in weakening the attractive influences of the grace and Spirit of God, and are become, as it were, bomb-proof against the most appalling horrors of the eternal world, and equally unsusceptible of the sweetest allurements of Divine Love. Are any of my readers thus hardened?

Further, there are those who, at the cost of a little of their mammon, aid in building the ark of the kingdom of God, yet are displeased on hearing that this kingdom flourishes and progresses. Had they been present at Mary's evidence of tender and sacred affection in anointing the Savior, they would also have been ready to say with Judas, "Why this waste? The money had been better spent for worthier purposes." No, such people even experience a malicious pleasure; if; for instance, the Missionary cause, to which, for the sake of appearances, they may possibly have contributed, seems to retrograde, and when, generally speaking, the zeal for the cause of God appears to abate. I ask, Are there any of my readers who are the subjects of such feelings?

Finally, there are individuals, who are so far overcome by the truth of the Gospel, as to feel compelled to bear witness to it in their consciences, but do so reluctantly, and against their will. Hence, as often as they hear or read anything that encourages the idea in them that they can obtain admittance into heaven without Christ, from whose method of salvation they would gladly escape, they feel inwardly comfortable. Are there such among you? Examine your inmost motives, and know, that whoever belongs to one or the other of these classes, I do not indeed say of him that it would have been good for him had he never been born; but I do say that there is the possibility of this being the case. Such a one has reason to fear that the awful inscription on the tombstone of Judas may at length be transferred to his.

O my friends, when I think that perhaps it would have been good had your cradle been your coffin; that the nurse who laid you in your mother's

arms, was perhaps depositing there an infernal firebrand; that your parents had greater reason for greeting the hour of your birth with weeping than with rejoicing; that the sacred water of baptism was wasted upon you, and was sprinkled, as it were, in derision over you; and that while in joyful hope, your first festival was celebrated, your names instead of being recorded in the Book of Life, were inserted in that of Death—when I imagine all this to myself, the blood in my veins is ready to freeze with horror. I do not indeed say that such will actually be the case with any of my readers; but that it is possible it had been good if you had never been born. And does not your having cause for the belief in such a possibility hurl you, as with a thunderbolt to the ground?

Yes, you tremble; you are horrified. At least let me take it for granted that you are so. For if it were otherwise, and you could yawn amid such startling truths, or even laugh at them in Satanic defiance; really, there would not require much more to authorize me to tell you, in the name of God, that "it had been good for such a one that he had never been born." But God forbid that I should exceed the limits of my duty! I am not empowered to trouble the seed of Abraham, or to speak anything but comfortably to Jerusalem, however deeply degraded I know there are those to whom the sentence upon Judas does not refer, although they fear lest it should apply to them. Let me characterize, in a few brief traits, these individuals, that no one may despair who is justified in praising God for his mercy.

I make no reference here to those who can exultingly say, with Paul, "I know in whom I have believed;" for, being firmly rooted in the life of grace, and "sealed by the spirit of promise," they would only smile were I to endeavor to prove to them that the sentence in question did not apply to them. That which I might say to them has, long before, been testified by another. But I address myself to you, you troubled ones, who are tossed to and fro on the sea of doubts, and who are still in uncertainty whether you may bless the day of your birth, or have reason to curse it.

Be patient, my friends! I understand the cause of your unhappiness. Neither the fact of your feeling yourselves destitute of faith, love, and strength to lead a holy life, nor that you daily stumble and feel defective, decides anything. This state is painful to you; but is it not the real cause

of your grief and your greatest sorrow, that it is thus with you? Do you desire anything so much as to be able to say with the bride in the Canticles, "My beloved is mine, and I am his?" And if as a condition of this happiness, you were compelled to bear the cross, in its most painful form, after the Lord Jesus, and openly to confess your guilt before the whole world, would you not resolve to do so without hesitation? Would you not sacrifice that which is the dearest to you, in order to be able to assure yourselves that you belong to Christ, and could rejoice in his mercy? If you reply in the affirmative to these inquiries, I will declare to you, in the name of him who "hears the cry of the needy, and will not despise their prayer," that the woe pronounced upon Judas has no reference to you, and that the glad tidings that you may bless the hour in which you first saw the light of this world, are for you.

O it is good that you have been born! You are set apart for great things. You are destined to serve the Lord God as vessels of his mercy. He intends to adorn his temple with you as the mirrors of his glory. He desires to exhibit you in the sight of heaven, earth, and hell, as proofs of what the blood of the cross is able to accomplish. He has selected you to join the choir of those who chant the mighty Hallelujah to himself and the Lamb. When you were born, kind angels stood around your cradle. Over your head a sublime voice whispered, "I have loved you from everlasting!" Your parents pressed in you an heir of heaven to their bosoms. A divine legacy fell into your lap when the water of baptism bedewed your foreheads. You entered upon this valley of tears only to pass through it with rapid steps, and then to find your abiding home in "the Jerusalem that is above." The King of kings wrote your names in his Book of Life. The Righteousness of his Son was the first robe he threw around you; and the last with which he will adorn you, will be the radiant garment of heavenly glorification. It is well for you, therefore, that you have been born. It would have been grievous if you had been wanting in the rank of beings; for one voice less would then have resounded in the vast jubilee chorus at the throne of God, and one pearl less would have glittered in the diadem of the heavenly Prince of Peace. Therefore, thrice hail that you exist! In spite of all the wretchedness you may be experiencing, you have infinite reason to bless the Lord. We heartily rejoice at joining with you in praising him.

But you, who pass with indifference by the cross of Immanuel, or even resist the Holy Spirit, who reproves you of sin, and is desirous of directing you to Jesus, what shall I say to you? I can only address you in the words of a well-known hymn:

"Sinner, O why so thoughtless grown—
Why in such dreadful haste to die?
Daring to leap to worlds unknown,
Heedless against your God to fly.

"Will you despise eternal fate,
Urged on by sin's fantastic dreams,
Madly attempt th' infernal gate,
And force your passage to the flames?

"Stay, sinner, on the Gospel plains!
Behold the God of love unfold
The wonders of his dying pains,
Forever telling, yet untold!"

The Walk to Gethsemane

We return to our narrative at a solemn moment. The Lord Jesus has just instituted the sacred ordinance of his love—the Lord's Supper—and, according to custom at the feast of the Passover, he commences with his disciples, in the silence of the night, the "Hallel," or great song of praise, which consisted of Psalms 115 to 118. It is the first time that we find our Savior singing; for the original Greek word admits of no other interpretation. The Lord, thereby, forever consecrates vocal music in his Church. Singing—this language of the feelings, this exhalation of an exalted state of mind, this pinion of an enraptured soul—is heaven's valuable gift to earth. Adopted into the service of the sanctuary, how beneficial and blissful is its tendency! Who has not experienced its power to raise us high above the foggy atmosphere of daily life; to transport us so wondrously, even into the precincts of heaven; to expand and melt the heart; to banish sorrow, and burst the bonds of care? And it can effect

greater things than these, when the Spirit from above mingles his breath with it. A thousand times has it restored peace in the midst of strife, banished Satan, and annihilated his projects. Like a genial gale of spring, it has blown across the stiff and frozen plain, and has caused stony hearts to melt like wax, and rendered them arable, and capable of receiving the seed of eternity.

We find the Lord of glory singing with his followers. O, if David, who wrote those psalms, could have supposed that they would experience the high honor of being sung by the gracious lips of him who was the supreme object of his songs and the sole hope of his life, he would have let the pen drop in joyful astonishment from his hand. But what a seal does the Lord impress upon those psalms, as the real effusions of the Holy Spirit, by applying them to himself, while thus singing them in the most solemn hour of his earthly course! Would he have sung them, especially at that moment, if they had not contained the pure words of God? The Lord's singing them, therefore, is a powerful proof of the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. In fact, we are only treading in his footsteps when we resign ourselves unhesitatingly to this sacred word. And ought not this consciousness greatly to encourage us, and to overthrow every fresh doubt that may arise? What happiness to have been permitted to listen to that peaceful nocturnal chant! Doubtless the holy angels lay listening, with silent attention, in the windows of heaven while the human soul heard, in those sounds, the cradle—and inauguration—hymn of its eternal redemption.

Millions in Israel had already sung the great "Hallel" after the feast of the passover, during the thousand years which had elapsed since David—many, such as the prophets, and the more enlightened among the people, assuredly with profound emotion and zealous fervor. But with feelings such as those with which the Lord Jesus sang it, no one had ever joined in it; for the four psalms treated of himself, the true paschal lamb, and of his priesthood and mediatorship. His sufferings, conflicts, and triumphs, first gave to those psalms their full reality. The 115th Psalm praises the blessings of divine grace, for which a channel to our sinful world was to be opened by the Messiah's mediation. In Psalm 116 the Savior himself lifts the veil from off the horrible abyss of suffering to which he was to be

delivered up for sinners: "The Sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me," is its language. But the psalm also praises the glorious deliverance which he should experience after enduring those agonies—"You have delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." The 117th Psalm calls upon the nations to glorify the riches of divine grace with hallelujahs, which they were to derive from the atonement of the Divine High Priest. The 118th Psalm concentrates what had been previously testified—first, as regards the cross: "They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as a fire among thorns. You have thrust sore at me that I might fall." Then the Redeemer's confidence: "The Lord is my strength and my song.—The Lord is on my side, therefore will I not fear. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Then the deliverance: "I will praise you, for you have heard me, and are become my salvation." Then the redemption which resulted from the offering up of himself: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them and praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord (that is free of access), into which the righteous shall enter." And, finally, the victorious and all-subduing power of the kingdom of his grace upon earth: "The stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

These are all features in the portrait of the future Messiah, and references to what would befall him on earth, and to the work he would accomplish. And he, in whom all this was to be fulfilled, had now appeared, and his foot already trod the soil of this world. The Lord Jesus beheld his own image in the mirror of the words of prophecy generally, as well as in these passover psalms in particular; and he sang the sacred verses with the clear and full consciousness of his position as High Priest, Redeemer, and Mediator. After the singing he went out to the Mount of Olives. What great things depended upon this eventful and mysterious walk! We exclaim, "Earth, which he is about to rescue from the curse, salute his feet! Hell, against which he is buckling on his armor, tremble! Heaven, for which he is going forth to gain a new population, look down, and be

astonished at his amazing undertaking!"

He proceeds upon his path, and O how much is laid upon him at that moment! The guilt of thousands of years, the world's future—The salvation of millions! He goes in order, in his own person, to plant the seed-corn of a new heaven and a new earth, Alas! where should we have been going had he not traversed this path for us? Our lives would have been a progress to the place of execution; our future state would have ended in unquenchable fire. He knew this. That which he undertook stood every moment, in all its magnitude, present to his soul. But the glorious result of his undertaking was equally obvious to him. At every step he apprehended himself as being sent by the Father to close up the chasm which sin had caused between God and the creature, between heaven and earth.

The Savior walks onward in the silence and obscurity of the night, accompanied by his disciples, all of them deeply affected by the solemn transactions which had just taken place in the chamber at Jerusalem, and yet greatly cheered by the gracious words which had proceeded from the lips of their Divine Master, and which sounded in their ears as from the heavenly world. The Lord then breaks the thoughtful silence, and says, to the no small astonishment of his disciples, "All you shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.'"—Matt. 26:31. In these momentous and significant words our Lord indicates the point of view from which he contemplated his approaching sufferings. He is minutely acquainted with the anguish to be endured. "This night," says he. O, sacred night, from whose bosom the brightest morning-star of hope and consolation has risen upon us, although with a blood-red light! The Lord regards his passion as an unconditional necessity. Had he not viewed it as such, how easy would it have been for him to have withdrawn himself from it in the darkness of the night! But he voluntarily yields himself up to it; for, while saying, "This night," he is on his way, with a firm step, to the garden of Gethsemane, the first stage of his sufferings.

He perceives, most clearly, the end and object of his passion; "for," says he, "it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.'" These words are taken from Zech. 13:7, where

we read as follows: "Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of Hosts. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." The Lord explains this passage by his own words. Its chief import is, "I, the Lord of Hosts, will smite, with the sword of justice, my shepherd—the man that is my fellow, the Messiah; and the sheep of the flock—his disciples, friends, and followers—shall be scattered." "Thus it is written," says the Savior; and that which is written in the Book of God will come to pass.

The Lord Jesus now says expressly, that this prophecy was about to receive its fulfillment in him. He therefore represents himself as smitten of God, and for what cause, is sufficiently evident from other passages. He appeared in our stead as suffering and atoning for sin. In him, as Mediator, was realized the execution of the irrevocable sentence —"Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," for the honor of God, the restoration of the majesty of the law, and our own absolution and redemption.

It is thus, and in no other way, that the subject must be apprehended, or the entire history of the passion becomes an obscure labyrinth. It must be thus, or hundreds of passages stand before us as inexplicable enigmas. It must, or the horrible fate of the Holy One of Israel sounds like a shrill discord through the history of mankind, and renders questionable the very existence of a Divine Providence and government of the world. Thus it must be, or the Lord from heaven has sown seeds of error instead of truth; for he said, "That which is written will now be fulfilled in me: 'I will smite the Shepherd,' says the Lord of Hosts."

The Lord well knew what reason would object to this; he therefore said, "All you shall be offended because of me this night." Reason mistakes, and knows nothing of divine things, until the heart obtains an insight, a living insight, into its own necessities. Only become as anxious for salvation as Zaccheus, or the thief on the cross—how different will the words then sound in your ears, "I will smite the Shepherd." You will then know that the Almighty must smite. The judge in your own bosom tells you so, and your conscience, aroused from its deadly sleep, testifies the same. Whatever may be told you of God's universal kindness, mercy, and

love, you maintain that he must smite. So deeply and impressively is this written henceforth in your convictions, that even an angel from heaven could not persuade you otherwise. God is holy, just, and true, and you a rebel against him, a transgressor in his sight. You abide by this position, and already hear the thunder of his wrath rolling over your head; and nothing in the world can divest you of the idea that a satisfaction is required before you, as a sinner, can be saved. If, amid these feelings and convictions, you hear the words, "I will smite the Shepherd," O, how peaceful and blissful is their sound! What a happy change in your state! You do you seek for the Shepherd, who was smitten in your stead, and find him in the bleeding Surety of Gethsemane, on Gabbatha, and on the cross. You cleave to him with all the tenacity of your inmost reliance, and testify to every one who will hear you, that you would be destitute of comfort in life and death, if the Son of God had not judicially suffered in your room and stead. Experience daily shows that the Gospel seems foolishness to them who do not feel their need of it; that it manifests itself to be the power of God to the contrite in heart, and that knowledge of this nature does not proceed from the understanding, but solely from the heart, when enlightened by the Holy Spirit, under a feeling of its guilt. The natural man, as the Scriptures assert, knows not the things that are of God, neither can he understand them, because they must be discerned spiritually. He who takes offense at the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, only makes it evident, that however believing he may be in other respects, he at least possesses very shallow and superficial ideas of the nature and culpability of sin.

The words, thus quoted by our Lord, clearly manifest his consciousness of the true meaning of his sufferings. We therefore easily understand his exclamation, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished;" as well as his subsequent agonizing prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Doubtless, the love of the Father to his only-begotten Son never forsook him for a moment. Jesus continued the object of his supreme good pleasure and tenderest affection. But the experience and feeling of his Father's love was to be for a time withdrawn from him, and the consciousness of being forsaken of God was to take its place. He was to descend into the lower parts of the earth, and endure all the fiery assaults of Satan and his

infernal hosts, and it was at this that he shuddered and trembled. But through the gloom of these oppressive feelings, the dawning rays of a more cheering consciousness shed themselves gloriously upon him—the consciousness of the triumph that awaited him after the conflict. This the Lord Jesus also expresses in the words, "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

Admire here, first, the faithfulness of the good Shepherd. He had just told them expressly, that they should all be offended because of him that night. What tender forethought is here manifested! The offense was now unable to extend too far. When the sufferings of their Master commenced, they were able to say to themselves, "He knew what would befall him, and yet he voluntarily met his sufferings. It was, therefore, requisite for the accomplishment of his work, that he submitted to them."

But the Lord informs them further, that the Holy Scriptures and with them the will and counsel of God, were to be fulfilled in his sufferings. What a powerful support did he thus afford them against the days of sorrow—a support which alone was not able to sustain them, but which nevertheless secured their faith from a total shipwreck. He told them, in conclusion, that though the sheep of the flock would be scattered, yet they would continue his sheep, and not be cast off because of their unfaithfulness. This he stated to them when informing them, that after he should come forth triumphantly from all his sufferings, and have overcome death itself, he would again gather them around him in peace and joy. O what comfort did they derive from this, and what encouragement for their faith, in expectation of the hour, when, after being thus scattered, they should hear that he, who had been so shamefully forsaken by them, had again appeared victorious over all his foes! There was then no need for them to be afraid, but they were at liberty to resign themselves to the delightful hope that he would not reward them according to their deeds, but pardon everything, and lovingly re-assemble them around him. Thus did his parental care provide for them, not merely with reference to the present but also to the future, and prepared the way to prevent evil ensuing, and to bring them every needful blessing. O how secure we are, when once we intrust ourselves to his superintendence! It may happen occasionally, that we

may feel offended, no, even depart from him for a time, and follow our own ways; but he does not leave us long to go astray. He again seeks us out; for with respect to all his sheep, his words remain true, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

"But after I am risen again," says the Lord: he here looks with joyful confidence across the anxious sea of his approaching sufferings, to the subsequent triumph. He feels assured that he shall reach the opposite shore, where the crown of victory awaits him. He doubtless called to mind the ancient prediction, "When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall prolong his days." He who knows how to follow his steps, in thus laying hold of the divine promise, has discovered the secret how to cry out with joy, "Land! land!" in the midst of the surge, and to sing songs of victory in the heat of the conflict. Let us abandon, therefore, the anxious position in which we see only what is immediately before us, and are tossed about, like a ball, by the calculations of reason. Rather let us place our feet upon the lofty and immutable rock of the word and promises of God. How safely and pleasantly may we then abide, even when the gloom of night spreads itself around us, and the storm and tempest assail us! We are then conscious that the clouds, which cause us apprehension, cover only a part of our real heaven; for the distant horizon continues bright; and that which is still more remote, promises, after every night of sorrow, a day in which the sun will no more go down.

"But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Galilee is therefore the rendezvous, the land of reunion and meeting. Once there, he has no further cup of agony to drink, and his followers will no more be offended in him. He is then no longer the Man of Sorrows, but clothed in majesty and the victor's glory, he meets his beloved friends, and greets them with the salutation of peace.

"I will go before you into Galilee." Even for us, there is something in these words, if we are able to read between the lines. "After I am risen again." Assuredly, that resurrection for which we wait, will not tarry—the final elevation of his kingdom from its deep reproach—the manifestation of him, on whose head are many crowns, after his long envelopment in gloom. Perhaps the day will soon appear. When he shall have made his foes his footstool, have gathered his elect from the four winds, and bound

and shut up Satan in the bottomless pit—then shall we also remove to the Galilee of peace and joy, where we shall behold him, face to face, whom, having not seen, we love, and shall greet him with songs of rejoicing and rapture.

But though we may see the dawn of this period upon earth, yet we know another Galilee, where he has preceded us, and which probably lies nearer us than the former. I mean that Galilee, on the shores of which so many weary pilgrims daily cast anchor; that Galilee, where the hand of Jesus wipes away the last tears from the eyes of the favored new-comers; that Galilee, where the song is continually sung of "the Lamb that was slain," and of the blood in which our robes are washed and made white. O you Galilee above, you land of perfect union with him, who is the object of our love, how does the thought of you exalt and cheer our spirits, during our pilgrimage through this valley of tears! You Galilee beyond the clouds, how blessed is he, whom Jesus has preceded, in order to prepare a place for him on your ever verdant vales and sunny hills!

"Blessed, indeed," you respond, "if we were only sure of landing there at last." If you are not yet sure of it, my readers, delay not to let the Lord assure you of it. Every where, and at every hour, he inclines his ear to you, and especially where he spreads his sacred table for you. There, also, is a kind of Galilee, where he has preceded you, in order to meet with and bless you. Ah, he already waits for you with his mysterious elements of bread and wine. His word informs you that you shall also see him face to face, eventually; and he is willing now to favor you with a foretaste of this vision. Draw near, therefore, and receive grace for grace out of his fullness; be blissfully assured of his presence, and of his willingness to take you eventually to his heavenly home, where there is fullness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

The Converse by the Way

The apostle casts a profound look into the heart of Jesus, when he testifies concerning him, that "For the joy which was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame."—(Heb. 12:2.)

In our previous meditation, we saw the Lord, on that eventful night, when his sufferings commenced, courageously leaving Jerusalem, after singing the song of praise. What was it that enabled him to tread the path of suffering so serenely, except the joy which he had thus in prospect?

Think of the situation in which the Savior was placed. It may possibly have happened to some of my readers, that the apprehension of some great calamity suddenly presented itself to their minds, as vividly as if they were already realizing it. Thus it was also, that all the horrors which the Savior was about to experience, appeared to him in clearer outlines than any one ever regarded the future, and that not merely in the light of probability, but of certainty. But while in such seasons of painful anticipation, our minds and spirits are overwhelmed, the Lord on the way to Gethsemane, felt his heart enlarged; and through the gloomy visions which passed before him, found his way to the sunny height of perfect and joyful composure, while regarding the joy which afterward awaited him.

We left the Lord Jesus proceeding to the lonely garden, to which he was accustomed to resort, in the darkness and stillness of the night. His mind is occupied with the thought of his approaching death. His followers press more closely around him, as is usually the case when the moment of separation is at hand, and the grief of parting overwhelms the oppressed mind. Conversation becomes brief and monosyllabic, and long pauses of entire silence intervene. Jesus now opens his mouth. The thought of himself and his approaching sufferings retires into the background. That which affects him more deeply is his love for and care of his flock.

Addressing himself to Peter, who appears to be the most grieved, and who clings to him the closest, he says, while regarding him with melancholy seriousness, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."—(Luke 22:31). What language is this, rendered doubly appalling by the darkness, and the circumstances under which it is uttered! At the very moment when the disciples are to be deprived of their only help and shield, they are informed of the approach of the most dreadful of enemies. The Lord expresses himself strangely, and in a manner calculated to excite the greatest astonishment. "Satan," says he, "has desired to have you"—that is, he has challenged

you, laid claim to you, and begged to have you, that he might manifest his power in you, in order to prove that your goodness is nothing, and your conversion only specious and deceptive. And you know that the Lord occasionally permits the Wicked One to try his power to tempt the redeemed to a certain point. He does so, in order to prove to the infernal spirits the invincibility of those who confide themselves to him, and thereby to glorify his name; and also, that he may purify his children as gold in such a furnace of temptation, and draw those, who live no longer to themselves, deeper into the fellowship of his life.

It was an ordeal of this kind to which the disciples were now to be subjected. The murderer from the beginning had wagered, so to speak, that if liberty were given him, he would cause their entire apostasy, the weapons for which he expected to find in the infinite abasement and disgrace, which their Master was about to experience. But the latter is aware of the horrible design. He already sees the infernal vulture wheeling round the heads of his followers. He dares not conceal it from them, lest the assault could take them by surprise; and he therefore says to them emphatically, fixing his eye especially upon Simon, whom the adversary had principally in view, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

They are now aware of the adversary's design. O that they would take every syllable of this address to heart! Warning and comfort are here wonderfully mingled. "Like wheat," says he, "would they be sifted"—an operation which, as is well known, only scatters the chaff, while the noble grain remains. The result, therefore, is salutary. It will only be a cleansing and purifying—certainly not according to the devil's plan and design, but wholly through the intervention of divine grace. Those who are thus sifted overcome indeed, but only after being made painfully conscious of their own weakness; and hence they know more assuredly to whom their victor's crown in reality belongs.

But let us listen to the Lord Jesus further. He displays to us, still more deeply, the greatness of his affection. After uttering the appalling warning just mentioned, he looks kindly at his disciples, and, as if he would encourage them, he says to Simon, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." O where is there a faithful friend and guardian to be

compared to him? The Gospel narrative often conducts us to the scene of his acts and miracles, and not infrequently removes the veil from his more quiet converse with his beloved disciples, and reveals to us the sacred spots where he exercised his priestly office; but here it favors us with a look into the solitude of his closet. Scarcely was the Lord aware of the intended assault, especially upon Peter, than he sought retirement, and in prayer, commended the endangered disciple to the protection and preservation of his heavenly Father. And the object of his prayer was, that Simon's faith might not fail in the storm of temptation.

Do not, however, suppose that Simon alone was privileged above other believers, in being the object of such affectionate solicitude. Listen only to the Savior's intercessory prayer, in John 17, and you will be convinced of the contrary. Hear him exclaim, "Holy Father, keep, through your own name, those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are." "I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil." "I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me." Do not think that these sublime words have reference only to our Lord's immediate disciples; for, listen further—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you."

Thus has the faith, which the Holy Spirit produces in us, a pledge of endurance in our Lord's intercession. It may be assaulted, tried, and shaken, but cannot be extinguished or annihilated. Simon was given to know this, in order that he might be in possession of a sufficient weapon when assailed. But in case of his succumbing, this consciousness was to serve him as a staff, by means of which he might successfully leap over the abyss of despair.

"I have prayed for you," says our Lord, "that your faith fail not." He knows that Peter will fall. He already sees in him the faithless disciple who denied his Master; and yet he feels toward him only like a tender mother, in seeing her darling child in danger. The Savior's chief care is lest Simon should despair after his fall; and that, at the proper time, he should take courage to return to him. Hence, he says, with the kindest forethought, "And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." After your grievous fall, the Lord herewith permits you to return. After your unfaithfulness, you may again take comfort in your Good Shepherd, and regain his flock. No, you shall be still further empowered, for when you have returned to him, you shall strengthen your brethren; you shall continue his apostle, and, in future, feed his lambs.

But Simon does not appreciate the compassion shown by our Lord. At the moment, he is unconscious of the tenderness which dictated his words; he has no idea what they mean. He thinks he will never need a second conversion; for, in that case, he must first have apostatized, and says to himself, "the Master shall never have cause to think me an apostate." But though his Lord's words may, for a time, lie slumbering in his memory, the day will come when they will awake and prove an invaluable treasure. The Savior himself is not so bent upon seeing the immediate effect of his words as we are. He possesses patience and knows that every tree produces its fruit "in its season."

"When you are converted, strengthen your brethren." Scarcely are we able to cease listening to these words. It almost seems as if Simon would only become a real apostle after his fall. And such was really the case; for otherwise God would not have permitted it. The first and essential quality of a herald of the Gospel is ever a thoroughly broken and contrite heart. For it is only after having obtained mercy as guilty criminals, that we are in a position to "strengthen the brethren." After having ourselves vitally experienced that without Christ we can do nothing, but everything with him, we then become real evangelists, who no longer lay intolerable burdens upon the people, which we refuse to touch with a little finger, but meek and gentle like him, who came not to "break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax," but to "bind up the broken-hearted," and to "strengthen the feeble knees."

Simon does not enter into the spirit of our Lord's words. "Lord," he exclaims almost angrily, as if some false imputation had been cast upon him, "though all men should be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended. I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." How excellent, and yet how full of self-confidence! Nevertheless, a zeal for his Master flames forth from him, which I can only wish pervaded us likewise. No self-estimation is more tolerable and pardonable than that which is founded upon such a zeal for the Savior. O what were Peter's feelings during this nocturnal walk! How they warmed, glowed, and boiled within him! He had never before felt how much he loved his Master than just now, when the hour of parting approached. And at the very moment when his feelings were the most excited, he hears his Master express his fears lest he should prove unfaithful to him. What? thinks he—"That is surely an impossibility. Rabbi, do not mistake your disciple. Not even bonds or death shall divide me from you." A holy earnestness dictated these words; but ah! he promised too much!

"How so?"—You inquire with astonishment. "Had not Jesus prayed for him, that his faith might not fail?" Assuredly; and had Peter founded his confidence on this, he might have vowed unshaken fidelity even unto death. But Simon vaunted himself on his own strength, and meant to say, "My love is a pledge to you that I will not deny you;" and this was just his misfortune. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things;" and he who depends on sensations and feelings leans upon rotten supports. However spiritually rich and strong we may believe ourselves to be, let us never promise anything in self-dependence, nor ever plant our feet upon the waters until the Lord calls to us to come, and stretches out his helping hand toward us. But he who rests on the strong arm of Immanuel, and seeks strength from him, may say more boldly still than Simon, "Lord, I am ready to go with you, both to prison and to death!" The Lord will not put his faith to shame, but be a strong refuge for him in the midst of the storm.

Scarcely had Simon, in all simplicity, uttered his heroic assertion, than he receives a second warning from his Master's lips. The Lord now informs him plainly what threatens him: "I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before you shall thrice deny that you know me." What an alarm

do these words sound in Simon's soul! But the latter, in the warmth of his affection, repulses it. "Be not afraid of that," thinks he, "Your disciple will not deny you; he will die with you, if necessary, but will never deny you."

"The Lord foresaw that he would not think otherwise; then why give him the warning?" It was directed more to the restoration of the fallen, than to the invigoration of the combatant. After Peter had denied his Master, he could say to himself, "He told me beforehand what would occur. He saw it coming, and warned me. Although he perceived that I rejected his warning, yet he did not reject me, but spoke kindly and graciously to me as before." It was thus he was able to converse with himself, and in due time, to recover and encourage himself by the remembrance of his Master's words. The Lord appointed the cock to incite him to repentance, and by his morning call, at the proper time, to bring the fallen man again to himself, and cause him to shed tears of contrition. Thus the Savior's affectionate solicitude extended far beyond the temptation and the conflict; and prepared, beforehand, a remedy for the wounds occasioned by the fall and defeat. O with how much reason may he say, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you;" and how much occasion have we to exclaim, on thus looking into the depth of his affection, "His love is stronger than death!"

After the Lord had finished speaking to Simon, and arranged everything for the restoration of the zealous disciple, in the season of contrition and weeping, he turns to the disciples in general. They had now finished their years of tuition, and the time was at hand when they were to let their light shine in the darkness of this world, and in the midst of storm and pressure, tumult and strife, to unfurl the banner of the cross among the nations of the earth. Jesus is now going to tell them so; and he does it in such a kind, careful, tender, and affectionate manner, as to make one's heart rejoice. "He said unto them, when I sent you without purse, and bag, and shoes, lacked you anything?" The disciples cannot call to mind that they had ever been in want, and must cheerfully confess it to their Master's honor, by saying, "Lord, never!" The Lord had acted toward them as he generally acts toward his children whom, in the time of their first love, he leads very gently, and with parental care and kindness. Not only what they desire is granted them, but even the manner in which they

desire it; the intention being that they may thus accustom themselves to him, and may receive an indelible impression of the loveliness of his peaceful kingdom during their future journey through life, as well as to divest them of every doubt of their being really accepted and sharing in his affections.

It might be thought that after this declaration of his disciples our Lord would say, "Be not careful, therefore, in future, for such will always be the case." Instead of which, he tells them just the reverse, and that in future they would not infrequently find it otherwise. "But now," says he, with reference to the whole of their future course of life, "he who has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his bag. But he who has none—neither purse nor bag—let him sell his garment and buy a sword."

How are these words to be understood? Generally speaking, they announce to the disciples, that conflict, danger, distress, and manifold trials awaited them, for which they must timely prepare; but that they might then firmly confide in him, whom they had ever found a faithful friend in time of need. At the same time, he gives them clearly to understand that henceforth they must not rest too confidently on the same obvious and wondrous guidance which they had hitherto experienced, because their life would in future partake more of the common course of human affairs, and that the direct interposition, by means of which the hand of eternal love had hitherto sustained and provided for them, would give place to a more indirect divine aid, for which faith would be required. It would then be necessary, besides prayer and looking up to heaven, to apply the ordinary means of provision, defense, and aid. Let him who had a purse and a bag not cast them away, but take them, and make use of them. Manly resolution, foresight, and prudent calculation are no longer to be despised, but to be practiced and employed. No, he who had no sword ought to sell his garment and buy one.

Perhaps you suppose that by the latter our Lord meant a spiritual sword, the sword of the Word, or of faith. No, my readers, the Lord thinks as little of spiritual weapons, when he mentions the sword, as of spiritual traveling equipments when he speaks of the purse and the bag. Nor does he intend that his disciples should provide themselves with swords in the

literal sense of the words. His language is allegorical, and its meaning is, "Your future course and calling will lead you into situations and circumstances in which you will have to bear your souls in your hands, and to strive with firmness and resolution for your liberties and lives."

But then, as if the Lord had intended to say, "Be not astonished at that which I have just told you, for the disciple is not above his Master, and what is hostile to me, will also be so to you:" he reminds them that his own path would terminate in ignominy and suffering: "For I say unto you, that this that is written of me, must yet be accomplished in me, 'and he was reckoned among the transgressors,' for the things concerning me have an end." The Lord here refers to Isaiah, 53, particularly to the 12th verse of that chapter, and expressly testifies that what is written there of Jehovah's servant,—that he should bear the sin of many, make intercession for the transgressors, and by his obedience and vicarious sacrifice, justify and eternally redeem his people—is said of himself. He thus dispels every doubt respecting the only correct interpretation of that portion of Scripture. It treats of him, his person, work, and kingdom. He also affords his disciples a strong light upon the mysterious obscurity of his approaching passion; and, finally, points out to them that the way to the crown is by the cross, and that his people ought scarcely to expect a better fate, in this evil world, than himself, who would have to endure the accursed death of the cross, and to be numbered with transgressors, and accounted and rejected by the world as the offscouring of all things.

But what does our Lord mean by the words which immediately follow —"For the things concerning me have an end?" Certainly not what he had intended to convey in the words, "This that is written must yet be accomplished in me." The Lord there unmistakably refers to the warning previously given to his disciples; and the import of his language is threefold. He intends to say, in the first place, "You must not arm yourselves on my account, nor in my defense; for, as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundations of the world, I must patiently resign myself to the appointed sufferings, which are indispensable for your reconciliation to God." Next, "The measure of that agony on which your redemption depends is exhausted by my passion. You may, therefore, boldly go forward, as being by one offering forever perfected." And, lastly,

"Whatever you may have to suffer in future has nothing to do with your reconciliation to God, since that which had to be endured to atone for sin and to extinguish guilt, is laid upon and has an end in me. If you suffer, it is only for your purification, and while it does not become me, it is befitting for you to defend your lives and preserve them for my service, for the brethren, and, in case of need, to protect them by all legitimate means."

Such was our Lord's meaning, which, however the disciples do not comprehend, but explain it as a call upon them to protect him by force against his enemies, as Peter actually endeavored to do in the sequel. Under this idea, they show him the swords, with which two of them, including Simon, were armed, as was customary with wandering Galileans, and childishly, though with the best intention, say, "Lord, behold, here are two swords!" "It is enough," rejoined the Savior, breaking off mournfully—as if he had said, "Let us leave the matter for the present; you will better understand my meaning in the sequel."

THE HOLY PLACE

Gethsemane—Conflict and Victory

It is night. The Lord has left Jerusalem with his eleven confidential followers, fully aware of what awaits him. In deeply affecting converse he descends with them into the dark valley of cypresses, where once, during the reign of the kings, the fire blazed, in which the abominations of idolatry were consumed to the honor of Jehovah. Here he crosses the brook Kedron, over which his royal ancestor, King David, when fleeing from his son Absalom, passed barefoot and in sackcloth, deeply bowed down by his own guilt and that of his people. Affected by momentous recollections, and sunk in the contemplation of expressive types and shadows, the Savior arrives at the entrance of the garden of Gethsemane (the oil-press) at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where ancient gigantic olive-trees, to this day, point out to the pious pilgrim the very spot where the Lord of Glory wept over the misery of the human race, and prayed and agonized for their redemption. We know that the Lord frequently

retired to the solitude of that peaceful inclosure, after the heat and burden of the day, in order, by sacred converse with his heavenly Father, to strengthen himself anew for his great work. Luke expressly remarks that he went "as he was accustomed," to the Mount of Olives, but with feelings, such as on this occasion, he had never before entered that silent retreat.

The song of praise, with which he had left the friendly chamber at Jerusalem with his disciples, had long been ended. The conversation by the way seems, according to the concluding words, "It is enough!" to have assumed a more aphoristic and monosyllabic character than before. Longer pauses occurred. The Lord's solemnity increased the nearer they approached the end of their night-wandering; and it was evident that his soul became increasingly oppressed. Every one perceived the alteration in the Master's feelings; and, therefore, it did not seem strange to the disciples that, on arriving at the garden-gate, he should say to them, with deep emotion, "Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder." In the mildest possible form, he announces to those of his disciples who were to remain at a distance from the mysterious scene, the events which awaited him. With true parental kindness he seeks to prevent their being too much alarmed. "He would go yonder and pray." It was prayer for which he was preparing himself; but what a prayer! How clearly does he make it evident, by the preparatory measures he takes, that he regards, and wishes the conflict he is about to enter upon to be regarded, not as anything arising from within him, but as breaking in upon him from without! That which awaits him presents itself to him as impending over him. He sees it like a thunder-cloud brooding over his head.

The disciples, obedient to their Master's dictate, seat themselves at the entrance of the inclosure, while he himself, after beckoning to Peter, John, and James, his most confidential friends, to follow him, goes before them deeper into the interior of the garden. It is of importance to him, for the sake of his future Church, to have eye-witnesses of that solemn scene. He is also incited to take the three disciples with him, by the purely human feeling of the need of affectionate and comforting fellowship in his approaching conflict. How beneficial it is, in seasons of trial, to be surrounded by like-minded friends, who watch and pray with us, and

impart to us valuable encouragement from the Word of God and their own spiritual experience! How the conflict may thus be rendered easy and sweet; while solitude is accustomed to increase the feeling of horror, and to open the gates of imagination to terrific ideas, in addition to the distress which really exists. Christ was not a stranger to any purely human feeling of necessity. He was made in all things like unto us, but without sin.

The voice which resounded through the garden of Eden, cried "Adam, where are you?" but Adam hid himself trembling, behind the trees of the garden. The same voice, and with a similar intention, is heard in the garden of Gethsemane. The second Adam, however, does not withdraw from it, but proceeds to meet the High and Lofty One, who summons him before him, resolutely exclaiming, "Here am I!" Let us follow him into the nocturnal gloom. But what awe seizes upon us! The beings we there meet are well known to us; but how is their appearance changed! All is enveloped in mysterious obscurity, and the distress of our hearts increases every moment at the sight.

It is the Eternal Father himself who here presides; but what is left for us, in his presence, except to exclaim with Job, "Behold, God is great, and we know him not, and darkness is under his feet!" His only and supremely beloved Son appears before him in a position which might melt the flinty rock to pity; but compassion seems a stranger with him, who yet said to Zion, "Though, a woman may forget her nursing child, yet will I not forget you!" We are tempted to break out with David into the piteous cry, "Has God forgotten to be gracious, and is his mercy clean gone forever?" For look, what a scene! Again and again does the Son of Love cast himself on his Father's bosom, with ardent supplication; but his ear listens in vain for a favorable Amen! from on high. There is neither voice, nor response, nor attention, as if the Eternal had in wrath retracted his words, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, you shall glorify me!" and had no longer a heart for him, who lay in his bosom, before the foundation of the world. The cup of horror does not pass from the trembling sufferer; on the contrary, its contents become every moment more bitter. Louder sound the complaints of the agonizing Savior; more urgent becomes his prayer but the Lofty One is silent and heaven seems

barred as with a thousand bolts. A holy angel, indeed, at length approaches; but why an angel only, instead of the immediate and consoling vision of the Father? Does it not almost seem like irony that a creature should be sent to strengthen the Creator? And what kind of invigoration was that which was only attended with an increase of suffering? For we read, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." O the horrors of that hour, when Jesus, our Surety, appeared at the bar of Divine Justice, and paid the penalty for us sinners, that we might escape!

But now let us fix our eyes upon the suffering Savior. Scarcely do we know him again, so enveloped is he in an impenetrable covering of agonizing mystery and contradiction. He is the man beheld in spirit by Jeremiah, and described in the words, "His heart is turned within him, and all his members quake." He is the desolate individual, who testifies of himself in the Psalms, "I am a worm, and no man." He announced himself as the Redeemer of the world, and yet, who seems to require deliverance more than he? He bears the sublime title of "Prince of Peace;" yet where ever was there one more destitute of peace than he? See how he applies at one time to his Father, and at another to mere human beings for comfort to his desponding soul, and does not find what he seeks, but is compelled to return disappointed and trembling. His eye is filled with tears, his lips with cries and complaints, while his heart is crushed as in a wine-press, which forces a bloody sweat from all his veins. Is this the hero, who was once the strength of the weak, the comfort of the sorrowful, the support of the feeble, and the shield of the combatant? Is this the Holy One of Israel, who formerly was prepared for everything, and joyfully exclaimed, "Lo, I come to do your will, O my God! yes, your law is within my heart." I ask again, Who recognizes, in this most wretched of men, the incarnate Son of God; and who perceives in this bruised reed and trembling worm, the "Fairest of the children of men?"

And now look also at his disciples, who fill up the measure of these incomprehensible things; while their Master is struggling with death in indescribable agony, we see, even the most select of the little troop, lying on the ground, overpowered with sleep. He rouses them, and almost supplicates them to watch with him only a little while; but they slumber

again, as if unconcerned about him, and leave their Master to his sufferings. One of their number is he who said, "Though all should be offended with you, yet will not I, though I should die with you!" Another is the beloved disciple, who once lay on Jesus' bosom, and the third is he who formerly answered so resolutely in the affirmative to the question, "Can you drink of the cup of which I shall drink, and be baptized with the baptism, with which I am baptized?" Behold here the little dependence to be placed on human fidelity! One only is faithful, and on him alone can we, in every case, rely; and he never slumbers nor sleeps, when his people are distressed. But how could the disciples sleep during that awful scene? we may well inquire; but must we not suppose that it was out of the natural course of things? Does not the idea of an influence, exercised by infernal powers, force itself upon us? See how we are enveloped with horrors in Gethsemane; like terrific and feverish dreams in a waking state, or like spectral and delusive phantoms in a delirious condition.

But let us contemplate this mysterious conflict in Gethsemane a little more closely. Scarcely had Jesus, with his three disciples, penetrated a few paces into the garden, when "he began"—therefore before their eyes, "to be very sorrowful and very heavy." In these words, the history gives us a hint that something unheard of before, now came over him. At the same time, it intimates that the distress which seized him was voluntarily endured by him, after due preparation. Indescribable melancholy took possession of his soul; mysterious apprehension oppressed his mind. Mark, according to his peculiar manner of depicting the awful scene, more in detail, gives us a clearer idea of the Savior's distress, by saying, "He began to be sore amazed." He makes use of a word in the original which implies a sudden and horrifying alarm at a terrific object. The Evangelist evidently intends to intimate thereby that the cause of Jesus' trembling must be sought, not in what might be passing in his soul, but in appearances from without which forced themselves upon him; something approached him which threatened to rend his nerves, and the sight of it to freeze the blood in his veins.

Immediately after the first attack of agony, Jesus returns to his three disciples, with words which cast a strong light upon his inmost state of mind. He says, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

Assuredly the import of this complaint is not confined to the idea expressed by, "I am grieved to death," or "sorrow threatens my life;" although the words certainly assert this in the first place. Even according to this explanation of them, they convey an idea of the sorrows of the Redeemer's soul, which is the more appalling the less exaggeration we can suppose in the words of him who was himself the Truth. The being "sorrowful, even unto death," however, does not indicate merely the measure, but also the nature and kind of suffering. We read in the sequel, that "he was in an agony," or, as other translators have it, "he wrestled with death." It was in the horrors of this state that our Surety felt himself placed—not merely in the way of beholding them, but also in that of a mysterious entering into them. Whatever men may say, without holding firmly by the idea of a mediator, the horrors of Gethsemane can never be satisfactorily explained. A mere representation of the death of the sinner, from which Christ came to redeem mankind, could not have laid hold of the Holy One of Israel so overpoweringly. He entered into much closer contact with "the last enemy." He emptied the cup of its terrors.

Observe now to what a height his distress increases. With the candid confession, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," he hastens back to his three friends, like one who, in his feebleness, welcomes even the slightest support and consolation, and speaks to them no longer like a master to his servants, but like one who is oppressed and in need of comfort, to his brethren who may possibly be able to afford him help. "Tarry you here," he says, "and watch with me." He means, "Do not leave me, your presence is a comfort." It is not they but himself, who is to be pitied.

"Tarry you here." In what terrific vicinity must he have found himself, that even the sight of these poor, frail disciples, seemed so desirable and beneficial to him. "Tarry you here." How could he have besought them in this manner, if he had seen heaven open above him, and had felt that he was lying on his Father's bosom? "Watch with me." This expression points out still more minutely the distress of his soul; for, though intended to serve as a warning to his disciples, to be upon their guard in this hour of temptation; yet he claims, at the same time, their sympathy for himself, and requests their compassion, possibly, even their

intercession. Certain it is, that the Lord Jesus was never in a state of deeper humiliation, either before or afterward, than here in the garden of Gethsemane.

Scarcely had he uttered these words to his disciples, when he tore himself from them, and proceeded about a stone's throw into the recesses of the garden. Here we see him sinking on the ground, first upon his knees, and then on his face, and the supplicating cry now forces itself, for the first time, from his deeply agitated soul, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto you, take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will." Yes, he would gladly have been spared the cup which was given him to drink, the contents of which were so horrible; for it is not a senseless stone, but a real man, susceptible of every painful feeling, that suffers within him. He wishes its removal, however, simply on the condition which is invariable with him, that it should be in accordance with his Father's counsel and will. He says, "If it be possible;" he does not, however, mean this in the general sense, for he had already said, "All things are possible unto you;" but he thinks only of a conditional possibility, within the limits of the object for which he had appeared in the world.

But it may be asked, "How can Christ still inquire whether the redemption of mankind can be accomplished without the cross and the shedding of his blood?" This, however, is not his object. The Lord's question confines itself to the present horrors—the cup of Gethsemane. Let this circumstance, therefore, again remind us that the self-renunciation of the Son of God essentially consisted in his divesting himself, to a certain point, of the use of his divine perfections generally, and of his unlimited omniscience in particular; in consequence of which he was in a position to walk in the same path of faith with us, and, according to the expression of the apostle, to "Learn obedience by the things which he suffered."

The prayer of the divine sufferer knocked at the door of the divine audience-chamber with all the force of holy fervor and filial resignation, but no echo greeted his ear. Heaven maintained a profound silence. The suppliant, then rising up with increased anguish from the ground, hastens again to his disciples, but finds them—how inconceivable!—sunk

in deep sleep. He hastily awakens them, and says with mournful earnestness to Peter, first of all—"Simon, sheep you? Could you not watch one hour?" An overwhelming question for the presumptuous disciple, whose mouth had just before been so full of assertions of fidelity even unto death. He then addresses this solemn warning to the whole three —"Watch you, and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

That which led him back to the disciples this time, beside the need he felt of consolation for his agitated soul, was his ardent affection for them, who, like himself, were surrounded by dangerous and infernal powers. "The hour of darkness," to which he had referred in a warning manner on a previous occasion, had arrived. The prince of this world had appeared on the stage in complete armor. Hell saw every barrier to its devices removed. The mysterious stupefaction and inability of the disciples manifests the baneful influence of the atmosphere they breathe. It was, therefore, necessary that they should summon up all the powers of their mind and spirit in order not to succumb to the temptation to offense, unbelief, and apostasy. For the expression, "enter into," signifies here the being entangled in the snares of temptation. The injunction to "Watch," includes in it an alarming call to vigilance and foresight against a misapprehension of the threatened danger. The exhortation to pray is an imperative note of preparation, a direction to the armory of Jehovah, and an invitation to the source of all help and strength—the grace of God. The words, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," must not be explained as an excuse for the slumberers, but be regarded as an additional reason for the warning he addresses to them. The Lord intends to say, "Do not trust to your pious resolutions. Your sinful and easily ensnared nature needs much stronger restraint, especially when baneful influences from without are superadded."

The Lord again returns to the deeper shade of the garden, and prays a second time in a somewhat altered form—"O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, your will be done!" One of the evangelists mentions that he prayed "more earnestly this second time." He does not mean that he urged his suit to be spared more importunately than before; but that, on the contrary, as soon as he perceived from the

silence of his heavenly Father, that his petition was refused, he strove, with an increased expenditure of strength, to enter still more deeply into the obedience of faith. Meanwhile his inward horror continued to increase.

After rising up from prayer, he again sought his disciples, but found them still sleeping—"Sleeping for sorrow," as the narrative informs us; and my readers may probably have themselves experienced how grief and dejection can paralyze and bind the animal spirits; "for their eyes were heavy." And on being awoke, "they know not," in their stupor, "what to answer him."

The Lord withdrew a third time into solitude, and prayed the same words. An angel now descends to the suppliant Savior, and approaches him in order to "strengthen him." This sudden appearance of a heavenly being must, in itself, have afforded the Lord no small comfort, after his mental imprisonment in the sphere of sinful men and lost spirits. What the radiant messenger brought the divine sufferer, was not, however, the news that his Father was willing to grant his petition for exemption from the cup of suffering; but, if he came with any message at all, it was only the express intelligence that the plan of salvation did not admit of its removal. The probability, however, is, that the mission of the angel was only intended to strengthen his exhausted frame, and revive his fainting spirit, which had been shaken to their center, in order that in the last and most painful part of the conflict, the body, at least, might not succumb. For immediately after the return of the angel, "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." What a spectacle! It is asserted only of one individual, Charles IX. of France, whose conscience was burdened with the massacre of the Protestants on the eve of St. Bartholomew, that on his deathbed, under the accusations of the inward monitor, he literally sweat blood in the anguish of his soul. What a parallel between the murderer of thousands of Christ's flock, and Christ the Holy One himself! Who is not horrified at the contrast; but to whom does it not at the same time afford a dawning apprehension of the nature and importance of Immanuel's sufferings, and shed a degree of light upon the darkest and most terrific moment of the conflict in Gethsemane?

Let us refer, once more, to that mysterious prayer at which the world is so often inclined to stumble. It has been found difficult to make it agree with the Lord's love to mankind, with his submission to his Father's will, with his omniscience, and with his previous composure and resolution in announcing the sufferings that awaited him, that he could suddenly desire to be freed from these sufferings. And when, to objections of this kind, it is answered that the soul of Jesus, during the conflict in Gethsemane, must be supposed to have been involved in a state of gloomy obscurity, in accordance with the divine will—it is rejoined that the perspicuity and fervor with which he addressed God as his Father, both before and after, by no means leave us to infer such a state of darkness. Inexplicable enigmas and contradictions seem to accumulate upon us here; but the obscurity will pass away, if we consider what follows.

First, as regards the objection derived from our Lord's omniscience, we repeat what we have formerly stated. The self-renunciation of the Eternal Son consisted essentially in this, that during his sojourn on earth, he divested himself of the unlimited use of all his divine attributes, and leaving that eternity, which is above time and space, he entered upon an existence circumscribed by time and space, in order that he might tread the path of the obedience of faith, like ourselves, and perfect himself in it as our Head, High Priest, and Mediator. As "the Servant of Jehovah," which title is applied to him in the Old Testament, it was his part to serve, not to command; to learn subjection, not to rule; to struggle and strive, but not to reign in proud repose above the reach of conflict. How could this have been possible for one who was God's equal, without this limitation of himself? All his conflicts and trials would then have been only imaginary and not real. He did not for a moment cease to be really God, and in the full possession of every divine perfection: but he abstained from the exercise of them, so far as it was not permitted by his heavenly Father.

Observe, secondly, that the Lord, in Gethsemane, does not pray to be delivered from his impending sufferings generally but only for the removal of the horrors he was then enduring. How could he desire anything contrary to the counsel of God, who, when his disciples had

exhorted him against thus giving himself up to suffering, rebuked them so severely? He only asks, if it be possible for the cup to pass from him; and means that cup alone, whose bitterness and horrors he was then tasting.

That Christ, in his conflict, still acknowledges God as his Father, had nothing strange in it, and does not contradict the assumption that in Gethsemane he emptied the cup of divine judgment for our sins. For it is one thing to know God as his Father, only by faith, and another to feel him present in his paternal capacity, and experience him in the enjoyment of his favor and affection. The Spirit of Jesus, in its grievous conflicts, certainly always struggled through all opposition to the comfortable consciousness of Sonship; but what his human soul experienced, was only curse, estrangement, and rejection.

Finally, the doubt whether the urgency of Christ's prayer stands in accordance with his love to sinners, as well as with his submission to his Father's counsel, is completely destitute of foundation. The love of Jesus as well as his obedience, celebrate, in Gethsemane, their most brilliant triumphs. He only asks his Father whether, without infringing upon the work of redemption, this cup might pass from him. That he has only this conditional possibility in view, and does not claim the divine omnipotence in general for his rescue, he clearly shows by that which precedes his question. "Father," says he, "to you all things are possible;" by which he intends to say, "I well know that my conflict shall end at your pleasure; "but will you be able to will its termination without thereby frustrating the redemption of sinners? If not, then refuse my request; I will then drink the cup to the dregs."

His obedience to his Father resembles his love to him. The invariable language of his heart was, "Not as I will, but as you will." If the sinless weakness of the will of his human soul strove against it, the will of his Spirit immediately laid hold of it, and overpowered it with the feeling of the most decided resignation, which exclaimed, "Father, your will be done, not mine!" This cry had indeed to be wrung from resisting nature in her distress; and like a vessel in a storm, which steers firmly and undeviatingly, according to the direction of the needle, toward its port, yet not in so direct and equable a course as during a calm: so the will of

Christ's Spirit entered into the will of God. As long as the unconditional necessity of the cup of suffering was still in question, his heart was tossed to and fro like the surging sea. But as soon as he became assured, by the continued silence of his heavenly Father, that the world could not be otherwise redeemed than by his completely emptying this cup: he did not permit the wish to avoid the suffering to be heard again; but with the words, "My Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, your will be done!" He accomplished the great sacrifice of the most unreserved, filial, and willing resignation of his whole self to the counsel and determination of his heavenly Father.

The cup of horror has been emptied to the very dregs. Our Lord raises himself up from the dust, and hastens back to his disciples. The whole manner of his behavior, tone, and deportment is now essentially changed, and indicates encouragement, manliness, and consciousness of victory. We behold him coming forth triumphantly from the conflict, and armed and prepared for all that is to follow. "Sleep on, now, and take your rest," he begins to say with mournful and reproving seriousness, "It is enough." "For my sake"—is his meaning—"you need no longer watch; I require your assistance no more. My conflict is ended."

But what means the addition, "It is enough?" What else than "Your slumbers will now cease of themselves?" The words that immediately follow require this explanation. "The hour is come; behold the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." He intends by these words to say, "The body is now concerned, and your liberty is at stake; who will think any longer of sleeping under such circumstances? He knows what hour has struck. Not without a degree of apprehension, but still perfect master of his feelings, he courageously prepares for being delivered into the hands of sinners, with whom, by this expression, he evidently contrasts himself as the Holy One.

"Rise up!" says he at the close, expressive of the valorous resolution which his language breathed. "Let us go," continues he, "Lo, he who betrays me is at hand!" What a momentous appeal is this! The champion of Israel goes forth to attack and overcome, in our stead, death, hell, and the devil, in their strongest holds. Let us adoringly bow the knee to him and accompany him with hallelujahs.

Thus, has the most mysterious scene the world ever witnessed passed before us in all its affecting circumstances; and which of my readers has not felt that to solve its enigmas, the keys which human science puts into our hands are insufficient. In no earthly martyrdom is there anything which remotely corresponds with the conflict in Gethsemane. It is obvious, on the contrary, that in treating of it, we have to do with sufferings which are unique in their kind. I might however, observe that the antithetical obscurity of the conflict places itself in light and splendor before us, as soon as it reaches its culminating point. It is only by the guiding clue of these ideas, that we find our way out of the labyrinth. If we believingly follow that clue, which is not drawn by the arbitrary will of man, but is put into our hands by the word of God, we shall discover the source of our eternal peace, where, at the commencement, nothing but horror and distress took possession of us; and shall joyfully finish, by ascribing thanksgiving, and blessing, and praise unto him, who endured such great things for us.

Gethsemane—Import and Result

The apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, concerning the priesthood of Jesus Christ, expresses himself in a remarkable manner, when he says in chap. 5:7, 8, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared: though he were a Son yet learned he obedience from the things that he suffered."

The apostle has evidently reference here to the conflict in Gethsemane, and expressly designates what the Lord Jesus endured and accomplished there, as sacrificial. According to the apostle's view, the Lord there struggled in the agonies of death; and he represents the deliverance from death as the object of his supplications. But the death with which the divine sufferer strove, could not be that which delivers the soul from the prison of the body: but only that the power over which is possessed by the devil, and which, while separating mankind from fellowship with God, weighs upon them as the curse and wages of sin.

The apostle says, Christ was "heard in that he feared"—that is, was delivered from the fear and horror of God. It follows of course, that this fear must not be understood as godly fear or filial reverence; but as horror and terror at the majesty of the Thrice Holy One in the heavens; for the being heard, can only have reference to this fear. But the Father's "hearing" was experienced only after Christ, by his sufferings, had learned obedience—that is, when he uttered the words, "Father, not as I will, but as you will," and had, without reserve, accepted the cup from him. In the midst of strong crying and tears, the Lord offered himself up as the Lamb which, as the representative of a sinful world, presented himself at the bar of divine judgment. For as Isaiah says, "He was taken from prison and from judgment."—Chap. 53:8.

I confess that whenever I am called upon to treat of the sacred mysteries of Gethsemane, I cannot divest myself of a certain degree of awe. I feel as if there stood at the gate of that garden a cherub, who, if not with a flaming sword, yet with a repelling gesture refused admittance, and emphatically repeated our Lord's injunction to tarry outside, while he retires to pray. A feeling always seizes me, as if it were unbecoming to act as a spy on the Son of the living God in his most secret transactions with his heavenly Father; and that a sinful eye ventures too much in daring to look upon a scene in which the Lord appears in such a state of weakness and abandonment that places him on the same footing with the most miserable among men. Besides, I know that I am expected to introduce the reader into depths which make the head turn giddy to look down upon; to solve enigmas, the complete deciphering of which I must despair of on this side of eternity; to explain mysteries, for the unsealing of which, my own soul vainly languishes; and to draw aside veils, which, as often as I attempt it, seem the more to thicken. But the Gospel brings the mysterious narrative before us for consideration, and hence it is incumbent upon us to enter into its sacred gloom, and seek to comprehend as much of it as human apprehension is capable of.

The events in the garden of Gethsemane, with their scenes of horror, have passed in review before us. If we are not entitled to regard the position in which we find the Savior there, as altogether extraordinary, superhuman, and singular; we should do better to close the gate of that enclosure, and

withdraw the Holy One of Israel from the eyes of the world, if we wish to save his honor, and that of his Father. If, in Gethsemane, we have to do with Jesus only as a prophet or teacher, his office, as such, there suffered the most complete shipwreck; since we cannot then avoid the conclusion, that he must, himself, have been at fault with regard to his doctrine, and have lost the courage to die for it. If he is to be regarded in Gethsemane only as the model of unconditional resignation to God; we must say that he scarcely attained even to this; since Stephen and many other martyrs have appeared infinitely greater than the trembling Jesus, with his bloody sweat and agonizing prayer that the cup might pass from him. If we are to look upon Jesus only as a man desirous, by his example, of sealing the truth that in the time of distress, the Lord God is near his people with his help and consolation—the question again recurs, where does such a tranquilizing fact appear; since the very opposite shows itself, and the holy sufferer languishes from being forsaken of God? If, finally, he must be viewed as a proof of that overcoming peace which never departs from the just, but accompanies him in every season of distress: we look around us in vain, even for such a testimony; for instead of peace, a horror seizes upon the Holy One of God, like that of a guilty malefactor, which renders him restless and fugitive, and even gives him the appearance of one who is on the brink of despair.

We must, therefore, have to do, in Gethsemane, with something essentially different to what I have just mentioned, or Gethsemane becomes the grave of the Lord's glory. If he were fighting a battle, only similar to that which every martyr for the kingdom of heaven has fought before and since—the scholars are then superior to their Master, and the latter is thrown by them far into the shade. All belief in the government of a holy and righteous God in the world, must be stamped as a delusion, if, in the suffering of Jesus, we apply no other criterion than that of an ordinary testing and purifying trial. Heaven must fall, the order of the divine government be annihilated, and Christianity be forever destroyed, if the Holy Scriptures compel us to regard the cup, which Jesus drank, as essentially the same as that of which Job, Jeremiah, Paul, and many others partook.

Know, however, that the combatant in Gethsemane loses nothing in our

esteem by his being "sore amazed and very heavy;" nor are we mistaken in him, in whatever degree he may seem to have lost his self-possession. We do not stumble at seeing him tear himself loose from his disciples, with the violence of one beside himself, and then, prostrate in the dust, hear him mournfully exclaim, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death! "Even his thrice uttered anxious petition, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" and his taking refuge with his weak disciples, as well as his requesting them to watch with him one hour for his consolation—no, even the bloody sweat, which flowed from his veins, and dropped from his sacred body to the ground—however much we may feel astonished, whatever sorrow it may cause our hearts, and however deeply it may horrify us—it does not make us take offense, nor cause our faith to suffer shipwreck. In our view, brilliant stars shine over the darkness of Gethsemane. We possess the key to its mysteries and the depth of its horrors; and we find it in the sentiment, which, in every variety of form, pervades the whole Bible: "God has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." As long as Christ's position, as Mediator, is not acknowledged, the events in Gethsemane will continue a sealed mystery. Every attempt to explain them, otherwise than by the fundamental article of his vicarious mediation, must be forever unavailing. Only through the light which it affords us, is everything rendered clear and intelligible to us in that appalling scene. The most striking contradictions are then reconciled, and that which is the most strange and apparently incomprehensible, disappears, and seems perfectly natural. The divine sufferer in Gethsemane must be regarded, not as that which he is abstractedly, but in his mysterious relation to sinners. He here appears as "the second Adam," as the Mediator of a fallen world, as the Surety, on whom the Lord "laid the iniquities of us all."

Three causes lay at the basis of Jesus' mental sufferings—the one more awful than the other. His agony was caused, first, by his horror of sin, by amazement at the abominations of our misdeeds, and by penitential conflict. The transgressions, which were divinely imputed to him, that he might suffer for them as the representative of sinners, crowd into the sphere of his vision in the most glaring light. He beholds them very differently to the view taken of them by man in his darkened state. They

present themselves, to his holy eyes, in their naked deformity, in their unutterably abominable nature, and in their soul-destroying power. In sin, he sees apostasy from the Almighty, daring rebellion against the Eternal Majesty, and base revolt against the will and law of God; and surveys, at one view, all the horrible fruits and results of sin, in the curse, death, and endless perdition. How was it possible that the pure and holy soul of Jesus, at the sight of such horrors, should not tremble and shudder, and be seized with a nameless abhorrence, of which we, who are so deeply infected by sin, have no conception? Only imagine personified holiness placed in the midst of the pool of the world's corruption! May it not be supposed, how a sinless messenger sent to him from the Father, needed only to enter into such a horrible sphere of vision, in order, by his mere appearance, greatly to comfort and refresh the Savior?

But do not let us conceal it from ourselves, that the sore amazement and heaviness, which the Savior experienced in Gethsemane, would still remain an inexplicable mystery, were we not permitted to conceive of him as standing in a still nearer relation to our sins than that of merely beholding them. We not only may do so, but are even compelled to it by the Scriptures. The assertion is true, that the Redeemer as Mediator, would only have been able to suffer the punishment due to our sins, by having a consciousness of them. The personal feeling of guilt—that worm in the marrow of life—certainly renders punishment what it is, and forms its peculiar essence and focus. But if the doctrine of the satisfaction rendered by Christ is opposed on the ground that he was holy, and that, therefore, it was a contradiction and an impossibility for him to have inwardly felt the condemning sentence of the law like a criminal—those who do so would become guilty of a very hasty and presumptuous procedure. They would then be overlooking the supernatural and mysterious union, into which the God-man and second Adam entered with us, as our Head, and by which he received into himself—not our sinfulness, for he remained immaculate as before—but our consciousness of guilt, together with its terrors. You ask how this was practicable? Something corresponding with it, though in a remote degree, may be met with, even in our human affinities and relations. Natural affection and consanguinity are able to establish sympathies, in consequence of which a father may take his son's faults and improprieties to heart, or a friend

those of his friend, in such a manner as to be compelled to sigh, mourn, humble himself with brokenness of heart, and wrestle with God for mercy on account of them, as if they were his own. Now, imagine to yourselves, if you are able, apart from his mystic union with our sinful race, the energy of love and sympathy with which Christ immersed himself in us and our guilty state, and you will more easily conceive how, though supremely holy in himself, he could feel our guilt as his own. Add also to this, that supernatural connection which, in its mysterious depths, is unfathomable by all human thought, by which he was incorporated, as a graft, into the stem of humanity, with which he became identified, and the doctrine that the Savior took the consciousness of our guilt upon him in another and more intimate manner than that of a mere objective representation, will no longer appear unreasonable. You will now comprehend how the Psalmist could exclaim, concerning the Messiah: "My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head;" nor any longer wonder at Christ's behavior in Gethsemane. The mystery of his horror, amazement, and dismay is solved. His anguish in the garden is the distress occasioned by sin, the pangs of contrition, and the terror at the judicial majesty of the holy God, endured in our names, and tasted in our stead. It is repentance —a repentance commensurate with the greatness of our sin, and which, in his priestly capacity, he offers for us to the Eternal Father.

Besides the abominable nature of sin, the Lord experiences its curse; and in this we perceive the second explanatory cause of the terrors of Gethsemane. He feels himself as a culprit before God. All that is implied in being separated from God, deprived of his favor, estranged from his affection, and a child of wrath, he feels as deeply, inwardly, and vitally, as if he himself were in that situation. He descends the gradations of such feelings into the distress of the damned, and into those infernal horrors where the prophetic lamentations in Psalm 22 find their fulfillment: "Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaves to my jaws, and you have brought me into the dust of death." He is only able, by naked faith, to struggle through the flood of opposite impressions and feelings, to the consciousness that God is still his Father as before. His soul is unconscious of God's gracious presence, and tastes only the pain and

distress of abandonment. Alas! the sight of his Father's smiling face was his heaven; the consciousness of paternal favor, his entire felicity. But he now beholds it enveloped in gloomy clouds; and instead of intimate nearness, he experiences only a feeling of distance on the part of God. But he was not to be spared these bitterest drops in our "cup of trembling," in order that the words of prophecy might be fulfilled in him: "He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."—(Isaiah 53:4). Even the heavenly peace of his heart belonged to the things which it was necessary for him to sacrifice as the ransom for our souls. Can we, therefore, feel surprised that when his sufferings rose to this state of inward abandonment, the inquiry as to the possibility of the removal of the cup should, with still stronger effort, be wrung from his soul?

The third cause of our Lord's bitter distress in Gethsemane, is to be sought in the world of fallen spirits. It is beyond a doubt that Satan essentially contributed to the horrors of that scene. The Lord himself intimates as much in the words, "The prince of this world comes," and "This is the hour and the power of darkness." And his repeated call to his disciples, when overcome by gloomy slumber, to watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation, places it beyond question in what kind of society and atmosphere they were at that moment. The infernal powers have been let loose upon the Divine Redeemer. They are permitted to array against him all their cunning, might and malice. If they are able to drive the soul of the Holy One of Israel to despair, they are at liberty to do so. It is in their power to distress and torment him to death, for no one hinders them. They may try him as much as they please, no one stands by him to help him. He must look to it, how he can maintain his ground. What I am saying sounds horribly; but he who voluntarily endured the punishment due to us, was not permitted to escape being given up to the assaults of the powers of darkness. What the latter did to him is not expressly mentioned; but it is certain that they assailed him in the most fearful manner, and strove, with terrific visions, which they conjured up before him, with revolting blasphemies, which they poured into his ear, and with lying suggestions, to induce him to suspect the conduct of his father toward him, and tortured him with insidious dissuasions from the work of human redemption. Suffice it to say that our Lord's faith, as well as his patience, fidelity, and perseverance in the work he had undertaken,

were never put to a fiercer ordeal than under the fiery darts of the "Wicked One," which he endured in Gethsemane. Here the complaints of the Psalmist, in Psalm 18, were realized: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about, the snares of death prevented me."

Thus has the night of Gethsemane become light to us, although that light be glimmering. The connection between that scene of horrors and the garden of Eden, of which it is the awful antitype, is unmistakable. While in paradise the first Adam reposed in the lap of Divine Love, and, like a child at home, held peaceful converse with Jehovah and his holy angels, we see, in the garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam sinking in agony to the ground, under the oppressive burden of guilt, languishing, forsaken of God, and horrified in the company of dark and infernal spirits. How evident it is, from this contrast, that what was transgressed and violated in the former, was suffered and compensated for in the latter; and how loudly does the narrative itself testify to the truth, that Christ suffered in the character of a satisfying surety, and an atoning representative!

After having thus developed the mystery both of the causes and nature of Christ's suffering in Gethsemane, so far as we have been enabled so to do, let us now inquire into the blessed result which has accrued to us from them. For this purpose it is necessary that we should apprehend the conflict in Gethsemane, not in the abstract, but in its inseparable connection with the whole of Christ's mediatorial sufferings. We see, however, in every single stage of our Savior's passion, some particular part of the salvation he accomplished brought before us in a clear and obvious light; and, accordingly, as we find ourselves placed in circumstances which require especial consolation, first one and then another station on his path to the cross invites us under its peace-inspiring shade.

Let us hasten to Gethsemane, therefore, beloved readers, when we feel oppressed in a world where selfishness reigns paramount, and what still remains of the charity of the Gospel threatens to expire in self-seeking and self-love. The loving Savior, whom we behold struggling for us in Gethsemane, continues ours; and how faithfully, ardently, and disinterestedly is he attached to us! What a price did it cost him to elevate

such unworthy creatures as we are from our misery, and to procure eternal salvation for us! O love divine, how do our hearts expand at the contemplation of your beauty! How blissful it is to escape from a selfish world to meditate on you, to sun ourselves in your light, and to know that we are reposing on your bosom! What a happiness is this—what a foretaste of heaven in the house of our pilgrimage! O love, stronger than death, and more invincible than the grave, never depart from our view! Be you the star to shine upon us day and night; and the colder the wind of a self-loving world blows upon us during our sojourn here below, the more brightly do you display to the eyes of our spirits the gracious radiance of your heavenly beauty!

Resort to Gethsemane, my readers, when you stand uncertain which way to choose—whether to give yourselves to God or to the service of the world. Gethsemane will make it evident to you what sin is. Look at Jesus. He did no sin, but only took upon him that of others. How did it fare with him? "Now is the hour and the power of darkness," said he. He was given up to the assaults of the infernal hosts. How they fell upon him! How they tormented his holy soul! What horrible company! what nameless terrors! But know that what tortured him for a time, menaces you forever! Think of being eternally doomed to endure the society and the scourges of the infernal powers! Is it possible to conceive of anything more terrible? Jesus prayed that the cup might pass from him, but no answer was afforded him. God heeded not his agonizing cries; and yet Jesus was only the sinner's representative, while you must answer, each one for himself. Remember the rich man in the Gospel, who vainly besought a drop of water to cool his parched tongue. Who among you can bear to dwell with devouring fire, or abide with everlasting burnings? Be irresolute no longer. On the left yawns the pit, on the right shines the crown! Sin begets death, but the fruit of righteousness is life and peace.

Let us repair to Gethsemane, lastly, when the storms of temptation roar around us, and Satan goes about seeking whom he may devour. The days in which our lot has fallen are dangerous, and few there are who are not carried away with the stream of impiety. Even in the circle of the believing and the pious how much weakness of faith, decrepitude of spirit, want of peace, and discouragement do we perceive! How do the

complaints increase of inward darkness, doubt, and blasphemous imaginations, which cannot be repelled! All these are signs that the Wicked One is using every effort, and as the Scripture says, is "in great wrath." He, therefore, who wishes to be secure, must resort to Gethsemane. There we shall not only find a confederate in the conflict, who will point the way to victory—there we shall not only be aroused with the alarming cry, "Watch and pray lest you fall into temptation;" but there the conviction is renewed within us, that the prince of this world is already judged—that every rightful claim of the adversary upon us is extinguished, and that what the Evil One suggests to us of an abominable nature against our wills, falls upon his own head, and not upon ours, since it has been long ago atoned for by the bloody sweat of Immanuel, in the case of penitent sinners, and can only have a purifying effect upon us according to the will of God. This faith is the victory, which has already overcome the prince of darkness.

Looking thus at Gethsemane, in its proper light, it becomes to us an "Eden," and is transformed, with its horrors, into a peaceful retreat. Within its circuit we are safe from the judicial inquiry, "Adam, where are you?" In this garden flows the never-failing river of God, which waters the new paradise. How many thousand anxious souls have gone forth out of it, from the conflicting bustle of the world, into divine Sabbatic repose! Its holy gates are open to us. Come, therefore, let us reverentially enter, and inhale its peaceful atmosphere!

The Sudden Assault

After coming off victorious from his spiritual conflict in Gethsemane, the divine sufferer prepares to enter upon the thorny path of bodily affliction. We must bear in mind that under the latter the former not only continues, but each of the trials to which he is subjected must be regarded only as the reflection of incomparably more, real and inward states and situations. His being taken prisoner, his being brought before the bar of judgment, his condemnation by the Sanhedrin, and his passage to the cross, are only symbolical representations of infinitely more exalted events, which were behind the veil, in the relations of the Mediator to

God, the supreme Judge. He who is unable to regard the individual scenes of our Lord's passion from this point of view, does not penetrate through them, and will never find his way in the labyrinth of the history of our Savior's sufferings.

We imagine ourselves still enveloped in the darkness of that eventful night, in which our Lord said, in a tone of serious warning, to his disciples, and which may still be uttered to thousands in the present day, "All of you shall be offended because of me this night." Scarcely has the Savior risen up from the ground when a new cause of alarm awaits him. Before his disciples are aware, lanterns and torches are seen glistening amid the gloomy bushes of the valley, and a murderous band, armed with swords, staves, and spears, is seen approaching along the banks of Kedron. The powerful preparation made for this occasion is partly in order to serve as a mask, as if they were banded together for the purpose of seizing a dangerous conspirator and rebel; and partly in consequence of a secret fear and apprehension in the minds of the adversaries that they might probably meet with some unexpected opposition. The superfluous torches and lanterns, in light of the full moon, likewise manifest their conscience-smitten fears. They might, however, have in view the hypocritical announcement that the individual they were about to arrest, despairing of his cause, was only to be found in secret corners and hiding-places. Scarcely ever were so much devilish wickedness, baseness, and craftiness joined with so much inward cowardice, timidity, and faintheartedness, as we meet with in this band of ruffians. It is truly an infernal host with which we have to do—the bodyguard of Satan.

Let it not disturb us to inspect it a little more closely. We first perceive the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary. What accusation have they to bring against Jesus? This—that he is undermining their proud hierarchy, stripping them of their false glory, snatching from their hands the scepter of despotism over the consciences of the poor people, diminishing their tithes and resources, and, intimating to them, that they ought to place themselves in the ranks of publicans and sinners. All this was intolerable to these proud and domineering servants of mammon, and hence their hatred of the Lord of Glory. Hence also the animosity of numbers of our contemporaries. All enmity to Christ, regarded in this light, is nothing but

the rebelling of proud, self-righteous, human nature, devoted to the service of the world, against a Gospel which places self-denial and the crucifixion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts, at the head of its requirements.

Near the priests we behold the Pharisees, those blind leaders of the blind, the representatives of the delusive idea of individual merit, and hence, also of repugnance to a doctrine which while stamping every one as a delinquent, affords a hope of salvation only by grace, and even to the most pious as the object of their boasting before God, leaves nothing but the freely bestowed righteousness of another. It is easy to understand how these men were offended at a Teacher who set up regeneration as a vital condition for all: whose language was, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and who testifies of himself saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by me." Let us here ask ourselves, whether, until the Spirit enlightens our darkness, we are willing to be nothing, and that grace should be everything? Whether we are better pleased than these sons of Gamaliel, to see our justification before God founded solely and exclusively on the blood of the Lamb, and that we are therefore naturally less offended with the Prince of Peace than they? I doubt whether this question will be decided in our favor. The Pharisee dwells in all of us from our infancy.

In the Scribes, who appear next in the band, we see the expression of a spurious wisdom, accompanied by spiritual ambition. No wonder, therefore, that such characters are also met with among the conspirators against Jesus. They, the learned among the people, were told that they must sit on the scholar's bench with the rest, and condescend to take their places at the feet of the Rabbi of Nazareth. They, the masters in Israel, who were stared and wondered at, and who sat with the heads of the people—were they to submit to this? How could such an idea fail to rouse and enrage the self-conceited men to the utmost? But do not the words of Jesus continue in force, even to this day? "You have hid these things from the wise and prudent;" as well as those of the apostle, "Not many wise men after the flesh are chosen?" In addition to the universal disinclination to Jesus, which is peculiar to every one who is not healed of the hereditary darkness of the human mind, there was also in the case of

the Scribes, a latent vexation at the numerous defeats and mortifications they had sustained in the face of the people, as often as they had ventured to assail him. How victoriously had he always driven them from the field! How had he caught them in their own craftiness! How had he taken them captive in the very snares they had laid for him, and then openly disgraced and triumphed over them! These were the things for which they could not forgive him. And after the weapons of their sophistry had been wrenched from their hands, they were neither noble-minded nor ingenuous enough not to regard those of the basest treachery and rudest violence as suitable for their purpose. O speak no more of the natural man's nobility of spirit! Whatever stage of refinement and mental culture he may boast of occupying, there is always a price for which he will unhesitatingly barter this cause for boasting.

Under the command of the ringleaders above mentioned, we observe the servants of the high priests, those blind instruments of their superiors, who, though less guilty, are anything but guiltless; and then also, the mercenaries of the Roman temple guard. It becomes, indeed, people of this class unconditionally to obey the command of those who are set over them. Yet they are not mere machines, incapable of guilt in so doing, but answerable, as well as all other men, to God the final judge, for their moral conduct; whose obedience ought to be limited by the well-known maxim—"We must obey God rather than man;" and whose duty it therefore was, in the present case, to prefer dying by the hands of the executioner, to the doubtful praise of having done their duty in the perpetration of the most heinous of crimes. However, for the most part, they know not what they are doing. More reprobate than they, appears the despicable troop, who, for money or favor, have voluntarily joined the band. These cowardly flatterers and men-servers, to whom it is a trifle, for one approving look from a man of rank, to smite their conscience in the face, remind us of those miserable imitators of others, who, because this or that person, on whom they depend, thinks in this manner or that, do not dare to speak otherwise; and carry their baseness to such a point that they even dispose of their independent judgment in affairs of supremely vital importance, for the most miserable price in the world. Woe to such worthless characters!

But let us cast a look also at the troop of catchpoles. Who is it walks at their head, with a gloomy face and confused look? Who is the man, muffled up in a cloak, and bearing the impress of a forced, rather than of a natural bravery, in his mien? Ah, we recognize him! Our hearts shudder at the sight of him, and the blood stiffens in our veins. It is the son of perdition, of whom it was written a thousand years before: "He who did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against me." It is the wretched man who wears the garb of discipleship only as the poisonous adder is clothed in its glistening skin; the hypocrite, who conceals himself in his apostolic office, like the murderous dagger in its golden sheath. Sin is perfected in him, and condemnation ripened to maturity. In darkness, bitterness, and a deceiver to the inmost center of his being: he now hates Jesus as the darkness hates the light. He has got beyond the period when he might have broken with Jesus with indifference, and then have gone on his way without troubling himself any more about him. But he has now given way to all the feeling of an infernal revolt. He is furious against him, as though the meek and lowly Jesus were an implacable judge, by whose holiness, purity, and love, he feels himself condemned for his own treachery, hypocrisy, and malice. He had long felt painfully uneasy in the company of Jesus. How could it be otherwise? A bird of night cannot bear the light of the sun. At the anointing in Bethany, where he became conscious that Jesus saw through him, he resigned himself wholly to the spirit of fury and bitterness, instead of to the Holy Spirit; and swore deadly vengeance against the man who had done him no other wrong than that of looking into his heart. Do not think that the lure of the thirty pieces of silver was a sufficient cause for his treachery. It was infernal in its nature, and must be sought much deeper. The unhappy disciple had already imbibed that furious spirit, which incessantly stings the lost in hell, to curse and blaspheme him who judged them, and of whom they are obliged to testify, that all his judgments are just. Alas! a spark of this fury is every where found in fallen human nature. As often as the Lord is on the point of shedding his light into the depths of its darkness, the hidden serpent begins to move. The natural heart cannot bear the disturber of its idle peace; and thus, the only Savior of sinners is greeted, even by those whom he came to save, with the salutations of the rebellious citizens: "We will not have his man to reign over us;" and with that of the Gergesenes: "We pray you to depart out of our coasts."

"Rise, let us be going. Behold, he is at hand that does betray me!" From whence resounds this courageous and resolute call? From the same lips, out of which the cry of pressure and distress had only just before ascended to heaven, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" But now, behold the glorious conqueror! He emerges from the horrible conflict in Gethsemane, as if steeled both in body and soul. His whole bearing breathes self-possession, manliness, and sublime composure. No sooner was he aware who it was that presented the cup to him in Gethsemane, than he willingly emptied it, and knows henceforth that the terrors and horrors which may be in reserve, belong to the indispensable conditions with which the completion of his great mediatorial work is connected. This consciousness enables him to take firm steps on the path of suffering. He clearly sees that whatever of evil awaits him, is the result of his Father's counsel.

When the Lord says to his disciples, "Rise, let us be going!" he does so, in the next place, in order to show them his altered state of mind, and because he was desirous that they should all be present at his arrest, that, as eye-witnesses, they might afterward inform the world how their master had voluntarily delivered himself up into the hands of his enemies, and not as one who was vanquished by them.

But see what occurs? Before the multitude that came against him has reached the place, he proceeds several paces toward them with a firm step. In opposition to the conduct of our progenitor in paradise, who, on the inquiry, "Adam, where are you?" sought concealment, our Lord approaches the armed band, and asks them the simple question, "Whom do you seek?"—a question at which the ruffians ought to have felt deeply ashamed, because it revealed the lying character of their whole procedure, and especially of their warlike array against him. But the world was to learn that the Lord was led to the slaughter, not by mistake, but intentionally, because he was the Just and Holy One of Israel; and it was for this reason also, that the Savior asked, "Whom seek you?"

The answer of the armed band was clear and decisive: "Jesus of Nazareth," say they. After thus making known their object, the Lord, with the sublime composure of the divine Mediator, who not only knew all that should befall him, but was also clearly conscious of the cause, results, and

final consequences of it all, said to them, "I am He!" Great and significant expression! It was never uttered by the Savior without being accompanied with the most powerful effects. "It is I!" exclaimed he, to his astonished disciples, when walking on the waves of the sea; and, as at the sound the raging storm immediately subsided, so, a flood of peace and joy poured itself into the hearts of his followers. "I that speak unto you am He!" said he to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well; and immediately she left her waterpot and hastened back home, as the first evangelist to the borders of Samaria. "I am He!" was his testimony at the bar of the Sanhedrin, as we shall subsequently find; and the conviction that he was really the Messiah, smote the minds of his judges so powerfully that it was only by means of the stage-trick of rending his clothes, that the high priest was able to save himself from the most painful embarrassment. And what occurs on his making use of the words on the present occasion? On hearing them the whole band of officials start, give way, stagger backward, and fall to the ground as if struck by an invisible flash of lightning, or blown upon by the breath of Omnipotence.

That which thus powerfully affected them was, undeniably, the deep impression of the holiness and innocence of Jesus, by which they were for a time overpowered. His majestic, though simple declaration, called forth in them, in its full strength, the forcibly repressed conviction of his superhuman glory. But this mental emotion would not alone have sufficed to stretch the whole troop bodily, as by magic, in the dust, if an act of divine omnipotence had not accompanied it. The Lord overthrew them, in order, in the most forcible manner, to stamp their appellation of "Jesus of Nazareth" as a falsehood, and to force upon them the conviction of his divine superiority, as well as to leave the world an actual proof that it was not through compulsion or weakness that he became a sacrifice for it, but in consequence of his free determination.

The murderous band lie at his feet, prostrated by a single expression from his lips. And what would have hindered him from walking triumphantly over them; and, after fixing them to the ground, departing uninjured and uninterrupted? But he only aims at displaying his supremacy and independence, and after attaining this object, he permits them to rise again from the ground. Their prostration in the dust before him, points

out to unbelievers the situation in which they will one day be found. The homage which they refused to Jesus here below, he will in due time compel them to render him. The knee that would not bow to him in voluntary affection, will at length be constrained to do so by the horrors of despair. A threefold woe will light upon them as obstinate rebels, when the Lord shall appear, no longer with the palm branch and shepherd's crook, but with the sword and scales of even-handed justice. There is no rising up, or recovering from the amazement and terror which will then seize upon them, at the sound of the words, "I am He!"

After the armed band, by the Lord's permission, had again raised themselves up, he repeats the question to them, "Whom seek you?" accompanied this time by an overwhelming irony. As when one, who had been mistaken for a vagrant, and arrested as such, should suddenly display to the view of his captors the royal star on his bosom, and were calmly to say to them, "Whom did you think to catch?" So here, likewise, with our Lord's question, "Whom seek you?" only that here is more than an earthly king. The banditti at his feet have just been made aware of it; the question, therefore, as it respects them, puts on the form of the bitterest mockery, for what folly for a straw to attack a fire, or a spark the foaming ocean! They feel the sting of the reiterated question in their consciences, and are confounded. The monitor within condemns them as reprobates and fools; nevertheless, they readily overcome their inward impression of the truth, and mechanically give the same reply as though it were the word of parole. It was uttered, the first time, with a certain military rudeness and boldness, but now it escapes from them timidly and without emphasis, and testifies of an inward overthrow, which gives way to a degree of assurance, only after the Lord has voluntarily delivered himself up to them.

"Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He. If, therefore, you seek me, let these go their way." How sweet and full of promise are these sounds! O how well the Lord was able to preserve the most perfect self-possession in every situation, however terrible; and, with his anxiety for the completion of the work of redemption, to mingle the minute and inconsiderable with the stupendous and sublime. While girding himself for his mysterious passage to the cross, he does not forget, in his adorable faithfulness, to

rescue his disciples from the approaching storm; "If you seek me," says he, "let these go their way." To this expression, however, we must attribute an application far beyond its immediate meaning. The evangelist, nevertheless, acts quite correctly in applying it, in the first instance, to the apostles, and adds, "that the saying might be fulfilled which he spoke, 'Of them which you gave me have I lost none.'"

"If you seek me, let these go their way." An expositor has very judiciously remarked on these words, that there was a delicate propriety in Christ's not saying, "These my followers," or "These my disciples," but only indefinitely, while pointing to them, "these." For had he applied either of the previous appellations to them, it would have been construed by the armed band as meaning "my partisans," and that in a sense which he would be careful not to countenance. In the sense in which the world is accustomed to understand it, the Lord Jesus was not at the head of a party, and he was desirous of avoiding the least appearance of being so.

In other respects, the simple expression, "Let these go," uttered with emphasis, was all that was needed for the safety of his disciples. It was not a request, but a royal command, and at the same time, a hint to the disciples as to what they had to do. It was the signal for their temporary retreat from his scenes of suffering. It would have been well for Simon Peter had he obeyed his Master's faithful hint. At that period they were unable to cope with such a "fight of afflictions," and would certainly, for a time, have all of them suffered shipwreck as regards their faith, if they had followed their Master further on his path of humiliation, not to speak of the danger which would besides have threatened their liberty, and even their lives. Therefore, adored be the foreseeing circumspection, and the admirable collectedness and composure which we see the Lord Jesus exercising at a time when the most excellent of men could not have found room to think of anything but themselves, while bearing upon his heart the welfare and safety of his followers, and so graciously providing for their security during the approaching storm.

But do not let us overlook the rich consolation for believers in every age, which this act of our Lord's includes. For he has uttered the words, "If you seek me, let these go their way," to other bands than those at Gethsemane, on our behalf. In their more profound and general sense, he

spoke them also to hell, earth, and the devil, for it was he whom they really sought, laid hold of, and brought low. But as regards his believing people, they have forever exhausted their power upon him, and have left in him their sting. And as far as these hostile powers extend, in the present day, anything more than to sift, try, or purify the followers of Jesus, an insuperable barrier is placed before them by these words. They can never destroy those who are in Christ. In the words above mentioned, we have a passport which insures us a safe escort across the frontier into the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us therefore honor this document, for the seal of God beams upon it.

The Traitor's Kiss

We direct our eyes, once more, to the armed multitude who had reached the Garden of Gethsemane in quest of Jesus. They have just risen up from the ground on which they had been thrown by the power of the Lord's word, "I am He!" Among those who had been thus hurled to the dust was Judas. It might have been supposed that this renewed manifestation of the majesty of Jesus would have finally scared the son of perdition, like some fiery sign or signal of danger, from his traitorous path. And who knows what effect servile fear might have produced, if he had not been surrounded by witnesses, and if his imaginary honor had not been at stake! But he had undertaken to act the part of a leader; and what a coward would he have appeared in the eyes of his patrons and superiors had he not resolutely performed his promise! How horrible the delusion, to make a virtue of consistency, even in wickedness! Judas fanned the flame of his hostility to the Lord, which might have received a momentary check, by recalling to mind the anointing in Bethany, and the last supper in Jerusalem. Suffice it to say, he again stands before us at the head of the murderous band, with a carriage certainly more forced than real. His bearing indicates a hypocritical resolution; but something very different is expressed in his averted looks and convulsively contracted lips, as well as in the restless working of the muscles of his pallid countenance. But he has pledged his word and concluded his contract with Satan. The traitorous signal must follow. Hell reckons on him, and would not for the world lose the triumph of seeing the Nazarene betrayed into its hands by

one of his own disciples.

We may have read and heard a thousand times of this horrible fact, and yet as often as it is repeated, we are astonished afresh, as if we had never heard it before. Can there be a more appalling or deeply affecting scene than this treacherous betrayal of his Master? Where did ever personified goodness and consummate wickedness, heaven and hell, meet in more open and awful contrast? Scarcely can we support the overpowering impressions, which we here receive, of the superabundance of divine love and meekness on the one hand, and the fullness of Satanic wickedness on the other! We are witnesses of a parting scene—one of the most melancholy and mysterious the world has ever beheld—Jesus and his disciple Judas, separated forever.

Before we view, in the traitor's kiss, the mature infernal fruit of his inward corruptions, let us cast a look at the prophecies respecting him and his course of life. In Psalm 41 we read, "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." In Psalm 109, "Let his days be few; and let another take his office. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his affections like water, and like oil into his bones." And in Psalm 69, "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one dwell in his tents." But that these and other appalling passages had reference to him, his parents had not the slightest idea. The boy grew up, displaying a diversity of talents, and an inclination for religion. Had he been an ordinary man, how could he have been selected by Christ to become one of his most confidential disciples?

After our Lord had openly come forward, Judas seemed, according to human ideas, to be fitted above others, to aid him in his stupendous object. He offers himself as a disciple, the Savior accepts him, and admits him into the number, assigning to him the administration of their common fund. No one knows anything of him but that he is a true disciple, a devout and highly gifted man, and, in every case, no ordinary character. The Lord Jesus alone soon sees through him, and perceives in him an evil root. This root is covetousness, ambition, and in one word, egotism, that is, the sinful inclination, common to all natural men, for the

exclusive gratification, exaltation, and glorifying of self.

That which led Judas into fellowship with Jesus, was probably the hope of acting a prominent part in the kingdom of his wonder-working Master. Finding that he had formed an erroneous idea of that kingdom, which was the reverse of what he expected, he seizes, as we have already seen, the money with which he was entrusted, to compensate him, in a small degree, for his disappointment. The scene at Bethany then occurred, which convinced him that his baseness was discovered; and he then gave way to those feelings of animosity and hatred, which afterward prompted him to betray his master for thirty pieces of silver. We have seen how, after receiving the sop from the latter, the devil entered into him, and from that moment he became the entire property of Satan.

Let us now return to the horrible scene we were contemplating. It is true that the sign of betrayal, which had been agreed upon, had been rendered superfluous by the voluntary approach of Jesus, and his majestic declaration concerning himself. The armed band, however, were unwilling that Judas should forego it, seeing that the thirty pieces of silver had been paid him, and since it might serve as a kind of salve to the consciences of the conspirators. Hence they hinted to him by their looks, to keep his word; and Judas, partly to save the credit of his assumed heroism, and partly to conceal the discouraging impression which the overwhelming words of Jesus had produced upon him, as well as in the furtive hope of disarming the anger of the Holy One of Israel against him by the mark of affection which accompanied his flattering salutation, for he inwardly trembled at his wrath, and his language to the captors —"Seize him and hold him fast!" seems only to emanate from his fear and anxiety, and not, as some would make it appear, as ironically intimating that they would not succeed in doing so—approaches the Lord under the mask of friendly intimacy, welcomes him with the formula of hearty well-wishing, "Hail, Master!" and ventures, like a poisonous viper hissing forth from a rose-bush, to pollute the sacred lips of the Son of Man, amid the plaudits of hell, with his treacherous kiss!

This act is the most profligate and abominable that ever emanated from the dark region of human sinfulness and degeneracy. It grew on the soil, not of devilish, but of human nature, although not without infernal

influence, which was voluntarily imbibed; and hence it may be attributed, in all its infamy, to our own race, as such. As the fully expanded flower, it displays the seed of the serpent, which we all of us bear in the center of our being, either developed or in embryo. It condemns our whole race, and at the same time places beyond question the entire necessity of an atonement, mediation, and satisfaction, in order that our souls may be saved. The kiss of Judas continues, in the sphere of morals, to be the shield with Medusa's head, before which the Pelagian, with his theory of the natural goodness of the human heart, must petrify. That kiss is the indelible brandmark on the forehead of mankind, through which their "virtuous pride" receives the stamp of lunacy and absurdity.

Would that the traitor's kiss had remained the only one of its kind! But, in a spiritual sense, Jesus has still to endure it a thousandfold to this hour. For, hypocritically to confess him with the mouth, while the conduct belies him—to exalt the virtues of his humanity to the skies, while divesting him of his divine glory, and tearing the crown of universal majesty from his head—to sing enthusiastic hymns and oratorios to him while, out of the concert-room, men not only blush at his holy name, but trample his Gospel by word and deed under foot—What is all this but a Judas-kiss with which they have the audacity to pollute his face? The Savior does not indeed, die from such kisses; but those who dare to offer him such insults will not escape. The loss of reputation and honor, wealth and property, health and life, are of no lasting importance. There exists a compensation for all these; but to lose and alienate ourselves from Jesus, is death and perdition; for he is life and happiness, and the living epitome of peace, salvation, and blessing.

"Hail, Master!" exclaims the traitor. These words are like two poisonous daggers in the heart of the Holy One. He calmly accepts them, nor does he refuse even the infernal kiss itself. He knows why he is passive here, seeing that this grief of heart was also a drop of the cup which his Father had apportioned him, and that at the bottom of this horrible act lay the determinate counsel of the Almighty. Angelic meekness would not have stood the test of that flagitious crime; but here is more than angelic meekness, forbearance, and patience. It is a testimony to the divine endurance of the Lord Jesus; for the traitor would not have chosen this as

the signal for betraying his Master had he not been aware of the latter's boundless long-suffering. Thus, with the very kiss with which he delivered him up to his captors, Judas was compelled to glorify him, and only enhance our ideas of the infinite condescension and love with which he had been favored by the Savior; for he never would have ventured to disguise his villainy under the mask of intimacy, had he not been emboldened by the infinite and often-experienced amiability of his Master. So true it is that in the traitor's daring to approach him thus the Lord manifests it afresh by his passive resignation to the hypocritical salute of the apostate, and by the spirit of compassion and gentleness which pervades the last words he ever addressed to him.

"Friend," says the Lord Jesus, with pathetic seriousness, "wherefore are you come?" Who would have expected such mildness on the present occasion? A "Get you behind me, Satan!" or, "a curse light on you with your Joab's kiss, you whited sepulcher!" would have been more appropriate in the eyes of many. Instead of which, we hear a sound like the voice of a parent tenderly concerned for the soul of his deeply seduced child. And certainly, an outburst of flaming passion would not have been so annihilating to the traitor as was this exhalation of compassionate charity. The word "friend," or, as it might be more correctly rendered, "companion," recalled to his mind the privileged position with which, as having been received into the circle of the Lord's most intimate associates, he had been favored. This address reminded him also of the many manifestations of unspeakable kindness and grace with which he had been loaded for three whole years, in the immediate society and faithful superintendence of the most amiable among men. And if one unobdurate place had been left in his heart, how would this remembrance have affected and overpowered him!

But in the Lord's pointed reference to the social connection in which Judas had stood with him, there lay, at the same time, an overwhelming condemnation of the conspirators, who did not blush to commit themselves to the guidance of a man whom, in their hearts, they must have despised as a reprobate that had not his equal. An infamous renegade, who was not ashamed thus knavishly and detestably to deliver up and tread upon a faithful friend and master, from whom he had

received nothing but benefits, bore the banner before them, and gave them the parole of the day. What a humiliation for them! How shameful and disgraceful! But the hardened band cared at the moment only for the Savior's fall, and that they might give the death-blow to his hated cause; and this murderous desire took such possession of their souls, as to leave no room for the interests of their own reputation.

"Companion," says the Lord, "wherefore are you come?" or, "why stands you here?" The dreadful inquisitorial interrogatory rolls like terrific thunder through the traitor's heart. His conscience awakes in a moment from its deadly sleep, and feels itself carried away, as by an Almighty hand, to the bar of divine judgment. But Judas, prepared for this entrance of truth into his soul, forcibly resists his own conscience, stifles the confession on the lips of his inward monitor, presents the latter the poisonous draught of self-deception, and with the rapidity of one well practiced and experienced in the wicked are, succeeds in again compelling it to silence and apathy. Hence the Lord has nothing left but to let the stroke fall upon the door of his heart, which, if it does not succeed in breaking it open, acts as the knell of eternal reprobation to the traitor.

The Lord now calls him by his name, as men hope to awake a lunatic sleep-walker, who is seen treading on the edge of a precipice, before casting himself down, by a similar procedure. "Judas," says the Lord, with emphasis, as if he would leave nothing unattempted for his rescue, and as if he intended by it to say, "Does not the mention of your name remind you of its signification—a glorifier of God, and that you are called after the noble and princely tribe of which you are a scion, and yet do you come to me in this manner?" After thus mentioning his name, our Lord plainly characterizes his deed. Yet even then we hear him giving a turn to his speech, as if he disbelieved the possibility of the traitor's purpose. As if still questioning it, he says, "Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?" But Judas, under the influence of Satan, answers the question by the commission of that crime which has branded his name as proverbially characteristic of all that is reprobate and flagitious, and which places him in the pillory of the world's history, marked with the curse of God on his forehead, as a terrific example to mankind for endless ages.

"Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?" This is therefore, the eternal farewell to the miserable apostate from the lips of the Savior of sinners. Woe to the unhappy man! Hell triumphs over him, heaven forsakes him, and the hollow thunder of that question still rolls over the head of Judas. Eventually, however, the words will be divested of their interrogatory form, and will be changed into a naked judicial declaration, "You betray the Son of Man with a kiss."

Deeply affected, we close our meditation. Let what has been brought before us have its full effect upon us. Let no pharisaical thanking God that we are not like that man, weaken the impression. The germ of what he was, lies in each of us, and may develop itself before we are aware, unless we place ourselves betimes under the protection of Divine grace. Satan has not yet ceased "Going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" and the distance between the first step in the ways of sin, and the last is often quickly accomplished, as long as we are left to ourselves. Let us, therefore, hasten to save our souls and guard our hearts, like a city besieged by the enemy. But our arms of defense must be sought where alone they can be found—beneath the wings of Christ. He is our rock and our fortress, our refuge and strength, and our very present help in every time of need.

The Sword and the Cup

A singular occurrence interrupts the regular course of the sacred narrative of our Lord's passion, and serves as an additional proof how difficult it is for human thought to elevate itself to God's thoughts, especially as displayed in the work of redemption. In the scene we are about to contemplate, a disciple smites with the sword, an action, which, however well meant, is, nevertheless, directed against the very ground and basis of the world's salvation. Let us rejoice that eternal love pursues its even path, and does not require our help in the accomplishment of its object.

After the mild but overwhelming words addressed to the traitor, our Lord opens the barriers to the banditti, and voluntarily offers them his hands,

while they press upon him with an artificial courage. How horrible to see the Lord of Glory fallen upon and surrounded like a robber and a murderer! The disciples witness it; but the sight renders them beside themselves. If, at the traitor's kiss, their blood congealed with horror, it now begins to boil in their veins. They cannot bear that it should come to such a pass. "Lord," say they, as with one voice, "shall we smite with the sword?" They do well first to ask, but the question is a mere matter of form, and unconsciously uttered from the force of habit. For, while speaking, they themselves give the answer; and before their Master has time to say a word, Peter's sword is unsheathed, and the first blow in defense is struck.

We understand what was passing in Simon's heart. The words our Lord had uttered on the road to Gethsemane, respecting his denying his Master and his own reply, still fermented within him; and he was anxious to show the latter that, in accordance with his own assertion, he would rather die than forsake him. Full of these ideas, and, doubtless, with a confused remembrance of what the Lord had said respecting the purchase of swords, he blindly attacks the troop with his blade of steel, and smites Malchus, one of the high priest's servants on the right ear, so that it hangs down on his cheek, only by a slender shred.

"Well done, Simon!" we are ready to exclaim, "only proceed as you have begun. These sons of Belial deserve bleeding heads! If you, who are his intimate associates, could have coldly witnessed this abominable crime against your Master, we should never be able to believe in your love to him." But here again we must take occasion to observe how apparently the noblest ebullitions of the natural heart of man are opposed to the will and order of God. That which appears to us as such an amiable trait in Peter, is only a confused mixture of self-love, arrogance, and folly; while the fire of our natural enthusiasm for Simon's act, proceeds likewise only from short-sightedness and blindness.

It is undeniable that an ardent and sincere affection had its essential part in this act of Peter's; but certainly, it was not love alone which nerved his arm on this occasion; at least he was equally as anxious to save his own honor as the person of his Master; while the publicity of the affair was assuredly no mean stimulus to his bravery. Had Peter been in earnest

with his question, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" the Lord would certainly have answered him by saying, "Simon, will you pollute the glory of my submission? Is it your intention to expose us to the suspicion that we are only a company of political demagogues? Do you propose affording our opponents a ground of justification for coming against us armed? And will you again offer the hand to Satan for the frustration of the entire work of redemption?"

In this, or a similar manner, would the Lord have spoken; for certainly, if Simon and the rest of the disciples, who were also ready for the combat, had succeeded in their attempt, the plan of the world's salvation would have been obstructed, since the Lamb of God would then not have been led to the slaughter. The great truth that the salvation of sinners could only be accomplished by the offering up of the God-man, was still a profound mystery to the disciples, and continued so until the day of Pentecost broke the seals and disclosed to them its sacred depths. And to this day it is the Spirit only that opens the understanding and solves the difficulty. Without him, we may listen to the article of reconciliation by the blood of the Lamb, and perhaps even know how to preach it. But it is only possessed as a barren idea, a dogmatic formula, a dead thing of thought, and will be of no benefit to us. It is only thoroughly understood, seriously believed, and vitally apprehended as the basis of hope and salvation, when the Spirit of Grace brings it near, and expounds it to the contrite heart.

The confusion caused by Simon's thoughtless assault is indescribable. The whole scene suddenly changes. The troop, drawing their swords, now prepare also for the conflict, and the sacred soil of Gethsemane is on the point of being transformed into a battle-field. A shriller discord could not have interrupted the entire purpose of Jesus, than arose out of that inconsiderate attempt. To all appearance, Peter had for the moment, drawn his Master entirely out of his path; and in what danger had the thoughtless disciple, by his foolish act, involved the Eleven, who formed the tender germ of the Lord's future Church! They would doubtless have been together overthrown and slain without mercy, had not the Lord again interfered at the right moment. But it is easy for him to unloose the most complicated knots. The repairing what we have injured has ever

been his vocation, and is so still.

Scarcely had the lamentable blow been struck, when the Savior stepped forward, and while turning to the armed band, rebuked the storm in some measure, by these words—"Suffer you thus far"—that is, "Grant me a short time, until I have done what I intend." It is a request for a truce, in order that the wounded man may be healed. Be astonished, here again, at the humility, calmness, and self-possession which the Lord exhibits even in the most complicated situations and confusing circumstances, never forgetting what is becoming, and what belongs to his office and calling. Even in the reckless troops, he honors the magistracy they represent; and does not order and command, but only requests them for a moment to delay seizing his person. And how willingly does he again, in this instance, bow to his heavenly Father's counsels, according to which, he was to be deprived of his liberty and subjected to the power of his adversaries! What silent admiration must his meek and tranquil submission have produced in the minds of his foes!

By a significant silence, they gave their assent to his wish. But how they are astonished on seeing the Lord kindly inclining to Malchus, and touching his wounded ear with his healing hand, when the blood instantaneously ceases to flow, and the ear is restored uninjured to its place! We are also astonished at this miracle—the last and not the smallest, by which the Savior manifested himself on earth, as the God-man. And we admire in it, not merely his power, which shines forth so gloriously, but likewise his love, which did not exclude even his enemies from its beneficial operation, as well as his care of his disciples, whom, by the healing of Malchus, he secured from the sanguinary revenge of the murderous troop. Nor must we overlook the wise forethought with which the Lord, by this charitable act, defends his kingdom for the future from all misunderstanding as to its real nature. It is not a kingdom of this world, but one in which revenge is silent, meekness heaps coals of fire on the adversary's head, and where evil is recompensed with good.

While the Lord was stretching out his healing hand to the wounded man, he opens his mouth to Peter, and utters, for the instruction of every future age, the highly important words respecting the use of the sword, his voluntary abasement for sinners, and his unconditional submission to

his Father's will.

He begins by saying, "Put up your sword again into its place, for all those who take the sword, shall perish with the sword." A serious warning, which must have rolled like thunder over Simon's head. Few are aware that according to the views of some parties in the Christian Church, this passage altogether prohibits the use of the sword. But Scripture must be compared with Scripture, and what is termed "the analogy of faith," is the first principle of biblical exposition. In the words above mentioned, our Lord gives us a hint that the sword has also "its place," where it may justly leave the scabbard; and hence "the powers that be" are described in Rom. 13:4, as "not bearing the sword in vain," seeing that they are "the ministers of God, and revengers to execute wrath upon him that does evil." Now, if they commit the sword to any one—whether to the executioner, the soldier, or to a private individual for his own defense: it is then drawn in a proper manner; while in the two first-mentioned instances, the responsibility attaches solely to them; but the sword is unconditionally and in every case withdrawn from private revenge, which is something essentially different from self-defense.

Least of all is the sword in its place, with reference to the interests of the kingdom of God. There, on the contrary, the words are applicable, "Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, says the Lord! The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." There the victory is gained by the power of the testimony, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the patience of the saints. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, and not the blood of "heretics." The Church of Rome, alas! has selected the worst thing out of the legacy of her patron, Peter, namely his sword—not, however, in accordance with our Lord's impressive command, to return the sword to its place, but in the strongest contradiction to it, having drawn and brandished it in order to smite. The weapons of Popish warfare have always been "carnal"—bulls of excommunication, interdicts, tortures, Auto-da-fes, and scaffolds. Hence they have established only a worldly church, which resembles the kingdom of Christ as little as a natural man does one that is born of the Spirit; it being more an institution of the State than a Church, more like Hagar than Sarah, bringing forth only

bond-servants and not children; and worse than the Galatians, it has not only begun in the flesh, but seems willing to end in it also. The words of our Lord, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," do not at least refer to her, but to the true Church, the members of which are born of water and the Spirit. The latter conquer while succumbing, and endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The true Church has indeed to do with "coals of fire," but heaps them on the head of her opponents only by the exercise of love. Her laurel wreath is the crown of thorns, and meekness is her weapon. If reviled, she blesses; if persecuted, she suffers it; if defamed, she entreats (1 Cor. 4:12, 13). She takes to heart the saying of Peter (1 Epis. 4:14): "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the Spirit of Glory and of God rests upon you." Thus she overcomes by submission, and prepares a triumph for Christ by her triumph over herself; and either fights her battles like the sun, which dispels the mists, and causes them to descend in fructifying dew-drops, or like the anvil, which does not strike itself, but cannot prevent the hammers, which fall upon it, from being split to pieces.

In this mode of passive overcoming, by which alone the world is conquered and brought into subjection to the Prince of Peace, the latter himself is our forerunner and leader. Hear what he says, "Put up your sword again into its place; for all those who take the sword, shall perish with the sword. The cup, which my Father path gives me, shall I not drink it? Or think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

O what a profound and comprehensive view is here afforded us into our Lord's sublime knowledge of his Divine Sonship! How the veil of his abject form is here drawn aside, and how does the whole majesty of the only-begotten Son of the Father again display itself before us like a flash of lightning in the darkness of the night! He continues the same in the obscurest depths of humiliation; and in the consciousness of his Divine dignity, always rises superior to the opposite appearance in which he is enveloped. He is sure of nothing so much as this, that if he would, he had only to ask, and the Father would send twelve legions of angels for his protection (consequently a legion for each of the little company). How

must Peter, on hearing these words from his Master, have felt ashamed for imagining that, if he did not interfere, the latter would be left helpless and forsaken. How severely is this foolish thought reproved by the words, "Think you not." For Simon knows that his Lord is not accustomed to use empty phrases, and that he must, therefore, take the words concerning the celestial powers that stood at his command, in their literal sense; and yet the idea could occur to him that he must deliver such a Master from a handful of armed mortals, as though he were utterly defenseless! What unbelief! What delusion!

But was it really in the Lord's power to withdraw himself from his sufferings by angelic aid? Without the shadow of a doubt. Having voluntarily resolved upon the great undertaking, he could, at any moment, have freely and without obstruction, withdrawn from it. Every idea of compulsion from without must be banished far from the doing and suffering of our Redeemer. Hence, there is scarcely a moment in his whole life, in which his love for our fallen race is more gloriously manifested than in that on which we are now meditating. A heavenly host, powerful enough to stretch a world of adversaries in the dust, stands behind the screen of clouds, waiting at his beck, and burning with desire to be permitted to interfere for him and triumphantly liberate him from the hands of the wicked while he, though ill-treated and oppressed, refuses their aid, and again repeats, more emphatically by the action than by words, "Father, your will; and not mine, be done!" "Thus it must be," says he. Carefully observe also this renewed testimony to the indispensable necessity of his passion. "How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled," he adds. The words of Moses and the prophets are "a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path." His language still is, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" Great and momentous words! Let us spend a few moments in meditating on them.

A cup is a vessel which has its appointed measure, and is limited by its rim. The Savior several times refers to the cup that was appointed for him. In Matt. 20:22, he asks his disciples, "Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" By the cup, he understood the bitter draught of his passion which had been assigned him. We heard him ask in Gethsemane, at the commencement, if it were not possible that the cup

might pass from him; and here we find him mentioning, with the most unmoved self-possession, "the cup which his Father had given him." We know what was in the cup. All its contents would have been otherwise measured out to us by divine justice on account of sin. In the cup was the entire curse of the inviolable law, all the horrors of conscious guilt, all the terrors of Satan's fiercest temptations, and all the sufferings which can befall both body and soul. It contained likewise the dreadful ingredients of abandonment by God, infernal agony, and a bloody death, to which the curse was attached—all which was to be endured while surrounded by the powers of darkness.

Here we learn to understand what is implied in the words, "Who spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all." "The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all." "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." All that mankind have heaped up to themselves against the day of God's holy and righteous wrath—their forgetfulness of God—their selfish conduct—their disobedience, pride, worldly-mindedness—their filthy lusts, hypocrisy, falsehood, hard-heartedness, and deceit—all are united and mingled in this cup, and ferment together into a horrible potion. "Shall I not drink this cup?" asks the Savior. "Yes," we reply, "Empty it, beloved Immanuel! we will kiss your feet, and offer up ourselves to you upon your holy altar!" He has emptied it, and not a drop remains for his people. The satisfaction he rendered was complete, the reconciliation effected. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The curse no longer falls upon them. "The chastisement of our peace lay upon him, and by his stripes we are healed," and nothing now remains for us but to sing Hallelujah!

Offering and Sacrifice

We shall confine our present meditation to the state of resignation in which we left our great High Priest, at the close of the last chapter. He yields himself up to his adversaries, and suffers them to act with him as they please; and this very circumstance is for us of the greatest and most

beneficial importance. His situation is deeply affecting. Imagine, as might actually have been the case, that immediately after the occurrences at Gethsemane a messenger had hastened to Jerusalem to inform his mother Mary of what had just befallen her son, outside the gates of the city. What must have been the feelings of the distressed woman! "What?" she would doubtless have exclaimed, "Has this happened to my child—is he in such a situation who was the best of sons—the Holy One, who is love itself, assaulted like a criminal?—the benefactor of mankind, their tenderly susceptible and gracious Savior, covered with such undeserved disgrace, and in the hands, and even in the fetters of jailors?" It would certainly have seemed to his grieved parent as if she had only dreamed of such horrible things; and on receiving a confirmation of the painful intelligence, can you suppose anything else than that she would entirely lose all command over herself; and burst into loud lamentations and floods of bitter tears?

It is from such a point of view that we ought to contemplate the occurrence at Gethsemane, in order to feel and comprehend it fully. And that you may view it in a still more lively manner, imagine to yourselves with what feelings the holy angel must have witnessed their Lord being thus taken prisoner—they whom the Savior's humiliation never for a moment prevented from being conscious of his real character and dignity; and who, wherever he went, perceived in him the Lord of Glory and the King of kings, before whose throne they only ventured to approach with veiled faces. Let us realize, if possible, what they must have felt at that moment, when, looking down from the clouds, they saw the High and Lofty One surrounded by the officers, as if he had been the vilest of criminals; the Prince of heaven taken captive with swords and staves; the Judge of the world fettered like a murderer, and then dragged away under the escort of a crowd of ruthless men amid blasphemies and curses, to be put upon his trial! May not a cry of horror have rung through heaven, and the idea have occurred to those holy beings that the measure of human wickedness was now full, and that the day of vengeance on the ungodly earth had arrived? We can so easily forget, in his appearance as a man, whom it is that we have before us in the humbled individual of Nazareth; and it is only now and then that it flashes through our minds who he really is. But then our hearts become

petrified with amazement, and we can only fold our hands in silent astonishment.

But however dreadful his position may be, the Savior bears with composure these outrageous proceedings. He delivers himself up, and to whom?—to the armed band, the officers and servants. But we are witnesses here of another yielding up of himself, and one that is veiled and invisible; and the latter is of incomparably greater importance to us than that which is apparent to the outward senses. Christ here gives himself up to his Father, first, as "an offering" (Ephes. 5:2), and such a one as will doubtless satisfy the Father. How shall we sufficiently appreciate the excellency of this offering? Behold him, then, as One against whom all hell may be let loose without being able to cast the slightest blemish on his innocence; as One who endured the fiercest ordeal without the smallest trace of dross; who boldly withstood the storm of temptation, which only served the more rapidly to perfect his obedience; who, in a state of the most painful inward privations, preserved, unshaken, his love to his Father; and although his Father's heart seemed turned away from him, yet regarded it, as before, as his meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent him; who, in a situation in which acute agony forced him to sweat blood, could nevertheless pray from the bottom of his heart, that not what he desired, but what the Eternal Father wished and had determined respecting him, might take place. Such is the dazzlingly pure, immutably holy, and severely tested offering, which Christ in his own person presents to the Father.

Regard him now as submitting himself, not only to the disgrace of a public arrest, but also to the fate of a common delinquent, in obedience to his Father's will. But how willingly does this conviction cause him to descend to such a depth, and unhesitatingly to resign himself into the hands of sinners! Hear him address his enemies. With the majesty, freedom, and sublime composure of One who, far from being overwhelmed by that which befalls him, marks out himself the path on which he is to walk, and who, in accordance with his Father's counsel, ordains his fate himself; he says to the multitude, and especially to their leaders, the chief priests, and the captains of the Jewish temple-guard, and to the elders, the assessors of the Sanhedrin, who, in the heat of their

enmity to Jesus, had come out with the intention of encouraging the captors by their presence, "Are you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you laid no hold on me, nor stretched forth your hands against me."

Our Lord, by these words, intends, first, that they shall serve as a testimony, not merely to those that heard them, but also to the whole world, that he was led guiltless to the slaughter, and that the shadow, which Peter's smiting with the sword might have cast upon him and his adherents, was entirely dispelled; and next, that no power on earth would have been able to overcome him, had he not, when his hour was come, voluntarily yielded up himself in free submission to his Father's will. Until he had completed his ministerial office, no enemy dared to touch him. Nor had they been able to discover anything in him which might have enabled them to prosecute him. The invisible barrier is now removed. "This," continues the Savior, to the profound confusion of his adversaries, "this is your hour and the power of darkness." His meaning is, "By an act of the Divine government the chain of Satan has been lengthened, the bridle of hell, whose armor-bearers you manifest yourselves to be, has been removed, that it may do with me as it pleases." What self-possession and divine composure are in these words! With such unreserved willingness does he yield himself up to the most disgraceful treatment. Not even the slightest feeling of a disturbed or revengeful affection rises up within him against the reprobates. His soul continues in a state of equanimity and serenity, just as if they were not jailers' assistants, who bound him with cords, but followers and friends, who were winding chaplets for him.

But what benefit do we derive from the fact of Christ's giving himself up so completely and devotedly to the Father? The greatest and most beatifying of which thought is capable. Listen! Jehovah says in his law, "You shall not appear before me empty." Consider, that if we wish to inherit heaven, we cannot do without that, to which salvation is promised as the reward. We now possess it, and the days of our grief and shame are at an end. We may now boldly appear before the Father, and need no longer apprehend anything discouraging from him when we express our desire that he should love us, and open the gates of his palace to us. "But

what have we to exhibit to him that is meritorious?" Sufficient, my readers—yes, more than the angels possess. We have, indeed, nothing of our own. In the records of our lives we perceive only transgression and guilt. But God be thanked that we need nothing of our own, and are even interdicted from trusting and depending upon anything of the kind. We are instructed to appeal to the righteousness of another, and this is the living "offering" of which we speak—Christ, with the entire fullness of his obedience in our stead. If he was accepted so are we, since all that he did and suffered is placed to our account. For, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Those who are in Christ are no longer transgressors in the sight of God, but pure, blameless, and spotless. What a blissful mystery! If you are unable to believe it, grant it, at least, a place in your memory. The hour may come in which you will be able to use it; for we have often had occasion to witness how it has fared at the last with those who supposed themselves among the most pious and holy of mankind. Whatever of a meritorious and approved character they imagined they possessed, nothing remained when the light of eternity and approaching judgment threw its penetrating rays upon their past lives. The splendor of their virtues expired, their gold became dim, and that which they had preserved as real worth, proved only tinsel and valueless. What is to be done in such a case? How weave together, in haste, such a righteousness as God requires, and without which no man can enter heaven? What answer are we to make to the accusers that open their mouths against us —Satan, the law, and our own consciences, which say to us, "You are the man?" Really, if we are not to give ourselves up to despair, something which is not ours must be bestowed upon us, which we may offer unto God as the ground of our claim to salvation. The living offering which Christ made of himself can then alone suffice, and that abundantly, to recommend us to God. Possessing this, we no longer need be mute in the presence of our accusers. In Christ, as our Surety, we fulfilled the conditions to which the heavenly inheritance is attached. Henceforth, who will accuse us, who will condemn us? We rejoice with Paul, and say, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Lord Jesus appears in our narrative, not only as an "offering," but

also as a "sacrifice." Our sins are imputed to him, and in his sacred humanity he endured what they deserved. Let us, therefore, now consider him in the character of our representative, and the sufferings he endured, and the wrongs he sustained, will then appear in their proper light.

A horrible scene presents itself to my mind, in which every one ought to recognize his own likeness. I see a murderer; for it is written, "He who hates his brother is a murderer." I perceive a robber; one who is guilty in two respects; toward God, in depriving him; by unbelief and pride, of his glory; and toward his neighbor, whom he has injured by envy or evil-speaking. Thus the curse of the law impends over him, and the divine denunciations attend his steps. A dreadful fate awaits the unhappy mortal —first, an assault in an hour of darkness, and then a dreadful arrest and captivity. He proceeds for a while freely and securely upon his path, and yields obedience to his fleshly lusts fearing no evil. But before he is aware, the sentence is pronounced over him, "Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe!" Horrible beings, the one more dreadful than the other, put themselves in motion. The day has disappeared, the night has overtaken the man. The gloom of his dying hour envelops him. What occurs? In what situation does the miserable being find himself? Are they ministers of vengeance which surround him? Are they demons and spirits from the pit? He hears the clashing of irons and the clanking of chains and fetters. He finds himself in the power of another, surrounded, seized, and apprehended. He can no longer go where he likes. A horrible guard take him between them, and an iron necessity indicates to him the way that he must take. As long as he sojourned on earth, it was, perhaps, only the flattering voice of applause and commendation that reached his ears. The hour of his accusers now arrives, and he hears on every side the thundering accusation, "You are the man!" Hitherto he had experienced so little annoyance from the powers of darkness that he thought himself at liberty to doubt their existence. They now emerge from their hiding-places, and he learns to believe in the devil, now that he finds himself in his power. For it is he, and his infernal bands, who have fallen upon him, in the midst of his fancied security, in order that they may bind him in chains of darkness, and drag the resisting criminal, with yells of execration, there, where he will be reserved for that burning day, when the Judge of the world will pronounce the final sentence, even the

dreadful words, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Such is the horrible future which presents itself to my mind. It is no empty product of a heated imagination, but contains in it real truth and substance; for in this representation we each behold ourselves, as in our natural state, and are conscious of the curse, which, as long as we remain in it, impends over us, and the gloomy fate that awaits us.

But to return to our narrative. What does it present to us but a picture resembling in every feature that which we have just been contemplating? How wonderful and striking is this circumstance! We see at the entrance to Gethsemane one who would seem to be nothing better than a robber and a murderer. In the dead of night he is set upon by order of the public authorities with swords and spears, surrounded by an armed band, and taken prisoner. And what is the language of the captive? "This," he exclaims, "is your hour;" by which he means to say, "You, my adversaries, have full liberty to deal with me as you please. Fall upon me, accuse me, disgrace me, and drag me to the scaffold; I am at your mercy." And then he says further, "This is the power of darkness"—the meaning of which is, "Hell is now granted free access to me, and can do with me as it likes; for by a judicial decision I am given up to its power." And lo, the man is actually seized, bound like a dangerous malefactor, dragged with crude threats before the bar of judgment, and before long we shall hear him cry, in the deepest distress, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

We here see the same situation and fate as we saw before was the deserved lot of every individual simmer. And who is the man on whom those horrors are poured out? One who is ignorant of it would say "Who can he be but a criminal of the worst description?" And this would be relatively correct. He who is arrested is such a one, and yet, at the same time, "the Holy and the Just." How this can agree together is intimated by Paul, in the well-known words, "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteous ness of God in him."

A blissful and heart-cheering mystery is here presented before us. If I possess saving faith, I find myself in a peculiar relation to the sufferer at Gethsemane. For know that the horrors he there experienced are not his curse but mine. The Holy and the Just submits himself, representatively,

to the fate of the guilty and the damnable; while the latter are forever liberated, and inherit the lot of the holy Son of God. Wonderful and incomparably blissful truth! Our only shield and comfort in life and death!

O you blessed, who belong to Christ, who can worthily describe the glory of your state! We hail the wondrous exchange which the eternal Son of God has made with you. We glorify the Surety and the Liquidator of your debts. Never forget the nocturnal arrest of your High Priest. Paint it, in bright and vivid colors, on the walls of your chambers. If you are again reminded of the curse which your sins had brought upon you, accustom yourselves to regard it only in this sacred picture, where you no longer behold it lying upon you, but upon him, in whose agonies it eternally perished.

Therefore, let not shadows any longer disturb you. There will never be a period in eternity when you will be compelled to say to your enemies and accusers, "Now is your hour and the power of darkness." Your representative uttered it, once for all, for you; and henceforward only the hour of triumph and delight, which shall never end, awaits you. Peace be with you, therefore, you who are justified by his righteousness, and forever perfected by his one offering! No longer dream of imaginary burdens, but know and never forget that your suit is gained to all eternity. Behold Christ yonder bears your fetters; and nothing more is required of you than to love him with all your heart, and embrace him more and more closely who took your entire anathema upon himself, that you might be able eternally to rejoice and exclaim, "Jehovah Zidkenu—the Lord our Righteousness."

Christ Before Annas

The armed band have executed their object, with regard to Christ, and the Eleven, perceiving it, have fled to the right and left. A young man who also belonged to the little flock, and resided near, having heard the tumult, in holy indignation against the banditti, had hastened from his couch to the revolting scene, in his night-dress. But no sooner was he

observed by the mercenaries, than he was laid hold of, and only escaped from bonds and probably even death, by leaving in their hands his linen covering, and fleeing away naked. This little circumstance is related by one of the Evangelists, doubtless in order to point out and excuse the flight of the disciples, as rendered imperative by the most imminent danger.

Surrounded by a bristling forest of swords and spears, the Lord Jesus suffered his hands to be bound, like a captive robber, by a troop of crude mercenaries, in the name of public justice. Think of those hands being bound which were never extended except to heal and aid, to benefit and save, and never to injure, except it be considered as a crime to uncover to mankind their wounds, in order to heal and bind them up; to destroy the Babels of delusion, and in their place to erect the temple of truth; and to pull down the altars of false gods, in order to make room for that of the only true God.

Jesus bound! What a spectacle! How many a prophetic type of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in this fact! If you inquire for the antitype of Isaac, when bound by his father as a lamb for a burnt offering; or for that of the ram on Mount Moriah, which was caught in the thicket because God had destined it for the sacrifice; or of the sacred ark of the covenant, when it had fallen into the hands of the Philistine, only, however, to cast down the idols of the latter; or of that of Jacob's son, arrested and imprisoned in Egypt, whose path lay through the company of criminals, to almost regal dignity and crowns of honor; or for that of the paschal lambs, which, before being slaughtered for the sins of the people, were accustomed to be tied up to the threshold of the temple; or finally, for that of the captive Samson, who derided Delilah's band, and came forth victoriously from the conflict with the Philistines—all these types and shadows found their entire fulfillment in Jesus, thus bound, as their embodied original and antitype.

Jesus bound! Can we trust our eyes? Omnipotence in fetters, the Creator bound by the creature; the Lord of the world, the captive of his mortal subjects! How much easier would it have been for him to have burst those bonds than Manoah's son of old! However, he rends them not; but yields himself up to them as one who is powerless and overcome. This his passive deportment must have for its basis a great and sublime intention. And such is really the case, as we have already seen.

Behold them marching off in triumph with their captive. They conduct him first to Annas, the previous high priest, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, a sinner of a hundred years old. But why first to him? Perhaps

out of compliment to the old man, who probably wished to see the fanatic of Nazareth. His being brought before him, however, seems to have been the result of a secret arrangement between him and his son-in-law; and he, the old Sadducee, was perhaps more deeply interested in the whole affair with Jesus than outwardly appears to be the case. The preliminary hearing, which now commenced, was doubtless instituted by him, and not by Caiaphas. Even the irregular course which it takes, places this beyond a doubt. What appears in the Gospels to contradict this assumption, loses all its importance, as soon as we suppose—for which there is sufficient reason—that Annas was residing in the high priestly palace with his son-in-law.

Thus, the Lord stands at the bar of his first judge—one of those miserable men, of whom, alas! not a few are to be found among us, and who, "twice dead," estranged from the truth of God, and satisfied with the most common-place occurrences of life, think of nothing better, but treat the most sublime things at least only as a spectacle; and in their perfect unsusceptibility for everything that is divine, visibly bear on their fore heads the brandmark of the curse. Certainly, it was not one of the least of the sufferings of the Holy One of Israel to see himself delivered into the hands of such a man, so destitute of every noble feeling. And only look how the hoary-headed sinner domineers over and puffs himself up against the Lord of Glory, although he is not even the actual high priest, and while he was so, presented only an airy shadow of the true High Priest, who, Priest and King at the same time, stands now before him, in the person of the captive Nazarene! Jesus, however, endures with resignation all the indignities to which he is subjected, and we know for what reason he does so. We are acquainted with the mysterious position he occupies, in which, he not only shows us, by his own example, that his kingdom is not of this world, and that honor is something different from what the world is accustomed to characterize by that name, but also that he fills it as our Surety, whom it became to present, to the Eternal Father, the sublime virtues of a perfect self-denial and resignation in our stead, and in opposition to our ungodly self-exaltation.

Annas proceeds with the hearing of the case, and interrogates our Lord respecting his disciples and his doctrine. He hopes that the statements of

Jesus may enable him to bring an accusation against the former as a politically dangerous association, and against the latter as being a wicked and blasphemous heresy. In his questions, he is presumptuous enough to treat our Lord as the disguised head of a party, and a secret plotter, notwithstanding that he brought forward his cause in the most public manner, and walked every where in broad daylight. But the world still acts like Annas. Because it will not acknowledge that we possess the real and eternal truth of God: it stamps the latter as heretical, and brands us as a sect. The world cannot bear that believers should call themselves "true Christians," and never fails to attach some opprobrious epithet to them. However boldly we may preach our doctrine, and however completely we may prove that we confess and believe nothing else than what the whole Christian Church has believed and professed before us, and for which the noblest and most excellent of men in every age have blissfully lived and died—yet the world persists in maintaining that our faith is only the religion of conventicles, and we ourselves only narrow-minded fanatics. It strives, by these artful suspicions, to keep the truth, with its goads and nails, far from it, and thus to give its ungodly and carnal proceedings at least a semblance of correctness.

The Lord answers the old priest's questions regarding his doctrine; for it was less requisite here to defend the honor of his person than that of his cause, which was, at the same time, the cause of God, and which he, therefore, felt called upon to vindicate. He also wished to make it clearly known throughout all ages, that he was condemned and crucified solely because of his asserting his Divine Sonship. "I spoke," says he, "openly to the world"—that is, "I opened my mouth boldly." Yes, in all that he spoke, the profound assurance and powerful conviction of being the Lord from heaven, who revealed that which he had himself seen and handled, was perceptible; not like the wise men after the flesh, who defend their propositions with many proofs and arguments against possible objections; but as knowing that he who was of the truth would hear his voice, and acknowledge his word to be the word of the living God. Nor did he deceive himself with reference to this. To this day, when any one is delivered from the snare of the devil, and attains to the knowledge of his necessities, he needs no other proof of the truth of the words of Jesus; since his heart hears them as if spoken direct from heaven, and discovers

between the language of Jesus and the most intellectual discourses of mere mortals, a gulf of difference so immense, that it is incomprehensible to him that he did not long before perceive it.

The Lord Jesus continues: "I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews always resort." He had done so, and no one had ever been able to prove that he had taught anything which was not in strict accordance with the Old Testament Scriptures, and did not most beautifully harmonize with the nature and being of a holy God. The Masters in Israel were compelled, by his discourses, mutely to lay down their arms. Why then does Annas inquire respecting his doctrine? An expositor well observes here, that "We may discern in Jesus all the marks of a true teacher—confidence, which delivers its testimony before the whole world; persevering continuance in that testimony at all times; and a siding with existing divine and human ordinances."

"In secret have I said nothing," says the Lord Jesus further. No, not even that which was enigmatical, obscure, and mysterious, much of which was explained only in the course of centuries, while other things remain, to this hour, partially closed and sealed to us, and await their elucidation. He knew that these things would long be inexplicable to his people; but this did not hinder him from uttering them. This is another proof that he was clearly conscious that his doctrine was divine, and would therefore continue to the end of time.

"Why ask you me?"—says our Lord in conclusion—"Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I have said." How could the Lord testify more strongly to the purity and divinity of his doctrine, than by calling upon his judge to summon before him all those, either friends or foes, who had ever heard him speak, and ask them if they were able to say anything against him which might furnish ground for accusation. Nor to the present day does he show any witnesses, but appeals as before, on behalf of his cause, to all who hear and receive his word; and these unanimously, from their own conviction, confirm it, and will ever do so, that the doctrine of Jesus is of God, and that he has not spoken of himself.

While the Lord is speaking, one of the servants of the high priest rises up

and smites him on the face, while saying, "Answer you the high priest so?" From this circumstance, we may perceive what is intended with respect to Jesus. This first maltreatment gave the signal for all that followed. It did not escape the servant how completely his master was embarrassed by the simple reply of the accused; and this crude blow was the only and final means which presented itself of rescuing him from his painful and disgraceful dilemma. The fellow well knew that it would be allowed him—no, that he would only rise by it in the favor of his master; and thus the feeling of the family reflected itself, as is often the case, in the soul of the menial who wore its livery.

It was horrible to act thus toward the Lord from heaven. For this very crime alone, which must not be placed to the account of a single individual, but to our corrupt human nature, to the guilty race of Adam, it was fit that hell should open its mouth and swallow it up, as the pit formerly did Korah and his company. But Jesus came not to hasten our perdition, but to prevent it. We therefore do not behold the wicked man scathed by lightning from heaven, nor his hand withered, like that of Jeroboam, on his stretching it out to smite; nor that the deeply insulted Jesus threatens or reviles, but resignedly endures the injury, which his holy soul must have felt more painfully than his body, while gently reproving the worthless man, and thus again fulfilling that which had long before been predicted of him, "Then I restored what I took not away."

"Answer you the high priest so?" As if the Lord, who knew better than any one else what was becoming in his converse with mankind, had infringed upon reverence due to the sacerdotal dignity. But how often are we treated in a similar manner, when the truth which we proclaim to the men of the world can no longer be assailed. We are then called bold, presumptuous, obstinate, etc. And woe to us completely, when we presume to abide firmly by our belief before dignitaries and superiors, and refuse to deviate from the truth! How does hypocritical zeal for the preservation of the honor of authority start up against us, and how pompously it calls out to us, "Answer you the high priest so?" while it would also gladly smite us on the cheek. But what is left for us, in such situations, except to make use of our Master's own words, "If I have

spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smite you me?"

How overpowering was this speech to both master and servant! It was like the stroke of a hammer, driving the sting of their evil conscience still deeper into the marrow. The blow on the cheek, with its accompanying brutal language, was only a clear proof that the miserable men felt themselves unable to bring anything of a culpable nature against the Lord. By acting thus, they only smote themselves in the face, since by their conduct they made it evident how deeply and painfully they had felt the truth.

Thus our Lord and Master came forth perfectly justified from this first examination, and the high priest and his satellites were covered with disgrace. In their fate we see reflected that of all those who dare to lift the shield against the Lord's cause, which, through the power of inward truth, victoriously repels every attack. Whatever may be planned and undertaken against it, it invariably comes forth like the sun shining in the mists of the valley, and calmly looks down on all opposition and gainsaying as upon vanquished enemies.

The Judicial Procedure

Christ at the bar of the ecclesiastical tribunal is the subject to which our meditations are now to be directed. The apparent contradictions in the life of Jesus increase, and become the more striking, the nearer it approaches its close. Think of the Holy One of God arraigned as a criminal; the Judge of the world judged by sinners! Where was there ever a more outrageous contrast exhibited! And that which thus displays itself on the stage of the world's history is not the most astonishing or the strangest part of that which here occurs. The exterior of the event, occupies, as we have already seen, the place of a screen, interwoven with symbolical figures, behind which the real judicial act is accomplished, which is typified by the former, and only obvious to the eye of faith—an act which, in a higher degree, concerns us all, and which is carried on before an infinitely higher tribunal than that of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Night still reigns. The city of Jerusalem lies for the most part in profound slumber, and has no presentiment of the awful events which are occurring within its walls. Occasionally, isolated footsteps are heard along the streets, in the direction of the high priest's palace, the windows of which, now glaring at an unwonted hour with the light of lamps and torches, cause events of an extraordinary nature to be inferred. Let us also repair there. An assembly of high rank, collected together in the spacious hall of audience, receives us. It is the council of the seventy rulers of Israel, with the high priest as its president. A venerable assembly, as regards its appointment; the most illustrious and awe-inspiring in the whole world; since, sitting in the seat of Moses, in the midst of the chosen people, its office is to administer justice according to the book of the law, and in the name of the Most High God. Next to the president we perceive the men who had previously filled the office of high priest. Behind these, we observe the representatives of the four and twenty classes of the priesthood. Then follow the elders or rulers of the synagogues, while the rest of the assembly is composed of the most eminent doctors of the law, men well versed in the Mosaic statutes and the traditions and ordinances of the Rabbis.

It was the primary duty of these men, as keepers of the sanctuary, to maintain the observance of the ordinances of Jehovah among the people; to settle the legal differences of the various tribes; to watch over the purity of doctrine and of divine service; and to examine and judge any heresies that might spring up. It certainly belonged to the privileges and even duties of the authority thus constituted, to bring before them a man who gave himself out for the Messiah; and to examine him in the strictest manner. And that it did not occur to the Holy One of Israel to dispute their right to this, is clearly manifest from the reverence, which, apart from the moral qualities of its individual members, did not fail to show itself in his deportment during the whole course of the proceedings. In the Sanhedrin he sees the tribunal of the Divine judge—but in a superior manner; that is, while hearing the voice of God through its medium, even when the counselors, as respects their own persons, speak from the suggestions of Satan; and while regarding the unrighteous judgments of the latter as changed, with reference to himself, into well-founded and just decisions of the court of judicature above.

Before this supreme tribunal the Savior of mankind stands bound; for we must not limit the great judicial procedure to that which is visible, but must seek it especially in the invisible world. The Lord does not stand at the bar as a Holy One, but as the representative of sinners. Our catalogue of crimes is displayed before him, as if they were his own. Our sins are charged upon him, for he bears them. He is laid in the scales of justice with our transgressions, for they are imputed to him. What may then have passed between him and the Majesty upon the throne, is concealed from us by the veil of eternity. One thing, however, we know, that he stood there in our place. Had he not appeared, that position would have been ours; and woe unto us, had we been made responsible for our sins! Such a thought need no longer terrify us, if we belong to Christ's flock. What was due from us, he has paid. We come no more into condemnation, since he has taken our place. We know no longer any judge; for the Judge is our friend. How blissful is this consciousness! Eternal praise to him to whom we owe it all.

But we return to the hall of judgment. The council seek for witnesses against Jesus. They seek, because unsought, nothing of the kind presents itself. That which is unsought is all in his favor. But they have already decided to put him to death. Why? Because he spoils the game of the proud men, who have him in their power, and every where comes in the way of their selfish practices. Their heads are less at variance with him than their hearts. But generally this is not the case with his enemies. They dislike him because he disturbs them in their sinful haunts; because he disapproves of the ways of vanity in which they walk, judges their ungodly and carnal deeds, and pronounces them deficient in that righteousness which avails before God. And because, for these reasons, they dislike him, they seek for witnesses against him, denying above all things his divinity; for if he were God, who would absolve them from the duty of reverencing him and believing his word, which condemns them? And what kind of witnesses do they bring against him? O the miserable authorities to which they appeal, who not only contradict one another incessantly, but themselves every moment! while the witnesses which we bring forward in behalf of our faith, are the devout seers and prophets, the holy evangelists and apostles, the thousands of martyrs, who, in his strength, have sung their psalms to him in the midst of the flames—yes,

we appeal to the entire history of his Church, as well as to the daily experience of all believers, as to a continuous testimony in favor of him who is the object of our love, and of the truth of his cause.

The council of the Sanhedrin, who are anxious for the people's sake, and probably also for the sake of their own consciences, to clothe their legal murder, with at least an appearance of justice, take great pains to find witnesses against Jesus. But a more fruitless undertaking was perhaps never attempted. They long to meet, in the garden of his life, with a single poisonous plant, from which they may weave for him a fatal wreath. They find, indeed, an abundance of flowers for a crown of honor, but not the vestige of a weed. Desperation then advises an extreme course. A number of bribed witnesses are suborned—fellows well experienced in all the arts of rendering another suspected—who strive to fasten one or other false accusation on the Holy One. But what is the result? They expose themselves, with those who hired them, in the most barefaced manner, and serve only as a new foil to the innocence of the accused. What they adduce, condemns itself as an absurdity, and not even that is attained which was indispensably required by the Mosaic law, that their testimony should correspond. They become more and more confused, refute one another against their will, and remind us of the word of the Lord by the mouth of Zechariah, "I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness."

The venerable assembly now finds itself in the most painful dilemma. At length, two witnesses come forward, and hope, by means of an expression which the Lord had once uttered a year before, and which they now charge him with—naturally in a malicious and perverted form, to make amends for the deficiencies in their accusation. The words adduced are those in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Even at the time, this expression, which he doubtless divested of any serious misapprehension by pointing to himself, was most maliciously misinterpreted by the Jews who were present. "Forty and six years," said they, "was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days? But he spoke," says the Evangelist, "of the temple of his body." The two hirelings were aware of this. It seemed to them, however, a very suitable expression to make use of for casting upon Jesus the appearance not only

of an ungodly boaster, but also of a crime against the Divine Majesty, by blaspheming the temple. Thus we hear them say, "He boasted that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it again in three days." But they, too, fall into the most glaring contradictions on the outset, as partly appears from the Gospel narratives. The one maintaining that Jesus had said, "I will," the other, "I can;" the one, "I will destroy the temple of God, and build it in three days;" the other, "This temple that is made with hands, I will destroy, and within three days I will build another without hands."

Suffice it to say, the opposing statements of the two complete the scene of confusion; and even the high priest is not yet base and inconsiderate enough to pronounce his judicial decision upon such miserable and suspicious evidence. His conscience was still sufficiently susceptible to make him sensibly feel the pitifulness and worthlessness of these last testimonies; and if it were not the voice of his inward monitor which raised itself against it, yet the secret apprehension that such a judicial inquiry might not satisfy the people, as well as the impressive, sublime, and commanding tranquility which the accused opposed to the wretched fabrication of the two witnesses, restrained him from it. Thus in the end, the whole inquisitorial proceeding of the judge, although so well versed in scraping together the moral weaknesses and defects of offenders against the law, only tended to our Lord's glorification, since by it his spotless innocence was placed in the clearest light. Yes, my readers, he is the Lamb without spot, which it was necessary he should be in order to take away our guilt.

But how does the accused conduct himself during the judicial procedure? His whole conduct is extremely significant and remarkable. With a judicial mien, which only partially covers his perplexity, the high priest says to him, in an imperious tone, "Answer you nothing to what these witness against you?" "But Jesus," as we are told by the narrative, "held his peace." How eloquent was this silence—more overwhelming for the children of the father of lies than the severest reproofs would have been! And why make many words on this occasion? since his enemies, though against their will, witnessed so powerfully in his favor that he needed no further justification. He was silent. How easy would it have been for him,

by a few words, to have most painfully exposed the august assembly! But he honors in it, as before, the powers ordained of God, of whatever injustice they may be guilty; and, viewing the matter thus, he deems it becoming him to hold his peace. He does so, remarks an expositor, like an ill-treated child, who is silent before his unjust father. The essential meaning of his silence, however, lies still deeper. It is not merely the silence of a good conscience, but rightly understood, the reverse. His holding his peace is the reflection of a more mysterious silence before another and higher than any human tribunal; and regarded from this point of view, it may be considered as a silence of confession and assent.

When a criminal makes no reply to the accusations brought against him before a human tribunal, it is regarded as an admission of his guilt. Thus we must also regard the silence of Jesus, who, having taken upon him, before God, the sins of his people by a mysterious imputation, deems himself worthy of death and the curse. By mutely listening to the accusations of his judges, without attempting to exculpate himself, he wishes outwardly to intimate the actual offering up of himself as a culprit in our stead. Thus he is silent, not only as a lamb, but also as the Lamb which takes away the sin of the world. His silence enables us to speak in judgment, and gives us power and liberty to lift up our heads boldly against every accusation, while trusting to the justification wrought out for us by the Redeemer.

May the Lord instruct us all when to speak and when to be silent; the former, by enlightening the darkness of our natural state; and the latter, by an application to our hearts and consciences, of the consolatory mystery of the sufferings of Jesus for us! There is only one way of escaping the horrors of future judgment, and that is, the believing apprehension of all that our Surety has accomplished in our stead. May God strengthen our faith for this purpose more and more, and enable each of us from the heart to exclaim, in the words of the apostle, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

The Fall of Peter

In addition to all his other sufferings, our blessed Lord had also to endure that of being denied by one of the little company of his confidential disciples, on whose fidelity he ought to have been able to reckon under all circumstances. His heart was not to be a stranger to any grief or pain, in order that he might be to us in all things a compassionate High Priest. But how would the Scriptures have been fulfilled, had he not also experienced the fate of his living prototypes—Joseph, delivered up by his brethren, and David forsaken in the season of his calamities—or how verified the prophetic language of the Psalmist, "Lover and friend have you put far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness?" At the same time it was to be made manifest, for our consolation, that "he had received gifts even for the rebellious;" and where is this more evident than in the grievous event which we are about to contemplate?

Let us join ourselves in spirit to Simon Peter. If any one was ever ardently attached to the Savior, it was he; but he was only partially conscious of what it was that he loved in Jesus. The mystery in his vicarious character, and the consequent necessity for the offering up of himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, was still concealed from him. He had only a kind of general perception that his salvation in some way depended upon fellowship with Jesus, and that without him he would infallibly perish. In Peter, as in many churches where the Gospel is not preached in all its fullness, faith and love preceded religious knowledge and discernment. More the subject of feeling than of a divinely enlightened understanding, which regulates the whole life, Peter reminds us of that class of our brethren, of whom we are accustomed to say that though they possess the burning heart, yet they are still in want of the light of the Holy Spirit. The new life is implanted in its germ, and the ability to develop itself to the aim of its heavenly calling exists: but the development itself is still far behind, and much remains for the Holy Spirit to enlarge and complete.

The cause of Peter's ignorance of the chief intention of Christ's coming into the world, was his deficiency in the knowledge of himself. He knew, indeed, that as a poor sinner, he stood in need of mercy: but he had no idea of the boundless extent of man's moral depravity and inability. Over this a veil was thrown by the sparkling and deceptive brilliancy of his sentimental state. He felt himself animated by such an ardent love and

enthusiasm for Jesus, that the smallest suspicion, in this respect, wounded him deeply. Alas! he did not yet know how much the noblest human feelings depend upon the change of circumstances, situations, and seasons. The declaration of Jeremiah, that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," was not obvious to his understanding. He was ignorant that one who could be enthusiastic for Jesus transfigured on Mount Tabor, possessed no pledge, from this feeling, that he would be equally zealous for Jesus ignominiously crucified on Mount Calvary. Just as little did he imagine that what pervaded his mind under the sound of his Master's affectionate parting address, in the solemn stillness of the midnight hour, by no means necessarily enabled him still to cleave to him when arrested and disgracefully dragged before a judicial tribunal.

We read of Gideon, that the Lord said to him, "Go in this your might;" and to this day, it is only the Lord's gracious inspiration which produces true heroism. But of this Peter was ignorant. Instead of despairing of all his own courage and leaning solely on the strength of the Lord, he trusted to his own valor, which he lamentably over-estimated; and instead of applying for spiritual weapons to him who said, "Without me, you can do nothing:" the simple disciple, in the armor of his own feeling of affection for his Master, thought himself sufficiently able to cope with Satan and his crafty devices.

Peter was like the man in the Gospel, who went to war without first sitting down and counting the cost. He might have already perceived that he was acting foolishly, when after his rash assault on the servant of the high priest and the Lord's subsequent resignation of himself to the hands of his enemies, his zeal was instantly extinguished, so that he was cowardly enough to take to a disgraceful flight with the rest. True, he again bethought himself after a time; but that which induced him to follow his captive Lord at a distance, was, in reality, more the spur of a despicable pride, than the noble impulse of a "love strong as death." He had spoken so openly and loudly of never denying his Master, and even of going to death with him; and what would be thought of him if he were now to break his vows and vanish from the field? No, he was resolved never to be regarded as a coward. Where his Master is, there he must be.

Like a vessel steering against the wind, he follows in due distance the march of the armed band. He goes forward with feeble knees and inward reluctance. What would he give if some unavoidable and obvious hindrance were to block up his way and prevent his further advance! In fact, such a wished-for obstacle seems to present itself, in the gates being closed as soon as the band, with their captive, have entered into the court-yard of the high priest's palace. Peter would now have felt himself excused, had he gone away, since however willing he might be, he could proceed no further. If we mistake not, he is already preparing to depart; but just as if everything conspired to promote his fall, it happened accidentally, as people say, that before the entrance, he meets with a friend and fellow-believer, who was known to the high priest; and who, being on amicable terms with him, went freely in and out of his house. The latter addresses a few words to the door-keeper, and Peter, whether willingly or unwillingly, is admitted.

We are not informed who the disciple was that procured his admission. If, as many suppose, it was the Evangelist John himself, to whom we owe the mention of this unimportant event, it is pleasing and truly affecting to see him taking, in this statement, part of the blame from his friend Peter, and putting it upon himself. But whoever he may have been, the question still urges itself upon us, why God in his providence did not so order it that Peter should arrive only a few minutes earlier at the gate of the court-yard; since that eventful meeting would have then been avoided, and the whole of the subsequent mischief prevented? The answer is easy. Although it remains a truth that God tempts no one, much less causes him to stumble and fall: yet he not infrequently visits with severe trials those whom he loves, and even does not prevent their falling, when they do not attend to his word and disbelieve his warnings; thus refusing to be healed of their presumptuous reliance on their own ability in any other way than by bitter experience. Even Peter's fall, which, as regards its guilt, must be placed solely to his own account, and is fully explained by the self-dependence of the disciple, was intended by God as a medicine for his soul, which aimed at its thorough healing of its foolish and blind self-confidence. The Lord Jesus had already clearly hinted at this, and also at the salutary results of his lamentable fall, when he addressed to Peter the encouraging words, "When you are converted, strengthen your

brethren."

Simon passes with tottering steps over the threshold of the opened gate, and thus sets foot on the scene of his trial. O that he had now cast himself down in prayer before God! But instead of this, he still depends upon himself; and upon the chance of accidents and circumstances. Satan and the world already stand armed against him on the field. He had no need to fear them, if he had only put on the breastplate of faith. We can now do nothing but tremble for the poor man, and should be compelled to give him up for lost, were we not aware of the admirable protection afforded him, but of which he is unconscious. The solemnity with which the Lord, on the way to Gethsemane, foretold what awaited him, hangs in his memory, though silent for a while—like a bell which, at the proper time, will give the signal for his restoration. The cock, the divinely appointed alarmist already stands at his post, and his crowing wail not fail of its due effect. The Savior's intercession, that Peter's faith might not fail, hovers, like a protecting shield, over his head; and he who never quenches the smoking flax, nor breaks the bruised reed, continues near the endangered disciple, and in the hour of distress will afford him seasonable aid.

Let us now consider the melancholy event which took place in the court-yard of the high priest. At the moment when Simon is admitted, at the intercession of his friend, the damsel that kept the door, holding up her lantern to his face, regarded him with a look as if she knew him, but is not quite sure of it. Peter, seeing this, turns away his face, and hastens as quickly as possible past the woman, lest she should recognize him. In the center of the court-yard the soldiers had kindled a fire, to protect themselves against the raw, cold, morning air, and, crowding round it, pass the time in talking and joking; while inside the house the proceedings against Jesus are going on.

Peter, who feels uncomfortable enough in such an atmosphere, approaches the noisy group, and with a careless mien, as if only anxious to warm himself, takes his place among them. In fact, his denial had now commenced, for his intention was evidently to appear to the mercenaries as if he belonged to their party, and shared their sentiments with regard to the Nazarene. Not a little pleased at having thus attained a twofold object—the safety of his person, and the being able to say that he had

manifested his courage in thus mingling with the adversaries, and fulfilling his promise not to forsake his Master—the pitiable hero sits there and expects that he will be able to witness the future course of events without danger to himself. On a sudden, a painful stop is put to these calculations. The porteress, who wished to assure herself whether or not she had mistaken the stranger whom she had admitted, steals there unobserved, and mingling among the soldiery, discovers, by the light of the flickering flame, the lurking guest; and looking over his shoulder in his face, she asks him, with a triumphant and malicious leer, "Were you not also with Jesus of Nazareth? Are you not one of his disciples?"

Who can describe Peter's confusion at this question? At the moment when he thought himself so safe, to be so suddenly assailed! However, he recollects himself, and thinks, "What does the woman mean? What right has she to put such a question? It is too much to be obliged to answer every idle inquirer. I would have told Caiaphas, or one of the chief priests, who I am, but who is this busy-body, that I should give an answer to her?" Thinking thus, he replies, with the emphasis of one whose honor is assailed, "Woman, I know him not. I know not what you say."

Alas! Alas! He who offered to take up the gauntlet for Jesus, even if thrown down by the king of terrors, succumbs at the first idea of danger, suggested by the question of a menial servant! Who does not perceive from his language the tempest of accusing and excusing thoughts which rages within? "I am not; I know him not," is first uttered with tolerable decision. But then, condemned by conscience, he seeks to bear out this denial in some measure, while passing by the necessity of a direct answer, by adopting another mode of speech, and adding, "I know not what you say. What do you mean? I do not understand you." But this no longer suffices to expunge the unambiguous words, "I know him not."

While stammering out this lamentable prevarication, he rises from his seat, under the influence of alarm and inward rebuke, and attempts to retire unobserved from his dangerous position, in which he succeeds without being again attacked. He bends his steps toward the gate, in the hope of finding it open and being able to make his escape. The cock now crows for the first time, but the state of excitement which he is in, does

not suffer him, this time, to hear the warning sound, the more so, since the way is unexpectedly blocked up by another maidservant, who, calling to the soldiers who assemble round her, says, in a more definite manner than the former, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth!" The mercenaries are gratified by the stripping off of Peter's disguise, since it affords them the desired materials for additional joke and pastime. "Are you not also one of his disciples?" they ask, in a crude and threatening tone—"You belong also to the sect!"

What is the poor man to do now? After his foot has once slipped, we see him fall into a state of complete vacillation. The way to the second transgression is always rapidly traversed after the commission of the first. Some dark spirit then whispers in our ear that the repetition cannot make us more culpable, since God is accustomed not to number but to weigh our sins; or else, that by persisting in the commission of any particular sin, we only manifest that we do not exactly regard it as sin, and have, therefore, in some measure, sinned ignorantly. Suffice it to say that Peter now denies his Lord again, and this time at least, according to the sound of the words, more boldly than before, "Man," says he, "I am not," and then adds an asseveration; no, even so far forgets himself as to speak of his Master in a contemptuous tone while saying, "I know not the man!" They must now be forced to believe him, since no one would speak thus of his friend, if he were not the refuse of faithlessness and falsehood. They do not imagine Peter to be capable of such baseness, and therefore they let him go. O what a disgrace for the disciple, morally to have convinced the troop that he could not be Jesus' friend, but had sworn fealty to the banner of his adversaries.

Restless and fugitive, like a stricken and chased deer, the unhappy disciple wanders about the remote parts of the courtyard, but to his horror finds every outlet of escape closed against him. For a while he succeeds in withdrawing himself from the view—and further molestation both of the spearmen and domestics; but the danger of his situation takes such possession of his thoughts and senses that we must give up the hope of his taking to heart the extreme point to which the wind of temptation has carried him. He staggers about like one who is no longer master of himself, when, after the lapse of about another hour, a fresh crowd

surrounds him, who, after carefully weighing all the circumstances, have at length come to the conclusion that the stranger must certainly belong to the disciples of Jesus. "Surely," say they, with greater confidence than before, "you are also one of them;" and when he again begins to defend himself, they convict him of falsehood by his own words, and exclaim, "Your speech betrays you; you are a Galilean." Another soldier, attracted by the noise, looks him full in the face, and adds his confirmation to their assertion, by saying, "Of a truth this fellow also was with him." Last of all, a servant of the High Priest approaches, a kinsman of him whose ear Peter had cut off at Gethsemane, and says, "Did not I see you in the garden with him?"

Peter now finds himself completely entrapped. How is he to act? Two ways are open to him, either to reveal his disgraceful denials by a candid acknowledgment, and present his bare bosom to his enemies for Jesus' sake, or else to act his lamentable part completely through, in which case he must carry his barefaced falsehoods to the utmost. In a state bordering on desperation he decides upon the latter. In the confusion of the moment, I know not what he may, half unconsciously, have summoned up to soothe his conscience, at least for a time. Whether he took refuge in the subterfuge that such degraded characters were not worthy of having the name of Jesus confessed before them, which would be like casting pearls before swine, or whether he sought to deceive himself with the idea that he would spare his blood until the desired opportunity arrived of shedding it publicly before all the people in testimony of his faith, who shall decide? Suffice it to say, he is quite the old fisherman, the rough sailor again—no, even much worse than he had ever been before, and heaps oath upon oath, and curse upon curse, to confirm his assertion that he knew not the man. While calling down upon his head all that is dreadful, and abjuring his salvation, he exclaims, "I am no Christian; I know not the man of whom you speak." And he gives them this assurance with a gesture and in a tone as if no one under heaven was more despicable in his esteem than "that man," and as if a more outrageous injury could not have been inflicted upon him than by such a supposition. He is apparently beside himself at the grievous wrong which he is enduring. But the more violently he protests and cries out, the more obvious is his Galilean dialect; and the more this is the case, the more

certain at length are the mercenaries that they have not been mistaken in him. The measure of his sin is now full. The soldiers leave him to himself without giving him any further trouble, and turn their back upon him, either out of contempt, as deeming such a renegade unworthy of being stamped as a martyr, or else because, by the opening of the doors of the judgment hall, a new spectacle attracts their attention in a higher degree.

We break off, for the present, with painful feelings. "Is it, then, possible for the children of God to fall so far back into their former state?" Yes, my readers, if, instead of commending themselves, in true humiliation of spirit, to the grace of God, they enter the lists in presumptuous self-confidence, and rush of themselves into danger. In this case, there is no security against their experiencing similar defeats. The new man, in those who are regenerate, does not attain to such an unlimited superiority over the old, as no longer to require, on all occasions, the continuance of divine influence for the overcoming and restraining of the latter. It is true that the former will never yield the field to the flesh for long together, but in due time will again trample it under foot. It may, however, be the case, as it was with Peter, that the old Adam, under the pressure of seductive and darkening influences, may again burst his fetters, and, manifesting his depravity before God and man, may obtain a considerable advantage over the new man. Hence the Lord's pointed admonition to his disciples to watch and pray lest they fall into temptation. Simon Peter vowed and promised, certainly with the purest intentions, but neglected to watch and pray. What was the consequence? The first blast of temptation miserably overthrew him, and all his vows and promises were scattered to the winds.

"Let him, therefore, that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." In the kingdom of God, indeed, a defeat may bring more blessings than a victory; and more costly fruits often spring from stumblings than from the most apparently successful strivings after holiness. But woe unto him whom this truth would render reckless! Such a one would be in danger of being never raised up from his fall by the hand of divine grace. And though he might rise again, yet no one can calculate how far a relapse into sin might affect, at least the present life, by its destructive consequences. Therefore, let us ever bear in mind the apostolic exhortation, "Put on the

whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil;" as well as those other words of the same apostle, "Endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

The Great Confession

We return to the judgment hall of the Sanhedrin at a moment when profound and gloomy silence reigns. But even this pause has its import. The Spirit of Truth does his office in the assembly. Shame and embarrassment take possession of every mind. The false witnesses have acted their part most wretchedly, and stand unmasked. Their contradictory evidence only tends to their own disgrace. The sublime bearing of the accused, expressive only of innocence, completely paralyzes his adversaries. Every eye is now fixed on the presiding head of the Church. Every look seems to ask with amazement, "What are you about, you Priest of the Most High? Where is your wisdom; what is become of your dignity?" He, meanwhile, finds himself in the most painful situation in the world. Anxiety, both for the preservation of his official dignity, and for the result of the whole affair, torments his soul. There the proud hierarch sits, and his thoughts take tumultuous counsel how the difficulty may be overcome, and how he may escape from the pressure. Such is the end of the judicial procedure against the Holy One of Israel. I ask, who has lost the cause?—Jesus or his judges? Be assured that the world's great process against Christ will eventually end in a similar manner. It will terminate in the utter confusion and despair of all who oppose him. Therefore let not his adversaries imagine that they have brought the case against him to a close.

The perplexity of the high priest is great. How can he conceal his embarrassment? He must give the affair another turn. But of what kind? His ideas whirl round like a fiery wheel. All at once a thought occurs to him, which he deems fortunate. But it is not by mere accident that it presents itself to him. A greater than he overrules and controls the scene. The hierarch convulsively snatches up his falling dignity from the dust, and, with visible effort, while enveloping himself in the gravity of his office, he solemnly steps forward a few paces, and makes known his

intention to cite the accused before the throne of the Almighty, and to call upon him to testify on oath, and under invocation of the name of the Most High God, who he is; whether he is really the person whom he is regarded as being and lets himself be taken for by his followers, or whether he is a false prophet and a deceiver? We rejoice at this measure, though evidently more the result of desperation than of calm consideration. The affair will now be decided. Think of a testimony on oath by Jesus respecting himself! There was nothing else wanting to satisfy our utmost wishes.

Now, give heed. The greatest and most solemn moment of the whole process has arrived. The high priest, re-assuming all his dignity, opens his mouth to utter the most sublime of all questions: "I adjure you," says he, "by the living God, that you tell us whether you be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." He makes use of the legal form of adjuration which was customary in Israel. It was in this form that the oath was administered and taken. The person sworn answered without repeating the form itself, with a single," Yes" or "No;" being conscious at the same time, that the answer he gave, if it deviated from the truth, would be punished by the High and Lofty One, who had been invoked as a witness, with his righteous displeasure and the loss of eternal salvation. The high priest thus solemnly calls upon Jesus, as it were, for his credentials, while making the basis of the entire Christian religion as the object of his inquiry, and in so doing, he is perfectly justified by his official position.

What is it, therefore, to which Jesus is to swear? Let us above all things be clear upon this point. He is, in the first place, to testify whether he is the Christ—that is, the Messiah. Caiaphas, the steward of the divine mysteries, indicates by that name, the object of prophecy, and comprehends in it all the promises and types of the Old Testament, out of which as from mysterious coverings and swaddling-clothes, a sublime form ascends, who, as Prophet, is to bring down the light of eternity to the earth; as High Priest, to give his own life as an atonement for the sins of the world; and as King, to establish an everlasting kingdom of grace and peace. This dignified Being is called the "Lord's Anointed," or "Christ." But Caiaphas knows that this "Christ" will be a man, and yet at the same time "the Lord Most High:" such as David and Daniel saw in

vision; and Micah, as one "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." He knows that the Messiah will be the Son of God, in a manner such as no one else in heaven or on earth is entitled to be called. He will not only be like Jehovah, but Jehovah's equal, and thus really God. From this sublime point of view, Caiaphas asks, "Are you he?" and believes that in the event of Jesus affirming it, he would be perfectly justified in pronouncing him a blasphemer, and as such, in condemning him to death.

What greater or more momentous question was ever put than this? What would have been the consequences, had an answer in the negative ensued? What mercy would then have been the portion of the sinful race of man? Jesus might then have been whatever he pleased—the wisest philosopher, the chief of the prophets, the most perfect model of virtue—no, an angel and seraph of the first rank—all would not have availed us, and hell would have been the termination of our pilgrimage. If a negative had followed upon the high priest's question, it would have extinguished all our hopes; it would have fallen like a lighted torch into the citadel of our consolation; the whole edifice of our salvation would have been overthrown, and we should have been hurled into the open jaws of despair. For think of what is included in this one question. "Are you Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" In it Caiaphas inquires if the hour of our redemption has arrived; if there is a possibility of a sinner being saved; if an atoning power can be ascribed to the obedience of Jesus; and if the Suretyship of Christ can in reality be of any avail to transgressors? All these questions and many more are answered in the negative, if a simple negation had issued from the lips of Jesus to the interrogatory, "Are you the Son of God?" But if it be answered in the affirmative then they are affirmed to all eternity. And who is there that is not anxious for the reply? Well, then, give me your attention, and open your hearts to the truth.

The all-important question is propounded. Deep silence reigns in the assembly. Every heart beats audibly, and every eye is fixed on the accused. Nor do our hearts remain unmoved. We also stand, trembling with expectation, before the high-priestly tribunal. We are aware of the astonishing miracles by which Jesus has magnified himself. We were witnesses how he displayed his superhuman glory at the coffin of the

young man of Nain and at the grave of Lazarus. We have seen him in the endangered vessel, when the rage of the elements ceased at his beck, and on the stormy lake, where the wild waves became firm beneath his feet, and spread a crystal carpet for the King of Nature. But all these might have been the acts of a prophet sent from God, and the marvelous performances of a human possessor of divine power. Such a person, however, could not have coped with our misery. We heard him say, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father also," for "I and the Father are one," and "before Abraham was, I am;" with other expressions of a similar kind. But still, with reference to these expressions, the Tempter might suggest to us that they must not be apprehended literally, but are only to be understood of the moral glory of Jesus. And thus an assertion was still requisite, which should put to shame all the arts of infernal perverters of language; a testimony was still desirable concerning the person of Jesus, the undoubted nature of which would be able to annihilate all the objections of skepticism; and how could this be done in a more satisfactory manner than by a solemn declaration on oath? It is this, which is about to take place. Jesus is asked if he is the true God and Eternal Life?—for this is all comprised in the appellation, "Christ, the Son of the Blessed," in the mouth of a believing Israelite. He therefore that has ears, let him hear what the person at the bar of Caiaphas testifies of himself, before the face of the Almighty, the man in whose mouth, even according to the confession of his murderers, was found no deceit.

There he stands in the presence of the council of the nation, to all appearance "a worm and no man." Greatness and dignity appear to rest only on those who surround him. In himself you perceive nothing but lowliness and poverty. There he stands, with his head bowed down, his countenance pale, his hands bound, and surrounded by armed men like a robber. He stands there, ready to sink with weariness from the sufferings he has already endured, forsaken of his friends, inveighed against by his enemies, apparently the offscouring of the earth, and incomparably wretched. To this deeply abased and severely stricken man, the question is solemnly put by the first and principal person in the nation, whether he will swear by the living God that he is the Son of the Blessed? He is therefore now constrained to lay aside all disguise; and for our sakes he gladly lifts the veil. As long as the investigation was confined to wretched

accusations of personal reference, Jesus was silent; but after the affair had taken such a different and much more serious turn, it was requisite to bear testimony to the truth, and declare himself definitely with regard to his person. He knows that his answer will cause his death, but he dares no longer refrain. He is constrained to speak by the reverence which fills his heart for the sacred name by which he is adjured. He is constrained to it by the submission, which he thinks he owes to the dignity of him who calls upon him to answer on oath. He is constrained to it by his love and holy zeal for the truth, and especially by his tender solicitude for us, poor sinners, on whose behalf he appears at the bar of judgment. It is not the Sanhedrin alone, before which he feels himself placed; he sees, in spirit, his whole Church assembled around him; he sees a whole world in breathless excitement, and all the kindreds of the earth, grouped around him, full of expectation. The ear of his whole Church to the end of time hangs upon his lips; and he knows that the moment has arrived when he must place a firm and immutable support beneath its faith, for thousands of years to come. He therefore opens his mouth, and testifies before the throne of the living God, with clear consciousness, considerately, formally, and solemnly, "You have said it. I am."

Here you have the great confession. What an affirmation is this! It lifts us up above all doubt and apprehension. It places our faith on an everlasting foundation. It establishes and seals our entire redemption, and is the grave of every scruple. But that no shadow of obscurity might rest on the real meaning of his testimony, he makes an addition to his affirmation. He unveils the future, and says, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This is in part already accomplished. It commenced with his resurrection and ascension. Its fulfillment proceeded with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the founding of his Church; and it is hastening toward its completion in an uninterrupted series of victories, while it will experience its consummation amid the song of millions, chanting, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ!"

It was impossible that it could be more clearly testified who Jesus was than was now done. If his testimony is true, it is then also true that all are lost who will not believe on him, and that nothing remains for those who

refuse to bend the knee to him, but "a fearful looking-for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." It is true that "whoever is not born of water and of the Spirit, cannot enter into the kingdom of God, and that he who believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." For this likewise is testified by him, who answered, "I am," before the council; and if the latter is true, so is also the former. Hasten, therefore, to commit yourselves to the hands of him, beside whom there is none to help you, either in heaven or on earth; nor be such enemies to yourselves as to choose death and the curse, now that life and immortality are brought to light, and offered to you freely in the Gospel. In reliance on the sacred oath of the Savior, turn your backs upon the world, and cast yourselves into the arms and upon the heart of the only Mediator.

"I am!"—answered Jesus; and if he had not been, at the same time, the sacrificial lamb destined to disgrace and suffering for the human race, millions of voices would have sealed his testimony with their "Amen!" The seraphim with their golden harps would have hovered over him and have exclaimed, "Jesus, you are he!" From the foundations of the earth, which were laid by him, would have resounded the same testimony; and the Eternal Father, with that voice which causes the mountains to tremble, would have called down from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But silence reigns above, below, and around him. The priest of God is in the sanctuary, engaged in offering up his sacrifice. There all is silent. His enemies only are permitted to rage.

When Caiaphas hears the unequivocal confession, in order to manifest his hypocritical indignation at this supposed piece of impiety, he rends his clothes, by which act he unconsciously intimates symbolically the approaching dissolution of the typical priesthood, now that in the person of Christ, the true priest had appeared. In a few hours the temple will close; the offering up of lambs and of goats will have reached its termination in the sight of God. The Lord of heaven and earth will then retire forever from the Holy of holies, made with hands, in order in future to take up his abode in those who are of a humble and contrite heart.

The high priest, by this sign of grief, gives us also a lesson which is worthy of our attention. It becomes us spiritually to do the same, in the presence

of Jesus, as he did. We must appear before him with our garments rent, otherwise he will not regard us. We must tear in pieces the dress of our own imaginary righteousness, virtue, power, and wisdom. We must not conceal our nakedness, nor seek to hide our shame. We must come before him as poor sinners and poverty-stricken mendicants, if we wish to recommend ourselves to him. All self-exaltation is an abomination in his sight. Away, then, with all our tinsel! He will adorn us with his own robe. He does not desire artificial flowers. He plucks only lilies, which he himself has clothed with purity and beauty.

The high priest rends his clothes and says, "What further need have we of witnesses?" The man is in the right. Had Jesus unwarrantably presumed to declare himself to be the Son of God and the Judge of the world, he could not have been guilty of a more heinous blasphemy than by so doing. But why, you judges of Israel, must that necessarily be false which he had just testified of himself? Why should it be utterly inconceivable that he was the promised Lord from heaven? Was there anything in his life to contradict the assertion? In spite of all your efforts, what did you find that was disreputable in it? You can accuse him of nothing, except that, in the declaration just made, he had unduly exalted himself—which you must first prove—and in an unauthorized manner had appropriated Divine honor to himself. You were compelled to confess that he came forth from your examination pure as the light of heaven. And tell me, is the testimony to his Sonship which he has just given, wholly isolated and unsupported? On the contrary, is not his entire manifestation on earth a confirmation of it? Was it not established by voices from on high? Did not numbers of unheard-of signs and wonders surround it, like so many proofs of its truth? And has it not, as powerful witnesses in its favor, the whole choir of prophetic announcements which were most literally fulfilled in him? Such are the questions we might put to you, you judges of Jerusalem. But you would not that this man should reign over you; and, therefore, you refused to acknowledge him as that which he declared himself on oath to be. Woe unto you, you models of all judicial injustice! What will become of you when the day draws near in which you will be brought up for judgment, and when everything shall be brought to light that was hidden in obscurity!

"What think you?" asks the high priest. The whole assembly, then, as with one voice, taking the word from his lips, exclaim aloud, "He is guilty of death." Just so—as standing in our room and stead, it is really the case. Other and more exalted voices than those of the council mingle in the verdict. But what kind of death is it of which he is declared to be guilty? Not that of which Balaam spoke, saying, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Not that which the preacher commends in the words, "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth." Nor that of which Paul writes, "O death, where is your sting?" The death to which Jesus was condemned, he endured as the representative of our guilty race. By his death he took from ours its sting, which is sin. All fear of death in the children of God is henceforth needless and groundless; and his saying remains forever true, that "Whoever believes on him shall never see death."

We close our present meditation. You see the alternative, which is placed before you—either forever to break with Jesus, as the most disreputable enthusiast the world ever saw, and approve of the bloodthirsty sentence of the Sanhedrin, or to cry "Hosanna" to the lowly Nazarene, and fall in humble adoration at his feet, as God manifest in the flesh. There is here no middle path. The idea of his being merely an "excellent man," only manifests great levity; and regarded in the light, conceals within it the traitor's kiss. How, therefore, do you decide? Even sound reason advises you to take part with us. In Jesus' affirmation on oath before the high priest, behold the immutable rock which bears and sustains our belief in him! Build the house of your hopes for eternity thereon, and you shall never be confounded; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!

Peter’s Tears

Our present meditation will console us for the grief we experienced when considering the depth of Peter's fall. The star of divine grace rises on that gloomy scene with benignant radiance. We here witness the shedding of tears, which, next to those that flowed from our Lord himself at the grave of Lazarus, over ungodly Jerusalem, and in Gethsemane, may be regarded as the most remarkable that were ever shed upon earth. They

have dropped, like soothing balm, into many a wounded heart. May they not fail to produce a blessed effect on many of my readers, and be renewed in their experience!

We again meet with Peter at the horrible moment when completing his denial of Jesus, he formally abjures his discipleship with heavy curses. Observe, this is done by the very individual from whose lips the great confession had previously proceeded—"We have known and believed that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and the ardent and sincere declaration—"Though all men should forsake you, yet will not I." But what are even the best of men when left for a moment to themselves? And what would become of the most faithful of Christ's followers, if the Lord were only for a short time to remove the restraints of his grace? O the folly of trusting to the finest feelings, seeing that we are not sure of them for a single second! What childish presumption to rely for success on the airy weapons of what men call good-will, or noble resolutions! We might indeed do so, if the "weak flesh" did not always accompany the "willing spirit," and if Satan did not always go about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Peter has first to learn, in the school of experience, like us all, that we presume too much if we rely upon ourselves, even in the most trifling temptation. The love of Christ constrains us to venture everything for him; but it is only the belief in Christ's love for us, and the trusting to his gracious power and strength, that enables us to overcome. He who trembles at himself, as being capable above others of denying his Master, will gain greater victories than he who deems himself sufficiently strong to be able to say, "Though all men forsake you, yet will not I." "You stands by faith," writes Paul to the Romans, "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Therefore," says the same apostle, "I will rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Peter is vanquished. Hell triumphs. And why should she not? Had ever a soul become hers which had drawn down upon itself the curse so deservedly as that of this apostate disciple? and did the cause of Christianity, so hated by her, ever receive such a painful shock as in this instance, where one of its apostles basely succumbs under the first danger which menaces a candid confession of his discipleship, and is unable to

find language strong enough for his affirmation that "he knows not the man?" Nevertheless, hell begins to cry "victory" too soon. There is no such hurry with regard to the curse which is to light upon Peter. Listen to what is passing in the judgment hall of the palace. The appalling sentence has just been uttered in the midst of a tumultuous uproar, "What further need have we of witnesses! He has blasphemed God, and is guilty of death." "Who?" we ask, astonished. "Simon Peter?" No, another—a Holy One: even he who once exclaimed, "I lay down my life for the sheep." He is now ready to do so, and Peter belongs also to his flock, from whom the curse is transferred to him, the Surety, and with respect to whom the words are henceforth applicable, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." As regards the shock which the cause of the Gospel endured through Peter's denial, it will survive this also. Yet a little while, and there is One who will be able to give such a turn to the whole affair that it must tend rather to the advancement than the injury of the Gospel.

Just as Peter has filled up the measure of his sin by a formal repudiation of his Master, the cock crows. What is the result? A return to sober-mindedness, repentance, and tears. God only knows with what clamor Satan deafened the disciple's ears so that the first cry of the feathered watchman did not penetrate into them. Peter sank only still more deeply into the snare, and midnight darkness, enlightened only by solitary flashes of his accusing conscience, enveloped his mind.

An awakener of some kind or other is appointed to every one. Wherever we may be, there are voices which call us to repentance. Nature, as well as our whole life, is full of them, only our ears are heavy and will not hear. There is an awakening call in the rolling thunder, which is a herald of infinite majesty—in the lightning, which darts down before you, carrying with it destruction—in the stars, which look down upon you from such remote regions, as if they would say, "How far, O man! are you cast out from your home!"—in the flower of the field, which, in its transient blooming and fading, depicts your own brief existence upon earth—in the midnight hour, when the church-bell strikes upon your ear, like the pulse of time, which rapidly hasten sway, and calls out to you to hasten to save your soul. No, where are we not surrounded by awakening voices of this

nature? They sit upon the tombstones of our church-yards, and their language is, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." Their warning voice resounds from every funeral car that rolls past you. It may be heard on every birthday which you celebrate; in every fit of illness by which you are attacked; in every danger that threatens your life; as well as in that secret uneasiness which incessantly steals through your soul.

And besides these general calls to repentance, do we not find something similar in every family circle and in each individual? Some unrepented sin lies upon your soul. When will this awakening call fill your eyes with tears? One misfortune after another has lately crossed your threshold. O how many alarming voices have been contained in these strokes of the Almighty's rod! You feel your strength decaying, and that the sun of your life is declining. Do you not hear in this fact the crowing of the cock? On every side we may be conscious of it—in visions of the night, in the events of the day, in serious thoughts, which we are unable to prevent, in sermons and admonitions which are addressed to us. But to what purpose? Something must be added to this warning cry—something superior and more powerful than itself, or it will never succeed in awakening us, who are by nature so "uncircumcised in heart and ears," from our deadly sleep.

The cock in the court-yard of the high priest crows a second time, and this call enters and finds a response. Day begins to dawn upon Peter, awakened by the remembrance of his Master's warning, and while reflecting on the abyss into which he has plunged himself. But if he shudders with horror, hell may share his terror, since the second crowing of the cock is to her what the trumpets of Joshua were of old to the walls of Jericho, casting down, on a sudden, all the proud trophies of victory she had already erected.

Let us, however, return for a few moments, to see what occurred in the council hall just before this second warning. Something of importance has just taken place. The accused has declared upon oath that he is the Son of the living God. The high priest, in dissembled indignation, rends his clothes. Amid wild uproar sentence of death is pronounced upon the Holy One of Israel, and the minions of justice seize him to lead him away

into the court-yard, and there vent upon him their unlicenced fury. The divine sufferer has just passed through the doorway into the court-yard when the crowing of the cock reaches his ear. "And the Lord turned himself;" we know toward whom. That sound announced to him his disciple's fall, and his eye and his compassionate heart go in search of him. Such is Jesus the Savior. He embraces his followers with more than maternal tenderness, and their want of fidelity does not prevent his being faithful. What waves of sorrow beat over his head, and yet he can forget everything in his anxiety for his fallen disciple! Sooner than one of them should be forgotten, he would forget the government of the world; and would suffer the nations to take their course, rather than lose sight of one of his little ones. As long as a rose of his planting blooms on the earth, this desert is to him a delightful garden, and he leaves heaven to tend and nourish this plant. And happy are you who are the weak of the flock, the poor and needy above others! It would seem that you lie the nearest to his heart.

Deeply was Peter immersed in the mire of sin, yet the Lord turned toward him. Who among us would have troubled himself further about such a faithless deserter from the ranks? If such characters were referred to us, it would go ill with them. How ready we are to stamp and reject such stumbling brethren as hypocrites! Instead of moving a finger to restore them, we not infrequently plunge them deeper into the mire, and persecute them worse than the world does. If Jerusalem is besieged, Judah assists in the blockade. The Lord, on the contrary, whose right alone it is to judge in such cases, is not ashamed to deign to act the part of the woman in the Gospel, who having lost one of her pieces of silver, strikes a light, seizes the broom, and ceases not to stir up the dust until it is discovered; and when found, she calls her neighbors together, and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece of silver, which I had lost." His children are dearer to him than the brethren often are to us. Tell me, you that are parents, do your erring sons and disobedient daughters cease to be your children because of their aberrations? Do you not rather still more deeply feel that they are bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh? Does not your love to them increase with the danger to which you see them exposed? And are you not more fully conscious, when compelled to weep over them, that your life is bound up with theirs, than when they

merely caused you joy? If you then, being evil, cannot reject your own seed, how should He be able to forget those who are of his flesh and blood, who said, "As my Father loves me, so have I loved you;" and by the mouth of his prophet, "Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you. Lo, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Peter, though fallen, still belonged to him. Though he had acted so wickedly, yet his Master's love for him remains unchanged. See how carefully he looks round after him! For the second time it might be said, with reference to Peter, "When I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you, when you were cast out into the open field, and lying in your blood, yes, I said unto you, when you were in your blood, live!" Certainly, had it not been the Lord's will that we should believe that the covenant of grace, on his side, stood inviolably fast, he would have hesitated to have set before us such examples as those of David and Peter. "And Jesus turned and looked upon him." Yes, "though we believe not, yet he abides faithful; he cannot deny himself;" for "the foundation of God stands sure; having this seal, the Lord knows them that are his."

The Lord turned himself. The conversion of every sinner begins with that for which David prays, "Look upon me!" By nature we are like dry bones in a huge church-yard, and cannot come to him. But as soon as the Lord begins to look upon us, its effect is soon felt. Before we are aware we enter into closer connection with him, and feel that he is near us. We are conscious of being deeply and wondrously affected by things, which, otherwise, we scarcely noticed. The idea occurs to us, in a variety of circumstances, that God intends by them to call us to repentance, and we are often inclined to say with Jacob, "Surely the Lord was in this place." The Almighty is then no longer distant from us on some far-off height, but pervades our chamber, and meets us in the daily occurrences of life. Not a day passes without something happening which compels us to say, "It is the Lord!" Yet this state of things may continue long without our attaining to real conversion of heart. But when the Faithful Shepherd begins to follow after us, he does not leave us without accomplishing his purpose.

It was not simply the crowing of the cock that raised the disciple from his fall. Nor did the turning of the Lord toward him produce the desired effect. A third and more powerful means was added. What was it? A word, a call, an exhortation?—No; a look which the eye of the Keeper of Israel cast upon his disciple, who was staggering on the brink of destruction. This look did wonders. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." What a look must that have been! What divine sorrow and love must it have expressed! and how accompanied by the effulgence of the Spirit and the radiance of divine grace! It acted both as a sword to wound, and as a balm to heal. It struck like destroying lightning, and at the same time expanded itself like refreshing dew. O there is inexpressible power in the look of the Lord! With a look of majesty he beholds the earth, and it trembles. With a judicial look he overtakes the sinner, who exclaims, "I perish at his presence." His dying look on the cross melts stony hearts, and transforms lions into lambs. With a look of forgiving mercy, he makes a contrite soul forget heaven and earth in its happiness; and by means of a grieved and loving look, he restores lambs to his fold, which had long gone astray in the wilderness. To this day his people feel that his eyes are upon them, and according to what they read in them, their peace or joy rises or falls.

The Lord's look did not fail of its effect upon Peter. No sooner did the disciple's eyes meet his, than the magic band which held him is dissolved, the infernal intoxication dispelled, his ear opened, and reflection returns —no, sin is acknowledged—his heart is melted—the snare is broken, and the bird has escaped. "Gracious God," is now his language, "how deeply have I fallen! Wretch that I am, was not all this foretold me? Said he not on the way, 'Before the cock crows twice, you shall deny me thrice?' Woe is me, that in foolish presumption I repelled the warning, and only remember it now, when it is too late! I vowed to go with him to prison and to death; and yet I am the first to deny and abjure him! How is it that the earth still bears me, and that heaven's lightnings do not blast me! Instead of which, he who so kindly forewarned me, and whom I nevertheless abjured and ignored, deigns me still a look of pity and compassion!"

Such may have been the language of Peter's soul, when, as the narrative

informs us, "he remembered the word of the Lord, which he had spoken to him." He would now have infallibly become a prey to despair, had not the Savior's loving-kindness, by means of the conversation on the way to Gethsemane, made every arrangement for preventing Satan from sifting the poor disciple too severely. His Master's prayer, that "his faith might not fail, had surrounded the abyss, as it were, with a balustrade, and by his injunction, that "after his conversion, he should strengthen his brethren," had made preparation for wiping away his tears long before they fell. O how did the soothing influence of all the words which the gracious friend of sinners had spoken to him, shed itself upon his heart, when to them was added that look so full of mercy and compassion! Certainly, no one ever felt himself more unhappy than Peter; but what would have been his misery had not the gracious wings of divine pity been extended over him. Peter, by the look of his Master, is wholly dissolved in grief and humiliation. He covers his head with his mantle, as if he was unworthy to appear before God or man, and begins to "weep bitterly." These are the tears, of which it is written, "Put them into your bottle; are they not in your book?" and from the sowing of which a harvest of joy is promised. Like the pearly drops which burst, in spring, from the branches of the vine, they testify of the existence of life; and in the eye of the sinner, announce to Satan the loss of his suit, and the end of his triumph. O how much is reflected in these tears! What thorough contrition before God, what holy indignation against sin, what an ardent thirst for grace, and what fullness of fervent love to the Lord beam forth from their pure light! "Be not dreadful to me, you who are my refuge in distress! Cast me not away from your presence! Whom have I in heaven but you?" such are the aspirations which issue from his heart. All his desire and longing center in this, that he may again rejoice in the favor of the Lord. Though he were to become an outcast from the world all the days of his life, and as regards his body, were compelled to follow in the steps of Job and Lazarus, yet he would gladly submit to all this, if he might only again hope for mercy. His tears announce the birth of a new man. The old, presumptuous, self-seeking, self-trusting Adam is dead, and a man of humility, filial resignation to God, and sincere desire that the name of the Lord may alone be glorified, rises, phoenix-like, from his ashes.

It is said that a tear glistened in Peter's eye as long as he lived. If this is anything but a legend, it was not a tear of sorrow only, but of joy at the mercy experienced, tempered only by a permanent melancholy. The remembrance of his fall never left him for a moment; and in the degree in which it kept him low, it sharpened his spiritual vision for the mystery of the cross and of salvation by grace. This is abundantly evident, especially in his first epistle. He there comforts believers with the cheering assurance that they are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." He calls upon them to "hope to the end for the grace that shall be revealed." He impressively reminds them of the weakness and evanescent nature of everything human, while calling to their recollection the words of the prophet: "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away." He speaks of "the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without spot," with a fervor which immediately indicates him as one who had deeply experienced its healing power. It is he who addresses the warning to us, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." And when he quotes the psalm in which it is said, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; and his ears are open to their cry; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil"—does it not seem as if he intentionally referred to that look from his Master, which had once so overwhelmed him and cast him to the ground?

In conclusion: are there any of my readers who, with reference to Peter, are presumptuous enough to say with the Pharisee of old, "God, I thank you that I am not as that man!" O how much of the guilt of denying Christ, either in a gross or subtle manner, rests upon us all! How much reason have we also to be alarmed at the words, "He who denies me; him will I also deny before my Father in heaven." Let us therefore cover our heads with our mantles, and with Peter, go out and weep bitterly; that a day of grace may also dawn upon us, and that the words of the apostle may be also applicable to us, "Such were some of you, but you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

"Prophesy to Us, You Christ"

We have now to proceed to the contemplation of a scene which, with regard to its horrible nature, is scarcely paralleled in the whole history of our Savior's passion. We scarcely know, at first sight, what to say of such a spectacle. We shudder, are horrified, tremble, and look away from such ill-treatment, and, covering our heads, would gladly hasten from the mournful sight, exclaiming, "O my God, who can bear to witness such barbarity!" Let us not, however, hurry away from, but endure it, and throw light upon the revolting scene, which at first appears to us so incomprehensible, by referring to the "sure word of prophecy." The seemingly impenetrable darkness will then be illumined, and that which is obscure find a consolatory solution.

The sentence is passed upon Jesus. Its import is nothing less than death to the Accused. The judicial assembly, after its first sitting, which began during the night, has been adjourned for a short time, amid wild and triumphant uproar. Meanwhile the Divine Sufferer is given up to the reckless band of officers and spearmen, who shamefully ill-treat him, and they do so the more boldly, because it is done with the assent and for the account of their superiors, aware that they thereby cause the latter satisfaction.

Jesus is now in their power, and he must dearly pay the penalty of his conduct. "But why must he suffer? What has he ever done to offend them?" O how much, notwithstanding his best intentions! Did he not, in his own sacred person, hold up to them a mirror, which presented to them the dark image of their own ungodliness?—and such treatment did not please them. Was not an evident proof afforded, by his brilliant example, that they were going the wrong road?—and convictions of this kind cut them to the heart. By his calling upon them to be reconciled unto God, had he not plainly told them to their face that they had hitherto lived estranged from God?—and such disclosures offend and cause pain, especially when the man's own conscience unites in the accusation. Did he not repeatedly tell them that a new birth was an indispensable condition attached to the entering into the kingdom of heaven?—and what else were they to understand from this than that in their present state they were in danger of perishing?—but who likes to hear of such things?

It was thus that a mass of rage and vexation had by degrees accumulated within them. A horrible state, it is true, but one which only testifies for Jesus. Believe me, my readers, that the adversaries of the Lord and his word among us are, for the most part, like a wounded stag flying from the hunters. They feel that the teachings of Christ destroy their false peace, condemn their carnality, and demand the sacrifice of their idols; and hence they are averse to and incensed against him even to blasphemy. They joyfully greet every attempt which tends to degrade Jesus to a mere human Rabbi; for all their efforts are directed solely to escape from the obligations they lie under to him. Almost in every case where enmity against Christ is manifested, it may be traced to these corrupt motives. The Christian religion disturbs the hornet's nest, tears away the plasters and coverings from secret wounds, and awakens the conscience, which had been rendered lethargic by a variety of magic potions; and hence their hatred and animosity to it.

Before we approach the revolting scene in the court-yard of the high priest's palace, let us again call to mind who it is we have before us in the individual thus ill-treated. We are about to witness unheard-of outrages, at which the rocks might rend with horror. When, toward the close of the last century, the ruthless mob put the red revolutionary cap on the head of the unfortunate king of France, amid shouts of derisive laughter, and then cut their infernal jokes on his royal dignity—a cry of horror and indignation ran through the world; and he in whose heart there glimmered only a spark of piety and right feeling, turned away with disgust from such a revolting spectacle. But what was that, or any other event of the kind which the world's history records, compared with the scene which we are now called to behold? If the person to whom our eyes are directed had been only an earthly dignitary, even then the contrast of his dreadful fate with his exalted position would greatly horrify us, and we should be unable to refrain from calling out, "You go too far; cease your ill-treatment; men whom the Lord places in such high positions ought not to be treated in so disgraceful a manner!" But here, as you know, is a greater than any human potentate. He who is maltreated yonder is the same who spoke to the storm and the waves, saying, "Be still," and they obeyed; who, with a word, called forth the dead from the

coffin and the tomb; at whose bidding stand the angelic hosts of heaven; no, through whom, and to whom are all things that were created, and who could justly say, "I and my Father are one." "He who sees me, sees the Father." "My Father works hitherto, and I work." "All men shall honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." It is upon him, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that the recreants trample with their dirty feet. It is in the face of Eternal Love that they spit. It is the Source of Life whom they smite with their fists, and it is him whom the heavens adore that they insult with their venomous tongues, which are set on fire of hell. Yes, it was upon him that all this was inflicted, who had just before affirmed on oath, in the full consciousness of his divine dignity, that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and who had afterward added, "I say unto you that hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

It is, therefore, a monstrous spectacle which is presented to our view. The world never afterward beheld anything similar. What we call compassion does not seem here to correspond with the subject; nor is there any room for the idea of an unfortunate and pitiable mortal, such as is the case in other instances. Every one feels that here is an occurrence entirely isolated from the rank of similar events in the world's history, and that it must necessarily be of an extraordinary nature. Every one must be conscious that the individual freely and voluntarily gave himself up to the horrible treatment he experienced; and that the idea of One who was overcome, and yielded to superior power, must be wholly excluded. He who was thus covered with insult was neither weaker nor less powerful than at the moment when, with a single word, he overthrew the whole company of his adversaries. In the nameless wretchedness in which we now find him, he was not less the "stronger" than "the strong armed man," than at the moment when the legion of foul fiends, entreating to be spared, fled before his face. Though he may seem to be nothing but a broken reed and a worm trodden under foot, yet the sword of Omnipotence is not the less girded upon him, nor the bow of his strength broken. What but a single word from him was requisite, and the murderous band would have lain annihilated at his feet? But he did not make use of his power. He suffered voluntarily. It is with his own consent

that he is plunged into these depths of horror. Imagine, therefore, the magnitude of the purposes which lie at the basis of this resignation of the Holy One of Israel. The sufferings of Jesus as such, compel us to admit their atoning signification.

Let us come nearer to the scene. Imagine a Holy One appearing again in this sinful world. Scarcely does he show himself than mankind act toward him as if they were hyenas and devils. To such a degree is heavenly purity become odious to them, and that which is divinely reverent, abominable! Alas! what is done to you, you who are fairer than the children of men! How is your benignant countenance disfigured! One would gladly close one's eyes to such a spectacle. Have you merited this at our hands, O Eternal Love? Is this the due reward for your loving-kindness? And yet, however much you are insulted, you will not forsake us, until you have rescued us from the curse, even though it should cost you your life. O what is left for us but to sink down in the dust, to cover our faces, and to melt into glowing tears of penitence and thankfulness!

Look what occurs! When sentence is pronounced upon a malefactor, and the judicial decision is read, a solemn silence usually pervades the auditory, and a feeling of solemnity takes possession of them. Every one feels the majesty of the law, which, whenever transgressed, justly demands satisfaction. It is as if Eternal Justice in person had come down and established its throne upon earth. And the condemned criminal is not merely an object of compassion, but he is regarded with a kind of reverence, because the moral government of the world demands him as an atonement. In the condemnation of Jesus however, no feelings of this nature appear to have been excited in the reprobate host of his adversaries. Scarcely has the word "Guilty" been uttered, when they fall upon him; and, O, what revolting scenes are now unfolded to our view! The world had never before witnessed anything so horrible. Cain's fratricide—Manasseh's blood-guiltiness—what were they, compared with these flagitious acts? Alas! what will become of our Lord and Master! Ought we not to feel petrified with horror and astonishment? They have now got him among them, and they load him, first of all, with the vilest execrations and insults. But they are not satisfied with thus heaping ridicule upon him. They smite him with their hands. But even this does

not satisfy their thirst for revenge. He must feel more painfully still how utterly he is despised. They open their mouths against him, and, horrible to relate! they spit upon his sacred face, with gestures and grimaces of the rudest kind. Nor is their rage yet cooled, nor their satanic inventions exhausted. "The wicked," as the prophet says, "are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The reprobates seek for some new outrage, and it soon occurs to them. They have heard how the object of their ill usage had just before solemnly asserted in the council-chamber, that he was Christ, the Son of the living God, and for this he must now be especially punished. The arrows of their bitterest ridicule are therefore directed against his Messiahship, and particularly against his prophetical office. They bind the eyes of the patient sufferer with a cloth, then smite him with their fists; and exclaim, amid peals of sneering laughter, "Prophesy to us, you Christ, who it is that smites you!"

But I will let the curtain drop. Who can longer contemplate such a scene? O, it is too appalling! What infernal wickedness meets our view! And from whence does it proceed? From the human heart. But how could a race that is capable of such things be received into the favor of God, without an atonement and a mediator? What would have become of the glory of his justice and holiness, if he had suffered such degenerate beings to be spared without a satisfaction? Nor ought you to regard the perpetrators of the outrages we have been describing, as depraved above all others. Believe me, that according to its inmost being, every natural human heart is alike. Even those who refuse to hear of redemption and atonement, do not fail, unconsciously and involuntarily, to condemn human nature, every moment, in the most grievous manner. Hear their language, "Egotism rules the world." "Every one seeks his own." "Woe to him that falls into the hands of man!" "Friendship lasts only during prosperity." "Every man has his price." "Let no one be surety for another's virtue." "Opportunity is the ruler of mankind." "In the misfortunes of our best friends we find something that does not displease us." Such are the expressions which are constantly flowing from the lips of the men of the world. How completely do they thereby pronounce the human heart to be depraved and corrupt! Have they not therefore, sufficient cause to welcome a Deliverer with rejoicing, instead of coldly, or even sneeringly turning their backs upon him?

But to return to the question—"Prophesy unto us, you Christ, who it was that smote you?" From the lips, by which these words were uttered, they were only blasphemous ridicule and a burst of depravity. But in themselves, and apart from the feeling which accompanied them, they appear in the form of a question of the first importance; and he who has found the right answer to it, is acquainted with the groundwork of our salvation and entire redemption.

Many have impiously repeated the inquiry of the reprobate troop, and have thought within themselves, "How does he know whether we honor him, or trample upon him? Where is he to be found? Eighteen centuries ago, he went the way of all flesh, and the dead rest in their graves." By acting thus, they have, as far as they are concerned, again bound his eyes, and sneeringly said to him, "Prophesy, if you are still alive, and hear, and see, who it is that smote you!" I could relate to my readers, how he has, in part at least, replied to them. One he answered by reducing him to extreme poverty. Another, by disgracing his name before the world. A third, by striking him with madness; and others, again, by giving them up to the paths of the destroyer, and permitting them to sink into the lowest depths of depravity, and suffering despair to seize upon them on their death-beds, and rendering their descent into the regions of darkness palpable to the horror-stricken bystanders. And how many of those who now say, "Who is Jesus, that I should be afraid of him, or even humble myself before him?" when once he replies to them, will call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them, that they may be hidden from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! O let no one suppose that the Judge of the world will suffer himself to be mocked with impunity. Rather let them "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and they perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

"Prophesy to us, you Christ, who it is that smote you!" The mockers received no reply to this question. Jesus was silent. But we may give a different turn to the inquiry, and the answer will prove consolatory. Let those who are earnestly seeking salvation, and the contrite in heart, humbly inquire, "Who it was that smote the Lord?" and they will receive a satisfactory reply. At first, indeed, it will alarm them; for it will be, "not

those miscreants; but it is you who have made me to serve with your sins, and wearied me with your iniquities. For your transgressions was I smitten." And when he himself prophesies this to you by his Spirit—how evident it will then become to you; how will you humble yourselves in the dust before him; how the wish will then depart to lay the blame upon Caiaphas, Annas, and the spearmen; how vitally are you persuaded that they were only your representatives, and how will you hang down your heads, and learn to smite upon your breasts with the tax-collector! How will you tremble for your souls, and earnestly seek for salvation and a Mediator!

But know that this is only half the answer to your question. Continue to ask, and it will not be long before a gracious message will be delivered you. This will be its import: "The hand that smote me would have crushed you. The curse fell upon me which was destined for you. I drank the cup of wrath which your sins had filled. I drank it, that it might be replenished for you with everlasting mercy." And when this conviction pervades you, do not doubt that it is really from him. As the Lord lives, it is his own communication; and if you are still unwilling to believe, listen to the cheering words of the apostles and evangelists, who assure you that "God made him to be sin for us;" and that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us."

You now know who it is that smote the Savior, and that it was the sin of each of us. Does not this clearly appear from the circumstances of our Lord's passion themselves? Does it not seem strange to you that Jesus acted so patiently, meekly, and resignedly, under such barbarous treatment? Is it not wonderful that his tormentors were suffered to go unpunished? Are you not in the highest degree astonished that the ruthless band were not crushed by lightning from heaven; and that on the contrary, the Almighty observed silence, as if nothing had happened which was not in the regular course of things? Korah and his company had no sooner rebelliously attacked only Aaron's priestly dignity, than the Lord rent the ground beneath their feet, and sent them down quick into the pit. Uzzah was guilty of a seemingly slight irreverence toward the ark, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and smote him, so that he fell dead on the ground. But how much more is there here than

the ark and Aaron the priest! Here they trample the Son of God in the mire, and the Judge of quick and dead is mute, as if all was right. Tell me, does not all this amaze you? Does it not excite in you the most fearful and yet the most stupendous expectations? Give room to the latter, and you will find them not unfounded. Rightly understood, it is God himself, who smites the sufferer, on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid; and what he endures are the strokes of that sword, to which Jehovah said, "Awake, against my Shepherd and the man that is my fellow." They fall upon him, that we sinners might be forever exonerated.

Such, my readers, is the solution of this great mystery, and the complete answer to the question, "Who smote you, you Christ?" No sooner does the light of a propitiation shine upon the obscurity of the events of the passion than all is cleared up, and the deepest mysteries are unsealed.

Christ before the Sanhedrin

After a horrible night, the morning breaks, and announces the dawn of the most important and momentous of all earthly days. It is Good Friday, that most dreadful accuser of the sinful world, but at the same time, the birthday of its salvation, and the dawn of its eternal redemption. It is the day typified by the deliverance of the chosen race out of Egypt, and annually announced to the believing Israelites for upward of a thousand years, in the great day of atonement, which was the chief object of their hopes and desires. All the radiations of grace, which had ever beamed upon them, were only preliminary emanations of this day, which still slept in the lap of a far distant future; and whenever God favorably regarded a sinner, it was solely on the ground of the propitiation by the blood of Christ, which was actually made upon this day.

Notwithstanding the very early hour, the members of the council at Jerusalem are up and in full activity. They are preparing a second examination of Jesus, "that they might put him to death." But have they not already established his guilt, and pronounced sentence against him? Certainly they have.

But yet they are not satisfied, and would gladly find out other and more decisive proofs against him, than those on which their judgment was

founded. It is evident that our Lord's whole demeanor, during the first hearing, and especially his great confession, which was uttered with such majestic decision and confidence, had left a powerful impression upon them; and what remains of conscience they still possessed, awoke from its slumbers and stung them. The irresolution we perceive in them, as well as the hope they betray of obtaining fresh and more substantial grounds of justification with reference to their murderous purpose, places this beyond a doubt.

They now meet in their hall of session, which was in one of the buildings of the temple, in the character of a regular plenary assembly, because their first meeting in the high priest's palace—apart from the absence of several of its members—bore the aspect of being accidental and tumultuous. The council or Sanhedrin, was, as you know, the supreme court of judicature of the later Jews, and consisted of seventy-one members, including the chief priests, elders, and doctors of the law, or scribes, under the presidency of the high priest, which, formed on the model of the seventy elders, whom Moses joined with him for the administration of justice, during the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness, had to judge and decide in all national Jewish, and particularly in ecclesiastical affairs. Christ, according to Matt. 23:2, regarded this authority as being divinely sanctioned, and submitted without objection to its citation. Before this tribunal, Peter subsequently stood, as a pretended wonder-worker, and again, in company with John, as a deceiver of the people; further, Stephen, as a blasphemer, and Paul, accused of being a false prophet. After the Romans had possession of the country, this court of judicature was deprived of the right of carrying its sentences of death into execution by its own authority, which required, as appears from John, 18:31, the sanction of the Roman procurator. The stoning of Stephen without it, was a transgression of the rule, for which the Jews might have found an excuse in the fact that the governor, who usually resided at Caesarea, was at that time absent from Jerusalem.

We now see our Lord brought a second time before this court. He is conducted up the hill on which the temple stands by an armed escort. It is his last passage along that road, and by a remarkable coincidence, it occurs at the same time with the paschal lambs, which are on that day

brought to the priests for sacrifice. What may have been his feelings on this occasion! He certainly thought of the typical journey of Abraham to Mount Moriah, which was now so visibly fulfilled in him. For Christ, as the antitype of Isaac, is now proceeding to the altar of God upon the same path which once his human type, led by his father, had trodden for the same purpose. Christ, indeed, does not say like Abraham's son, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" He knows what the lamb is which God has provided, and willingly bows to the divine decree. He is also aware that in his case it will not be merely a sacrifice of the will, and that after he has ascended the altar, an angel from heaven will cry, saying, "Lay not your hand upon the lad," but that he has to recognize his type not only in Isaac, but also in the ram whose horns were caught in the thicket, and which Abraham, at Jehovah's command, took, in order to slay it in the place of his son.

The sitting of the Sanhedrin commences. The accused stands at the bar. He is again asked by the judge, "Are you the Christ? tell us!" as if he had not already plainly told them that he was. But it would seem as if they hesitated to deliver him up to death, as a deceiver and a blasphemer, on this account, without anything further—no, as if they involuntarily sought to prolong the affair, because a slight echo of the voice of conscience told them—not, indeed, that he really was what he gave himself out to be—but that it possibly might be the case. The Lord opens his mouth; and now mark how the tables are turned, and the accused becomes judge, and his judges the delinquents. "If I tell you," says he, "you will not believe; and if I also ask you (that is, if I were to attempt to convince you by proofs), you will not answer me, nor let me go."

O how many there are in the present day, to whom these words are applicable! I do not now refer to people who are entirely indifferent to religion. I mean such as are continually inquiring who Christ is, and would seem to have no rest until they were convinced. But although he is brought before them, first in one form and then in another, still they do not believe. The Church tells them, in the second article of its Confession of Faith, but they say, "The Church may err. What do the contemporaries of Jesus say?" The apostles tell them, as with one voice, "He is the Word that was with God from the beginning, and was God; the brightness of the

Father's glory, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." But to this they reply with a gesture of dissent, "Love is blind, and enthusiasm is visionary." They will only receive what Jesus says of himself. And Jesus comes forward and announces himself, not only as the light of the world, the truth and the life, but as greater than all this—as one with the Father, as being before Abraham, and to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. Do they now believe? They start; but before we are aware, they again slip out by means of a variety of questions, such as, "Did the historians rightly understand Jesus? Are his expressions to be taken literally? Is it possible, generally speaking, for Deity to become incarnate?" etc. And when the Lord condescends, in a convincing manner to these skeptics, and by a direct influence on their minds, or by means of his ministers, begins to ask them who else he could be, if he were not the One whom he gave himself out to be, after the predictions of two thousand years had reached their fulfillment in him to an iota—after his resurrection from the dead had been established even by his enemies—after having been subsequently seen by a host of disciples who joyfully hazarded their blood and their lives for him—after the Holy Spirit, according to his promise, had really visited the earth with his regenerating influences—after the best of the human race, for eighteen centuries, had honored and adored him—and seeing that his Church testifies for him more loudly than any word or single act can do—they are silenced, and have reached the end of their objections, but still do not believe, and yet do not let the Lord go, since they cease not to doubt of his superhuman dignity, and to render it suspected by others. They *will* not believe. This is the solution of the problem. They are horrified at the thought of being obliged to crucify the idols of their own wisdom and righteousness, as well as the honors and pleasures of the world, for the sake of Christ. They see an abyss open between them and the Lord, which threatens to swallow up nothing less than their entire glory and self-sufficiency, and they start back from such a death. They are still too conscientious to part with him decidedly, like the Gadarenes, and to say, "What have we to do with you?" but not conscientious enough to give admission to the truth. They rather let the matter rest, and come to no decision.

The Lord renews his declaration. The constituted authorities demand it,

and he obeys. Besides, it is of importance to him that the world should know, with certainty, who he was, and whom they crucified. From the summit of the eminence on which the temple stood, he surveys in spirit the human race and the ages to come. He once more raises the veil from his humble guise, and baring the regal star upon his bosom, he says, "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God." A sublime expression, evidently having reference to the remarkable passage in Daniel, 7:13: "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven." The priests and scribes could not for a moment doubt that by this he declared himself to be the Messiah promised by the inspired prophet, and thus claimed divine nature and essentiality. He intimated, even by the name by which he usually designated himself, that his humanity was only something attached to his person in an extraordinary way. For had he been conscious of being a mere man, what kind of meaning would attach to that striking appellation? His prediction concerning his approaching sitting at the right hand of power, or of the Divine Majesty, is nothing less than a decided declaration that he would divide the throne of glory with his heavenly Father, and with him rule the world in equal perfection of power. The Sanhedrin, conversant with the language of the prophets, understood the words in this sense. "Are you then the Son of God?" cried they all, as with one voice. "You say that which I am," replied he, with majestic firmness and composure.

The Lord has repeated his great confession The whole assembly rise in real or dissembled indignation and astonishment. One exclaims louder than the other, "What need we any further witness; for we ourselves have heard it from his own lips?" True, they have heard it from his own mouth. This their confession has been recorded in heaven, and will, without fail, be brought against them at the day of judgment. With which, then, will they justify their refusing to pay homage to the Lord, seeing that in reality they needed no further witness? On account of this testimony they condemned Jesus to death, and by so doing, for the confirmation of our faith, only established the fact of the testimony having proceeded from his own lips. Even to this hour, the tradition exists among the Jews, that Christ was crucified because he made himself equal with God, and therefore was guilty of blasphemy. Hence, nothing in the world is so beyond a doubt as that Jesus actually made that judicial confession of his

divine Sonship. He who seeks to view him as anything less than the Eternal Son, brands him as a blasphemer, and convicts him, with the Jewish council, as being worthy of death.

After sentence of death on the divine sufferer had thus been confirmed, the officers approach, in order again to put on his fetters, which had been for the time removed. He willingly offers his hand, that the words of Isaiah might be fulfilled (chap.53:7), "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth." He who had just before solemnly asserted his equality with God, with the consent of the whole heavenly world, appears now in fetters like a rebel. How monstrous the contrast, how great the contradiction! But how obvious it is that it is a voluntary act on the Lord's part; and how clearly do we again read in the soul of the holy sufferer the words, "Then I restored that which I took not away!" His fetters have contributed to procure our redemption; for Satan would have held us eternally captive had Jesus preferred liberty to bonds. Horrible and heart-affecting it is to see, that those hands, which were only employed in offices of mercy, are bound with cords, like the hands of a felon, by the very world to which they were extended only in blessing. But God be thanked that he restrained the lightning of his wrath from destroying the rebels, when they thus laid hands upon his Holy One! For in those cords which bound the limbs of Jesus, were hidden the fetters which would have forever bound sinners in hell.

The officers have done their task. The whole assembly then breaks up, in order, contrary to custom and etiquette, personally to bring the accused before the governor, and by their appearing in a body, to force from him the confirmation of their sentence of death. Herein was fulfilled the Savior's prediction, that he should be delivered unto the Gentiles. This feature in the proceedings belonged to that which was symbolical in the history of his passion. The whole world was to have occasion, in its representatives, to manifest its real position with reference to the Holy One of Israel, and its participation in the guilt, and the need of redemption. As regards sin and the curse, we have all fellowship with Israel; as well as in the vocation of grace.

He whom we have seen proceeding bound to the second court of justice, sits now, having long since accomplished his work, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as keeper of the heavenly blessings which he purchased for us. Let us bow, in humble adoration, before him, and not let him go until he has granted us all the blessed results of his passion. Let us beware of again binding his hands by our unbelief, and be cautious lest by our improper conduct, we should again deliver him up to the baptized and unbaptized heathen. Rather let us bind him to us by the cords of grateful love, and by a joyful confession of him, recommend him to those who are still ignorant of him. Let us bring our peaceful disposition, holiness of life, and fidelity in his service, as witnesses which justify him before the world, and learn to devote ourselves unceasingly to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

The End of the Traitor

My readers are aware how much depended upon our High Priest accomplishing the work of atonement in the robes of purity. If a blemish was found in the lamb, it was deemed unfit for sacrifice. "Such a High Priest became us," says the Scripture, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And such a one do we possess. The moral capability of Immanuel for his mediatorial work is unquestionable. God has spared nothing, in order to dispel every doubt on this subject. To this end, he gave up the Surety to the scrutiny of the acutest investigators in the world. But to their no small vexation, they tried in vain to find a single spot in him, and are compelled, either in plain words or by their conduct, to testify concerning him, "We find no fault in this man."

It was of great importance that the Argus eyes of the scribes and Pharisees discovered nothing culpable in him. But it adds much to the weight of this fact, that nothing of the kind could be traced in the Lord Jesus by the man whom we shall now see descending into the pit. It was of much greater importance to him than to them, to be able to convict the Lord of a single sin, since he could not, like those men, whose consciences were asleep, aid himself by the invention of a fictitious culpability, if he found no real guilt in him. Had he been desirous of having recourse to

such means, the judge in his bosom would have scoffed at such an artifice, like the leviathan at the quivering lance. Could Judas have been able to say to himself; even with a shadow of truth, "He whom I am betraying, deserves being delivered into the hands of justice," what would he not have given? He was compelled ardently to wish, for the sake of his peace of mind and his present and eternal salvation, that he might discover Jesus to be in some respects a transgressor. A single sin found out in Jesus would have been a great comfort and a sweet solace to him in the torment which he felt within. But however diligently he sought, however much he exerted his ingenuity, and recalled to mind all the acts of his Master's life, virtues presented themselves in abundance, a luminous sea of holiness shone upon him from it; but not one dark point could he discover, nor did the slightest spot meet his scrutinizing eye. How annihilating the result! Judas is compelled to justify his conscience, which accuses him as being the betrayer of the Holy One, and condemns him as the murderer of innocence. He finds nothing to assist him in weakening the sentence, and is forced to endure the most horrible curse that ever made a human soul to tremble.

It is remarkable that Judas sought for sin in Jesus in order to derive from it some alleviation to his agonized spirit, while he shrunk back from Jesus' holiness. Had the light of the Gospel shone upon him, he would, on the contrary, have rejoiced at the spotlessness of Jesus, and would have shuddered and trembled at being able to discover the smallest blemish in him. It is strange, however, that we again make common cause with Judas, though in a different sense, since we seek sin in Jesus to pacify our consciences. And we really find it, but only as attaching to him in the way of imputation and transfer; and this enables us to go on our way in peace.

Judas finds himself in a dreadful condition. Consoling himself with the wonder-working power of Jesus as a cloak for his wickedness, and holding up to his awakening conscience the delusive idea that his Master needed only to exert his will, in case of necessity, in order to escape from the hands of his enemies; when he saw his Master actually condemned, and dragged bound and escorted by the whole Sanhedrin to the residence of the governor, the last anchor breaks which had hitherto held the man secure against the storm of despair. The incorruptible judge in his bosom

has now free scope for his accusations, and thunders in his ears, "Your villainy has succeeded—your Master is going the way to death, and you are the means of it. On your head rests the entire guilt of the bloody end of this Just One. You, who did eat of his bread, are the viper which has given him the deadly bite. It is a wonder that the earth still bears you, and that the sun shines upon such a scum of humanity. Woe, woe unto you, traitor, murderer, and accursed!" O the fearful agony which takes possession of his bosom at these arrows of conscience, the boundless distress which falls upon him like an armed man! O the horror and dismay which thrill through every nerve and limb! It seems to him as if he heard the footsteps of the Avenger of blood approaching him; as if the sentence of death was already thundered down from heaven upon his devoted head; and as if he saw the flaming abyss of hell yawning at his feet. The darkness of despair weighs heavily on his soul. O how the accursed blood-money sears his conscience! How horribly sounds the silver in his purse! It seems to him as if it were the pay of Satan and the wages of hell that he carries about with him; no, as if he had bartered for it the salvation of his soul. And this was what he had really done. See him hurrying along, urged forward by the raven wings of mental agony. God has forsaken him, and the devil has ceased to trouble himself about the comfort of his soul. The pitiable wretch rushes to the temple. "For what purpose? In order to pray?" No, he can pray no longer. He must rid himself of the accursed wages of sin. He seeks for the chief priests and elders, and having found them, he approaches them, pale as a corpse, and filled with rage and hatred against these instruments of his fall, and confesses boldly and openly, saying, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

Hear these words, they are of great importance. "Why? Has Judas become Jesus' friend?" By no means; his heart was still embittered against him. "Was his testimony to the innocence of Jesus of advantage to him?" On the contrary, by it he only drew down upon him the displeasure of his superiors, and increased the dreadful nature of his crime. It would have been to his advantage to have reasoned himself into the falsehood that Jesus was unworthy of any other treatment than that which he experienced. How strongly and triumphantly, therefore, must the heavenly radiance of Jesus' innocence have been reflected, even by the

darkened mirror of his treacherous soul, that, in spite of the injury just mentioned which he thereby occasioned himself, he could not refrain from honoring Jesus by such a confession! Truly, scarcely ever has a more powerful hymn of praise to the holiness of the Lamb of God been heard, than sounds in our ears in the despairing outcry of his betrayer; and where has the innocence of Jesus been more powerfully attested, than by the testimony which the unhappy murderer is compelled by conscience to give against himself? Thus, the Lord Jesus, as already observed, celebrated a brilliant triumph in the midst of the deepest gloom of his humiliation. He triumphs as One whom no one could convince of sin—as the Lamb without spot—as the Holy One of Israel. We congratulate ourselves on this new confirmation of the truth, that there is no blemish in our righteousness; for the righteousness of the Surety is the righteousness of his people. Those who praise the glorified Head, praise us also, who are his members. Even the enemies of Christ, who deny his divinity, but enthusiastically honor him as the model of every virtue, are "helpers of our joy." Their laudatory effusions in reality praise our excellence. They refuse, indeed, to hear of this; but when at length God shall take us to his arms before the whole world, and present us with the inheritance of his Son, they will be made aware that Immanuel's garment has descended to us, and that we are clothed with it.

The Lord celebrates his second triumph in the event we are about to contemplate, as the only salvation which is prepared for sinners. Singularly enough, he is glorified by his betrayer even in this quality. Judas here performs apostolic service—not intentionally on his part, although on God's part. He serves as a fearful example, how a man may undertake everything, in order to free himself from sin and its attendant curse, and yet not succeed, as long as the Lord Jesus is not his, and as long as he does not belong to the Lord Jesus.

Behold the miserable man! The horrible deed is done, and he already acknowledges it as a crime. In him we have not to do with an entirely hardened villain. He feels the greatness of his guilt, confesses it, and bitterly repents of it. What would he give, could he undo the wicked deed! He attempts many things for this purpose, to which the moralists of the present day would doubtless also have advised him. He hastily returns to

the men in whose service he had sinned, brings them back the accursed bribe; prefers enduring shame, disgrace, and much more besides, rather than let the blood-money remain in his hands; confesses freely and openly the impious act he has committed; does not seek to alleviate it, but directly says, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!" and sufficiently shows that the abhorrence he displays at the crime he has committed is earnest and sincere. And when the priests refuse to take back their pieces of silver, and haughtily turn their backs upon him with the cold and cutting words, "What is that to us? See you to that!" he casts the money down in the temple, and thereby gives them to understand that he destines it for the poor, or other sacred purposes. In this scene, we perceive something dreadfully retributive, when we call to mind the hypocritical words, "Why was not this ointment sold, and the money given to the poor?" with which the unhappy disciple once presumed to deprecate Mary's laudable work of love. He is now compelled, although with other money, to verify, in a dreadful manner, what he then uttered in dissimulation.

But what more could be desired than what the sinner did here? Here was self-condemnation, resolutions of amendment, and even earnest endeavors to repair the evil he had done. And yet of what use was it all? Sin remained; heaven continued closed against him; the heart of the Eternal Judge was turned from him, and Satan's chain was unbroken. The trembling of the wretched man is in vain, as well as his repentance, confession, and his moral resolutions and vows. All this was insufficient to purge him from his sin. All these laudable acts do not procure him mercy. Judas perishes horribly. "Why? Is it because his sins exceeded the measure of divine forgiveness?" O, not so! "Is it because he was a thief and a cheat?" Such was the thief on the cross in a much higher degree, yet he found the way to Paradise. "Is it because he betrayed the Holy One of Israel?" Thousands did the same, and yet were saved. "Was it because he laid hands on himself?" I tell you, that even if he had not done this, but had lived for years together, and spent them in serious attempts at amendment, he would still have perished, for this one single reason—that Jesus was not on his side nor atoned for him by his blood. Thus the perdition of Judas must serve, like no other event, to show, in striking colors, how impossible it is to do without Jesus; and the latter triumphs

in this, as in almost nothing else, as the only and exclusive Savior of sinners.

Nothing can avail or save, if Jesus is not ours. If you, my readers, had any commensurate idea, how much you need him, you would throw open every avenue to admit him. Gladly would you divest yourselves of that which is the dearest and most precious to you, in order that you might possess him. No, you would risk your very lives, much more the vain delights and empty honors of this world, in order to gain him. There exists no compensation for the want of Jesus and the cleansing efficacy of his blood. The most specious tissue of austerities, morality, and devotional exercises, cannot supply his place. It is only a more handsome dress for a delinquent, and not the wedding garment for the invited guest.

Jesus alone enables us to obtain mercy, and to reach heaven. If he be not gracious to you, it is in vain for you to rise early and to sit up late, in order by such means to work out your salvation. You labor and accomplish nothing; you gather and put it into a bag with holes, you wove spider's webs, which are unfit for clothing. You pour into a vessel, the bottom of which is knocked out, and condemn yourself to roll a stone up a hill, which, just as you think to reach the summit, again escapes you, and rolls down, unimpeded, into the abyss below. But if Jesus is your, you have already gained your cause; fruits of peace fall into your lap from a tree, which is not of your planting; you can boast of your Savior's righteousness, while you are still striving against sin; and are reconciled unto God, without an atonement being required at your hand. Why then do you delay to embrace him, and make him your all in all? Say with the apostle, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" and when these words are verified in you, you are safe to all eternity.

Judas is exhibited to us in the history of the Passion, in order that sin, with all its horrors, may appear in the full blaze of day, and that redemption may appear in all its splendor, and Jesus be visibly glorified, not only as the Holy One, and the only way of salvation, but also as the Savior of mankind. If ever the dreadful nature of sin was manifested in any one, it was so in the traitor. Here, it first of all, presents to us its entire hatefulness and darkness, which appears only the more striking

when contrasted with the heavenly light, which beams forth from the person of Christ. Here it makes itself known as the great deceiver, which promises its servants mountains of gold, but rewards them with horror and terror. Here it comes forward as an emanation from hell, whose fruit brings death, and which has never borne any other children than fear, despair, and condemnation. Here it reveals itself as the worst enemy of our race, which cuts asunder the bonds that connected us with God, inflames the wrath of the Almighty against us, opens to us the gates of the eternal desert, and establishes a gulf between us and the heavenly city of God, over which no bridge can be thrown. Besides, it is here manifestly shown how it scoffs at every human attempt to extract its sting; how no penitence can banish it, no tears wash it away, and no good resolutions annihilate it; but it obstinately remains in defiance of all this; hands over its subjects to Satan, and after embittering their life on this side the grave, transfers them finally to an eternal night of death, and gives them up to endless perdition.

Look at the traitor in his state of despair, and behold how sin sits upon his shoulders, like a hideous specter! See how he shades himself and plunges under his burden, but the monster refuses to leave him. Observe how he hurries along, restless and fugitive, but the specter accompanies him and becomes increasingly frightful as he proceeds. He expects to get rid of his horrible burden by returning the thirty pieces of silver; but in vain are the attempts to settle accounts with sin at such a rate. Judas has recourse to the chief priest and elders, but they know of no remedy against sin. Driven at length to desperation, he casts himself into the arms of death; but even the latter does not relieve the soul from the fiend. Judas may divest himself of his body, but he does not thereby, lay aside his guilt. He may part with his life; but sin does not, on this account, depart from him. He can leave the world, but his impious act follows him across its boundaries. He may strangle himself, but his iniquity is not destroyed by so doing: on the contrary, greater scope is thus afforded it to unfold its whole power and dominion. It does not prevent his body from bursting asunder, but carries away the soul with it to everlasting fire. Approach the grave of Judas. No angels are watching there, nor does the guardian eye of God stand open over it. No rose of hope blooms on its grassy mound. Night-shade and thistle alone vegetate there. And what is

the inscription on his tombstone? It is short and horrifying—"And Judas went to his place"—and indicates in a dreadful manner how far the desolating, destructive, and fatal power of sin extends.

Who was there that was able to cope with this monster? He, who is being dragged yonder in chains before the judgment-seat of a heathen, and at the sight of whom, Judas despairs, instead of breaking out into exclamations of joy—he it is who enters the lists against it. Christ, by imputation, was the Lamb which took upon himself the sin of the world, in order by the representative endurance of the curse due to it, he might deprive it of its sting, in behalf of all those, who should believe on him. He has done so; and when we asserted that he triumphed in the event under consideration as a Savior, we meant to say, first, that the redemption accomplished by him, appears in such adorable splendor, because the monster sin here reveals more variously than elsewhere, its real nature, and exhibits its horrors in broad daylight. But Christ is also glorified here as the Savior, since every one must feel convinced that the son of perdition suffers shipwreck here solely because he disdains to cast himself patiently and believingly into the arms of him whom he has betrayed. However dreadful the storm, which sinks the whole fleet of human aid—a barque still remained, in which he might have taken refuge. Had he done so, it would have infallibly brought him safely into the haven of eternal peace. "But why did he not ascend its sides?" Partly because he was still too proud to honor him, by suing for his mercy, who had torn away his hypocritical mask, and against whom his soul was still deeply embittered. Partly, also, because he had given way to despair; for Satan did not cease, as a reward for the services which Judas had rendered him, to suggest to him that there was no longer any hope for him. In addition to which, by filling his imagination with all kinds of infernal imagery, he deprived him of the power of calm and lucid reflection. Could Judas have summoned up sufficient humility and courage to turn his tearful eye to Jesus, as did afterward the dying thief, he would have met only the look of forgiving mercy; and O what different sounds would have saluted his ear, than the horrifying language of the chief priests and elders, who said to him, "What is that to us? See you to that." There was no want of grace, even for a man in his desperate condition; and although his sin was "red like crimson," yet the blood of

atonement would have sufficed to wash it white as snow. But the devil carried him away in the whirlwind, like the vulture the lamb it has seized upon; nor did he rest until he had completed his triumph over him, and had gotten secure possession of the soul of him, who had thus become his rare booty.

The world has never beheld a more tragic spectacle than the one we are now contemplating. One who was ordained and fitted to become a distinguished vessel of salvation and blessing to mankind, gives himself up to despair in the presence of the world's deliverer, and plunges into the gulf of eternal perdition, instead of laying hold of the hand extended for his rescue, under the unhappy delusion that, by so doing, he should experience deliverance from the agony of his conscience. It would seem as if even death and hell disowned this son of perdition, just as the world had previously done in the person of the chief priests and elders, and were compelled, with God, to execute judgment upon him. The rope with which the miserable man had hung himself snaps asunder. The tree which he had selected as the instrument of his death, shakes him off again with horror. The strangled wretch falls down, bursts asunder, and his affections, gushing out, lie scattered on the ground.

While these horrible things are enacting, the chief priests and elders are consulting together, what should be done with the thirty pieces of silver, which Judas, in his state of desperation, had thrown back again. "It is not lawful," say the hypocrites, unconsciously stigmatizing themselves, "to put them into the treasury, for it is the price of blood." They say right; for according to Deut. 23:18, the treasury of the Lord was not to be defiled by blood-money, or the price of a dog. But how well do the words of our Lord in Matt. 23:23, apply to these whited sepulchers, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law judgment, mercy, and faith. You blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!" Were not these men equally guilty of the heinous crime with the traitor himself, to whom they had paid the thirty pieces of silver? And though they were in equal condemnation with him, yet they assume to themselves not only the place of his judges, but with a haughty mien, contrast themselves with him as keepers of the law and the holy places.

Who does not feel almost more sympathy with the despairing disciple than with these proficients in falsehood and dissimulation? Who can say that it may not be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the former, than for these arrogant and heartless hypocrites!

They agree together to purchase, with the wages of iniquity, the potter's field—a piece of ground belonging to a potter; and destine it for the burial-place of those pilgrims who might die in Jerusalem without having any tomb or place of sepulture of their own. Thus, even the money, for which our Lord was bartered, must be productive of good. And is there not in this transaction, a distant hint that Christ yielded up himself, that we, poor pilgrims in the valley of death, might rest in peace? The purchased field was thenceforward known by the semi-Syrian name of "Aceldama," or "the field of blood." A melancholy monument was thus erected to the lost disciple and his crime; which still speaks to the traveler and says, "There is no more offering for sin unto him, who treads under foot the blood of the Son of God."

The evangelist, after narrating the purchase we have just been considering, observes, that "Then was fulfilled, that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.'" Matthew combines here, as respects their chief import, two prophetic passages; the first of which belongs to Jeremiah, but the other to Zechariah, whose name is not mentioned. We read the words of Jeremiah, in chap. 19:11-13 as follows: "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again, and they shall bury them in Tophet, until there shall be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, says the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled, as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses, on whose roofs they have burned incense to all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods." The words of Zechariah we find in the eleventh chapter of his prophecies, where we read in verse 13, "And the Lord said unto me, 'Cast it unto the potter; a

goodly price that I was prized at of them.' And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter, in the house of the Lord."

Let us endeavor, first, to penetrate to the bottom of the words of Jeremiah. The prophet announces heavy judgments upon the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem; and according to divine direction, he had taken his stand near the tile—or potter's gate, at the place called Tophet, which belongs to the valley of Benhinnom, and is the same where the Israelites, in the days of dreadful apostasy, had sacrificed their children to the idol Moloch. In the presence of the priests and elders, accompanied by whom he had gone out by divine command, he takes an earthen vessel, which he had brought with him, and dashes it in pieces on the ground, accompanying this symbolical act with the prediction that thus should the city and people be broken, and that the latter would be buried in the defiled and accursed Tophet, from want of room to inter the corpses, and the city itself should be as Tophet, and its houses unclean.

Tophet, where once the image of Moloch stood, was, at the same time, the piece of ground where the potters of Jerusalem procured the clay for their handicraft. When the prophet broke in pieces the earthen vessel in this very place, and thus changed it into its original material, he very significantly and affectingly pointed out the fate which would, in like manner, befall the holy city and the chosen race. This Tophet was the potter's field, which, as stated above, was bought by the elders for thirty pieces of silver. But when Matthew says, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet," the meaning of the Holy Spirit, who guided the evangelist's pen, is this—"Seeing that God so ordered it that the elders of Israel purchased with the wages of iniquity, the field on which the curse of Jeremiah rested, thus making it the property of the Jewish state, and by so doing, transferred, as it were, that curse to themselves and the people: thus testifying, and again symbolically, that the visitation, then threatened, would break in, a second time, upon Israel in so much the more dreadful form, the more grievous the murder of the Son of God himself was than the service of Moloch, and the abominations connected with it. It was not therefore the purchase of the field itself, but rather the symbolic appropriation, by it, of the divine curse upon Tophet, which received its final accomplishment in the

destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that is here described as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

The passage from Zechariah serves only to enlarge the meaning of Jeremiah's prediction. The latter being, in the opinion of the evangelist, the more important of the two, he does not even mention the name of the former. Jeremiah points out the piece of ground purchased; Zechariah the price which the Jewish authorities paid for it. Let us look a little more closely at the words of the latter. The Lord is there speaking to his ungrateful people, and represents himself as their Shepherd, who had tended them at one time with the staff "Beauty" (gentleness), and at another, with the staff "Bands" (severity). But they had disregarded his pastoral care, and had continually strayed from his paths, and despised his under-shepherds, the prophets, and among them, Zechariah himself, who complains that he, and in him the Lord who sent him, was no more valued by them than the lowest slave; thirty pieces of silver being the price at which they estimated him. Jehovah threatens them with his judgments in consequence of this impious conduct. "Cast it unto the potter"—that is, throw it, as the wages of sin, into the mire of that accursed field, where the potter carries on his work—the field of Tophet. And then the Lord adds, in sacred irony, "A goodly price, that I was prized at of them," "and I," continues the prophet, now speaking in his own person, "took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter, in the house of the Lord." Thus the temple was treated, by divine command, as if it were the field of Tophet itself; a dreadful emblematical prediction of the fact that even the temple, in process of time, should crumble into dust under the curse of God.

The hour of the threatened judgment was at hand, when he, who was the perfection of God's pastoral faithfulness, was valued, on the part of Israel, at the trifling price of thirty pieces of silver. For this small sum, Judas, as representing his nation, disposed of his part in the Savior, and the children of Israel, by their rulers, bargained for the Holy One to slay him. But by the fact of the traitor, in despair, hurling the murderer's reward from him, and casting it down in the temple, the blood-money (a bad omen) was returned to the congregation of Israel. This act, which was not without divine intervention, called fearfully and significantly to mind the

thirty pieces of silver mentioned by Zechariah, and could only be explained to mean that the Almighty now renewed, more impressively than before, the threatening he had pronounced against Jerusalem and its sanctuary, in the symbolical act of his prophet. And the circumstance that the Jewish rulers hit upon the idea of purchasing the accursed spot, called Tophet, with the wages of iniquity, completely impresses the seal of truth on that explanation.

Hence it is evident that the spirit of prophecy both uttered and apprehended the words of Zechariah and Jeremiah with a conscious reference to the event which occurred in Jerusalem after the lapse of centuries; and that God permitted the transaction between Judas and the rulers of Israel to assume, in so striking a manner, a form corresponding with those ancient prophetic sayings, only because he would give the ungrateful flock of his people, a new and tangible sign that the time of maturity for destruction, and the long announced and terrible judgments of his hand had now arrived. Matthew therefore says, with perfect justice, "Then was fulfilled, that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." Actual predictions found their final accomplishment. Even as the Holy Spirit had distinctly pointed, in Zechariah, to the thirty pieces of silver—so in Jeremiah, he had pointed to the purchase of the potter's field by the priests and elders. The accusation of a merely arbitrary and allegorical application of Old Testament sayings and events to New Testament occurrences, nowhere applies to the evangelists and apostles.

Deeply affected, we take our leave of the most horrible passage in the whole history of the passion of our Lord. How near we may be to him, and yet become the prey of Satan, if we do not carefully watch over our hearts! How many gifts and favors we may have received from him, and yet may suffer the most dreadful loss of them by an unfaithful use of them! Let him who gives himself to Christ, do so without reserve; and whoever is desirous of holding communion with him, let him always walk before him without disguise. Let him who is overtaken by a fault seek the throne of grace without delay; and he who is conscious of being under the dominion of a single sin, let him not cease to watch and pray, until its power is broken by the mercy of him who bruised the serpent's head. The germ from which a Judas may spring, when fructified by hell, lies

concealed in all of us. Let us therefore make room for the Holy Spirit in our hearts, that he may destroy it, and make all within us new!

Christ before Pilate

The day has just dawned—the most momentous, decisive, and eventful in the world. It greets our Lord with dreadful insignia. It approaches in a blood-stained robe, a crown of thorns to encircle his brow, in the one hand, and in the other, the scourge, the fatal cup, and the accursed tree; while it rises upon us with the olive-branch of peace, the divine acquittal, and the crown of life. O sacred Friday, day of divine compassion, birth-day of our eternal redemption, we bless you, we greet you on our knees!

We find the holy city in unwonted commotion. Masses of men move along the streets. A spectacle like that which now presents itself, had never before been witnessed. The whole Sanhedrin has risen up to conduct a delinquent, whom they have condemned to death, in solemn procession to the Roman authorities, in order to wrest from the latter the confirmation of their sentence. And who is it they are dragging there? The very man who was recently received in the same city, by the same crowd of people, with loud hosannas, and was exalted and celebrated as no one had been before. It is Jesus of Nazareth, respecting whom they cried exultingly, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" and of whom, even his enemies could not refrain from testifying that a great prophet had arisen among them. He now meets us as the offscouring and refuse of the same people, who shortly before strewed palms and wreathed chaplets for him! Such is the world's favor, and so little truth is there in the saying, "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

The procession moves on to the palace of Herod. For it was there that the governor usually resided, when his duties called him to Jerusalem from Caesarea, where he regularly abode. It is well known that the Roman emperors committed the several provinces, of which their extensive dominions were composed to the government of pro-consuls or viceroys. To these, procurators or governors were added for each province, whose office it was to collect the revenues, and to give the final decision in all judicial affairs. In the smaller districts, the latter not infrequently exercised the sole power, as was the case in Judea, which, with Samaria,

had been incorporated into the province of Syria. It was generally said of these individuals, that they were in the habit of making their influential position the means of promoting their avaricious views; and hence they were characterized as being unjust and severe. Wherever they appeared, they were received only with mistrust and secret bitterness by their subjects; and it was only by the application of military force that they succeeded in giving effect to their commands, and in restraining the people from revolt, with which they were continually menaced.

After the deposition and removal of the Tetrarch Archelaus, Pontius Pilate, six years after the birth of Christ, was made the sixth governor of Judea. From Luke, 3:1, it appears that he was in office when John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness, and he therefore spent in Palestine the whole period of our Lord's ministry. For ten years together he was able to maintain his position under the Emperor Tiberius, a fact which does honor to his knowledge of the are of governing, since there was probably not a more difficult post of the kind in the whole Roman empire. For apart from his having to deal with the Jews, the most cunning and intriguing of all the nations around, there was no other people upon earth to whom the government of foreigners was a greater abomination than to them. However far the Jews might be from their former glory, they were still, in spite of their degradation, as much aware as ever of their nobility as the chosen people of God; and thought themselves called, under the sanction of divine promises, which however they grossly misunderstood, eventually to bear rule over the whole earth; and yet these free-born children of Abraham were now living under a foreign yoke, and that a heathen one! Where was the wonder, then, that they bore it with stifled rage, like a captive lion in its iron collar; and that he who exercised a direct power over them, was, from the first, an object of their bitterest hatred!

It is equally comprehensible that Pilate also, on his part, could not entertain any particular liking for such a nation, and gladly made them feel his superior authority when opportunity offered. Nor could it appear strange to any one that Pilate preferred fixing his residence at Caesarea, which was chiefly inhabited by Gentiles, and by means of its harbor carried on an animated communion with the rest of the empire, rather

than in the metropolis of the proud and rebellious Hebrews. There were several serious revolts in Jerusalem during his regency, which could only be quelled by calling out the Roman garrison quartered in Fort Antonia. But these repeated suppressions of the rebellious spirit of the people were accustomed to be followed by stricter measures on the part of the government, which only embittered the Jews the more. In other respects Pilate was not very severe or strict; and when he sometimes executed summary justice, as in the instance recorded in Luke 13:1, he had probably sufficient cause for so doing.

Were we able to look into the hearts of the Jews, and especially into those of their chief priests and rulers, during their procession to the Roman praetorium, we should see in them a glowing furnace of rage and vexation. It was dreadful to them to see themselves compelled to this open exhibition of their subjugation to a foreign yoke. But the bloodthirstiness under which they languished for the extirpation of the hated Nazarene, this time outweighed their boundless ambition and national pride. Foaming with indignation, like fettered hyenas raging in their chains, they proceed forward with their victim, and are compelled, by this procession, to testify, against their will, that the scepter has departed from Judah, and that the time so definitely pointed out by the dying Jacob for the appearance of the Shiloh, to whom the gathering of the people should be, had now arrived. Yes, they are compelled to acknowledge even more than this, and by means of their wickedness to place the necessity of an atonement beyond a doubt, such as the fettered captive who walked at their head, was about to accomplish.

It will doubtless be, in some measure, the conviction of every one of my readers that God must necessarily have pronounced an eternal curse on such ruthless reprobates as the characters just described, if no mediating surety interposed to take their curse upon himself, and render satisfaction to divine justice in their stead. To suppose that the Most High could pardon such sons of Belial, without anything further, would be to demand the overthrow of the whole moral government of the world, and to require nothing less than that God should act in opposition to himself, and cease to be God. Reason cannot believe in the possibility of salvation for a race like that of Adam, irrespective of an atonement; and scarcely

anything in the world appears more rational than the scriptural doctrine of the redemption of sinners by the mediating intervention of the Son of God. I confess that all that is within me would rise up in the greatest excitement and astonishment, were I to behold the thrice holy God embracing, without such an intervention, the worthless assemblage at Jerusalem in the arms of his love. In this case, nothing would be left me but to feel mistaken in God, or to disbelieve my own eyes. But when I see in the midst of those transgressors, the Lamb which takes away the sin of the world, I then see that God could open the gates of paradise even to the most degraded of that generation of vipers; and in this I should perceive nothing either enigmatical or objectionable. The Lamb is, therefore, the light in the economy and government of God, and the cross the key to the deepest mysteries of his ways and guidance.

Behold the adorable Prince of Peace bound like a criminal, and covered with ignominy! Who could be able to form a correct idea of this spectacle, and yet believe that divine justice rules the world, if we were permitted to behold the Savior only in his own person, and not at the same time as Mediator and High Priest! But now that we are aware of his Suretyship, although we may feel deeply affected at his infinite humiliation, we are no longer struck and astonished. We can even bear to be told that the visible sufferings he endured were only the faint reflection of the incomparably more horrible torments which he secretly suffered; and that the host which surrounds him with swords and spears, forms only a part of the escort which accompanies him, since another part, which is invisible and behind the curtain, is commanded by Satan himself. For when Christ experienced what was due to us, we know that the latter included all these horrors. Nothing more nor less befell him than what was destined to be endured by us on account of our sins. What an unspeakable gift do we therefore possess in the bleeding Lamb! Would too much honor be done him if our whole lives were one continued adoration of his name; and would our love exceed its measure if nothing any longer sounded sweet or lovely to us except what was interwoven with his name?

They bring the Lord Jesus to Pilate the Roman governor. The Almighty permits circumstances so to connect themselves together that the whole world, in its representatives, must participate in the condemnation of the

Just One. Hence his death becomes the common crime of our race, and every mouth is stopped before the judgment-seat of God. They conduct the Lord to Pilate; and thus, what the Savior had before so distinctly predicted, when announcing his passion, was literally fulfilled: "Behold," said he, "we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles." We now see the accomplishment of this prediction. By so doing Israel filled up the measure of its guilt. For the second time they hand over their brother Joseph to the uncircumcised and to strangers. By this transfer they typified, at the same time, their own fate. The world's salvation, intended for them in the first instance, was by them most ungratefully given up to the Gentiles; while they themselves were thenceforward left to languish in darkness and the shadow of death.

The procession arrives at the governor's palace. They lay hold of their prisoner, and rudely push him into the open portal of the house. Why do they act thus? The narrative informs us, that "they themselves went not into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover." Their idea was not in accordance with a right understanding of the divine law; but they obeyed the arbitrarily invented ordinance of their Rabbis, which stated that they exposed themselves to defilement by entering a house, and especially a Gentile one, in which leaven might be found. But they had no objection that their captive should be thus defiled. They even purposely push him into the house they deemed unclean, and thus tangibly and symbolically expel him, as a tax-collector and a sinner, from the commonwealth of Israel. But all this was to happen thus, in order that Christ's character as the sinner's Surety might become increasingly apparent, and every one perceive in the man who, by virtue of a mysterious transfer, had taken himself everything that was condemnatory in us.

There is no feature in the history of the passion which is devoid of significance. Throughout there is a manifestation of superior arrangement and divine depth of purpose. This forcible urging of the Holy One of Israel into the house of a heathen is something horrible. It exhibits a degree of wickedness worthy of Beelzebub himself. If the

redemption of the world had not been at stake, how could heaven have been silent or have restrained the vials of God's wrath? But the salvation of the world was to be accomplished, and hence it was that the Lamb of God patiently and silently endured even the most unworthy and disgraceful treatment. We could weep bloody tears to see him, who was love itself, pushed forward by the crude hands of the brutish multitude. But we will not weep over him, but over ourselves and our race, which is capable of such depravity and devilishness. Let us not overlook, however, the evangelical emblem that meets our view even in this trait of the narrative. Christ entered for us alone, not only where apparent, but where real and serious danger menaced us, even into the horrible abyss of the curse of the law, the prison of death, and the regions of darkness, in order to exhaust upon his own sacred person the force of the terrors which were prepared for us, and leave us nothing but peace, salvation, freedom, and blessing.

But what shall we say to the conduct of the Jews, who, full of the leaven of all ungodliness, while making no conscience of laying their murderous hands on the Holy One of God, act as if they were too conscientious to enter the house of an impure heathen, lest they should come in contact with the leaven which could not defile them? What a striking example do these "whited sepulchers" prove of the truth of our Lord's words, Matt. 23:27, and what a complete commentary do they yield us on the words that follow: "You blind guides which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!" Would to God these wretched people were the only ones of their kind! But they meet us in every form and color, even among these who call themselves Christians. Who is not acquainted with individuals who scrupulously abstain from worldly amusements, and carefully avoid coming into social contact with the worldly-minded, who not only vie with the world in all the arts of dissimulation, uncharitable judgment of others, and hateful scandal, but even go beyond it? Who does not know those who believe that they would be committing a great crime if they performed the slightest labor on the Sunday, or if they were not the first at every performance of divine service; while it never occurs to them to regard as sin the secret service of mammon to which they are devoted—who on no account would suffer themselves to be seen at a theater or a ball—in which they do well—but forgive themselves, without hesitation,

for compensating themselves for that privation, by taking part, in imagination, in all the enjoyments and pleasures of the world, and bloat with vanity, in their way, not less than the most frivolous characters of the age—who never fail to appear at the institution of beneficent establishments and associations, and head the list of the contributors, while they make no scruple of secretly practicing deceit and imposition in their trade and business, or of acting unjustly or severely toward those who are under them, or of their avarice and greediness for transitory honor?

One of the crafty devices by which men pass by the moral claims which God makes on our conduct is, that instead of bowing to the divine yoke, they form and impose another more pleasing to the flesh; thus trying to make it appear as if they performed more than God's commands enjoined upon them. Thus arose the traditions of the Talmudistic Rabbis, which, although they are nothing but exercises easy to be performed, afforded to those who practiced them the semblance of a special piety, conscientiousness, and faithfulness in the discharge of duty. In this way also, arose the shallow and sentimental morality of our modern sophists —that tissue of unobjectionable rules of life, which it likewise derived solely from the surface of moral consciousness, and which may be practiced just as conveniently as their performance aids us in the obtainment of a virtuous appearance at an easy rate. But he is mistaken who supposes that by such counterfeit holiness he shall be able to settle accounts with the Most High; and he dishonors and insults him, who hopes to bribe him with "cups and platters," outwardly clean, but inwardly full of "ravening wickedness." He who reigns on high is just as little satisfied with mere deductions from the amount of obedience due to him as with the counters of our self-chosen works, instead of the pure gold of righteousness required by his law. "The eyes of the Lord," said the prophet Hanani to King Asa, "run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him." He desires the whole man and not mere fractional parts. He who cannot resolve to devote himself to his service without reserve, loses nothing by withdrawing himself entirely, and placing himself at the disposal of the world and his own lusts. There is no medium between belief and unbelief. In the exercise of the former, we give ourselves

entirely to God; and where this is not done, there faith does not exist, however specious the man may be in his outward profession. True conversion is a new birth, and not a patching up of the old garment. The life of godliness is a harmonious organization, and not a sticking together of single acts of piety.

Pilate soon begins to suspect why the Jews pushed their culprit toward him through the gate, but feels so little offended at this, that he pretends ignorance, and magnanimously steps out to them to ascertain the object of their coming. He considers that he has only to do with contracted and narrow-minded Jews, and deems that it comports both with his refinement and his dignity to tolerate their limited prejudices. But with these prejudices, he overlooks the fact of the divine records being in their possession. There is no want, my readers, of people among us who assume, but not without culpability, a position with reference to real Christians, similar to that of this proud Roman toward the children of Abraham. It cannot be denied that there are believing Christians who suffer from a certain partiality and contracted judgment with reference to the things of science, are, or life. But, however, those of a more refined intellect may look down with a degree of compassion on these simple people and their narrow sphere of vision, and though it may be no crime to do so, for it is often difficult to bear with such limited and contracted characters, yet, though you may appear to yourselves to be elevated above such people, and suppose that it becomes you to tolerate, with their narrow-mindedness, the truths which they profess; yet you act improperly by so doing, and will one day smart severely for your self-esteem. If you are really in every respect far beyond these "poor in spirit," there is nothing left for you, if you are desirous of attaining to the highest aim of your existence, but to descend from your proud elevation, and place yourselves on the same level with them. Yes, you must come down to their humble position, and, with them, learn to hunger and thirst after a righteousness which is not your own; and to the position of Lazarus at the rich man's door, which is Christ, where you see them also lying. You must even be brought to acknowledge that they are far beyond you in all that is of real value; and that you are on the way to midnight darkness, if the faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness of these humble followers of the Lamb do not become yours. You are not restrained from being in advance

of them in refinement, extensive benevolence, and maturity of judgment, or from moving more freely and unfettered, as far as the Spirit from above gives you liberty. But you must be grafted into the same stock with these inferior people, and flourish from the same root, or you will continue, on the height of your intellectual superiority, to be the children of death, while they will eventually soar toward heaven as glorified spirits from the dark chrysalis state of their defective education. Therefore beware that you do not throw away the kernel with the shell, nor be found preferring external polish to that meek and humble spirit which, in the sight of God, is of great price.

"Pilate then went out unto the people, and said, What accusation bring you against this man?" He assumes the appearance of unbelief and indifference, but he was able to take a more unprejudiced view of the matter than the Jews, and cannot think, after all he has hitherto heard of the Nazarene, and feels at that moment that they would be able to bring any serious charge against him. Like as with Pilate, so it is still with every one who looks unprejudicedly into the sacred volume. Such a one will not be able to rid himself of the impression of the spotlessness of Jesus, which nothing can shake or neutralize. But ought it not to be regarded as a matter of astonishment that a Holy One, in the full sense of the words, has really appeared in the world? Does it not indisputably follow that the sayings of this Just One are much more worthy of credence than the doctrines of all the wise men after the flesh? Does it not constrain us to the conviction that a person so illustrious and superior to all other mortals, must have been sent by God for some very particular object? And does not this idea necessarily lead to another, that there must be something extraordinary and mysterious attached to the sufferings which were poured upon this Holy One? And do we not, finally, perceive, without any positive revelation respecting it, that we are compelled to come to the conclusion, that this incomparable personage must have been selected to be the deliverer and savior of a sinful world? It is impossible to avoid such reflections, after an unprejudiced and logical consideration of the subject. But we may well ask, where do we meet with such sound and liberal minded reasoners? The indocility and stupidity of the natural man, with regard to supernatural and divine thongs, has no bounds.

To the governor's question, of what Jesus is accused, the following haughty and insane reply is returned by his accusers, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto you." In this impudent speech, their entire refractoriness toward the hated Romans is made apparent. It is the rebelliousness of fettered slaves, the fury of encaged wolves. Here again we perceive also, the furious pharisaism of the priests and the people; for though they are endeavoring to murder innocence and do the devil's work, yet because *they* do it, it must be right and blameless. Can pride go beyond this? Do not let us overlook the circumstance, however, that by their arrogant language they hope to disguise the embarrassment in which, despite of all appearance to the contrary, they have involved themselves. They know of nothing from which they can form a well-grounded charge against their delinquent, and think that the bold front they put on the affair will compensate for what is deficient in proof and testimony against Jesus.

Alas! they do not entirely fail in their object. Pilate suffers himself to be overawed by their determined appearance, and places the first foot on that slippery path on which we shall afterward see him carried forward, from one crime to another, against his will, and finally ending in the abyss of perdition, amid the derisive laughter of infernal spirits. "Then said Pilate unto them, Take you him, and judge him according to your law." What worthless behavior in a judge who ought to administer law and justice in the land! We already see how little he cares whether Jesus lives or dies, only he would not willingly have the blood of a man upon his soul whom his conscience absolves as innocent.

More reckless than the Roman are those of our contemporaries, who, like Pilate, would not personally lay hands on Jesus, because they cannot divest themselves of a certain degree of reverence for him, but secretly suggest to bolder rebels than themselves, that which Pilate did openly, when he said, "Take him and judge him according to your law," and feel a malicious pleasure when the emissaries of Satan drag down the Holy One into the dust, pollute his Gospel with their infernal blasphemies, and reward his believing followers with the appellation of fools, or brand them as hypocrites. Compared with those who view with silent delight the anti-Christian proceedings and rebellious movements of the age, Pilate

was an honorable man, while they are worthy of a double curse, and already bear the mark of it on their foreheads.

"Take you him, and judge him according to your law." The heathen governor would gladly have escaped from sharing the guilt of murdering the Righteous One, whom the Jews had delivered up to him. But he will not succeed in his object on the path he is now pursuing. He must either decide for or against Jesus. He is compelled either to take the part of the Holy One, to the setting aside of all private considerations, or to afford his sanction to the most cruel and bloody deed the world ever witnessed. But, my readers, the case is similar with us. There is just as little room left us for a neutral position as was left him. The Holy One of Israel comes into too close a contact with us to be quietly passed by. If we refuse to do him homage, we are compelled to aid in crucifying him. We cannot escape the alternative of rejecting him, if we will not decidedly devote ourselves to him. He testifies too loudly to our consciences that He is the Lord, to suffer us quietly to part with him with a mere passing compliment. If we wish to separate ourselves from him, nothing is left for us but to say, in positive opposition, "We will not have you to reign over us; get you behind us!" God grant that this may not be the case with any of us, but enable us to exclaim, with the apostle Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

The Jews close the outlet before Pilate's face by which he hoped to escape from any participation in the dreadful crime of the murder of Jesus, by giving him a reply which ought to have made him feel deeply ashamed, "It is not lawful for us," say they, "to put any man to death." Pilate knew this, and what confusion of ideas and increasing perplexity does the man betray, who, though he was the supreme judge, could recommend to the Jews themselves the execution of an act of justice to which they had no right, according to the existing laws. Or was Pilate induced to express himself thus foolishly, from having no idea that the accusers of Jesus were bent upon his death? This is also conceivable. But his miserable attempt at an escape is wholly frustrated, as it deserved. There is something really tragical in the fact that circumstances should so concur and be interwoven with each other that it would seem as if Pilate was to be drawn into the blood-guiltiness of the Jews. And this will assuredly be

the case if he cannot resolve to give his heart, and pay homage to Jesus, even as every one who obstinately resists the call to conversion must increasingly fill up the measure of his sins, and accelerate his ripeness for destruction.

"It is not lawful for us to put any one to death." They were not permitted to do so. If, on one occasion, they tumultuously stoned a supposed heretic to death, the Roman authorities probably leniently overlooked it. But in order to a formal accusation, and death by crucifixion in particular, they could not do without superior consent. Hence they openly, though with stifled rage, confess their dependence on the Roman tribunal. Their thirst for revenge upon the Nazarene, however, this time outweighs their national pride. The man they hate is doomed to be crucified and to perish ignominiously. Such are their thoughts. But the Lord in heaven also exercises an influence in the affair. The evangelist remarks, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spoke, signifying what death he should die." John has reference here to the words recorded in ch. 12:32, of his Gospel, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," adding the explanatory remark, "This he said, signifying what death he should die."

In the tumultuous assemblage before the governor's palace at Jerusalem, we are, therefore, unexpectedly aware of a divine intimation respecting the Savior. The counsel of the Eternal Father displays itself, and in its depths a cross is descried for his only-begotten Son, even as it was also in the plans of Satan. For the sake of the symbolical meaning included in it, the accursed tree was selected in the counsels of eternity, as the instrument of the Savior's death. The brazen serpent in the wilderness, as well as the wave-offering of the tabernacle, early shadowed it forth to the people of God. The crowd which had assembled round Gabbatha, unconsciously aided in realizing it. It now stands erected in history, in the ministry of the Gospel, and in the minds of men, and manifests its wonder-working and attractive influence in an increasing measure, to this hour.

We conclude our meditation, strengthened afresh, as I hope, in the twofold conviction, that our forgiveness unconditionally demanded a vicarious sacrifice, and that the whole of our Lord's passion can only be

properly understood when regarded from such a point of view. We are reasonably astonished at the wisdom of the Almighty, who has so wonderfully solved the greatest of all problems—that of the restoration of a race which had fallen under the curse, to the divine right of sonship, without thereby denying his holiness. This solution is found in the Savior's obedience and death. Let us adoringly bow the knee to him, and join with thankful hearts in the song of the Church triumphant, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation!"

The Accusations

After the Jews had gained their first victory over the governor, for as such they might account it, in having succeeded by their imposing attitude, in wresting from him the reply, "Take you him and, judge him according to your law," they proceed with increasing courage, and bring forward accusations against their prisoner, by which they hope completely to influence the Roman, and induce him to favor their murderous project. They are acquainted with his weak side—his pride of office, his ambition, and, in particular, his dependence on the favor of his imperial master; and toward this point they direct their assault. They abstain from repeating, before a heathen tribunal, accusations against Jesus which they could successfully bring forward against him in their Jewish Sanhedrin. Instead of an ecclesiastical, they make before Pilate a political charge. They accuse the Lord of a threefold crime, which, because it is imputed to him, in a certain sense, by his opponents and the enemies of his kingdom, even in the present day, is worthy of particular investigation.

"We have found this fellow perverting the nation." This is the first of the three charges brought against him. They intend by it to say, "This man seeks to lessen the respect due to the constituted authorities." The worthless beings, who were themselves puffed up with revolutionary feelings, and incessantly intent upon inciting the people against the Roman sovereignty! But to bring forward against Jesus a charge like the one just mentioned, some shadow of truth was requisite, and this they

found in the position which the Lord had taken up with reference to the priests and scribes. For as regards the priests, our Lord certainly did not instruct his disciples to place their trust in them, as their real mediators with God, or to seek in their sacrifices the cause of their justification in his sight. If, by this, he detracted from the authority of the sons of Aaron, he did nothing more than reduce this authority to the correct measure intended by God, and thus purified the veneration which the people showed them, from the elements of a dangerous delusion and superstition, which had occasionally been attached to them in contradiction to the Word of God. But where had he denied to the priesthood of Israel the authority of a divine institution, and refused it the reverence and submission which belonged to it as such? His position as regards the priesthood was certainly peculiar and unique. The latter, as a prophetic shadow, had pointed to him, and in him, as its essential antitype, it was intended to reach its aim, and termination. This was not to be accomplished by means of a violent overthrow of existing institutions, but on the even and hallowed path of a gradual development. Of itself, and in consequence of an internal necessity, the priesthood of the old tabernacle was to give way to that which is true and real, just as the blossom makes room for the fruit, or like the butterfly bursting from the chrysalis. Therefore, as long as Jesus had not fulfilled the entire requirements of his high-priestly calling, and as long as the great atoning sacrifice had not been offered on the cross, he gave all honor to the Levitical priesthood, for the sake of their divine appointment. Not only did he visit the temple as the house of God, and celebrate the festivals of Israel as sanctified by him, but he obediently submitted also to all the Levitical statutes enjoined by Moses, from the circumcision and presentation in the temple, to the eating of the paschal lamb. And not only so, but he did not fail to enjoin upon others the punctual fulfillment of their ecclesiastical duties; so that he did not even absolve a leper, whom he had healed, from presenting himself to the priests, and offering the sacrifices appointed by Moses in such a case. So little did the reproach apply to him of degrading what was divinely authorized, that the latter found in him a powerful support; and so far was he from loosening the bond between the people and their superiors, that he was accustomed to enjoin upon all who came to him the most unconditional submission to them—of course after divesting it of all superstitious intermixture.

The Lord acted toward the elders of the people, whether they were Pharisees or Sadducees, as he did toward the priests. It is true that as the Master of all, he reproved their errors and sins, as appears from Mark, 7:13, and refused in any manner to justify their human invented ordinances and traditions, by which the word of God was only weakened and rendered void. He, nevertheless, unhesitatingly recognized their divine appointment, as, you will remember, is evident from Matt. 23:2, 3, where he says, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's seat. All, therefore, whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works, for they say and do not." Could this be called weakening the respect due to the constituted authorities, or was it not rather the contrary?

In the present day, the Christ of the Protestant Church, who, as the Scriptural Christ, is certainly a somewhat different Christ from that of the Church of Rome, is reproached in a similar manner by the latter as he was formerly by the Jews. This arises from the universal priesthood of all believers, instituted by Christ himself, and realized in our Church, in virtue of which they are called to immediate fellowship with Christ, and no longer need any further mediators between him and them. A priesthood with mediating rights, finds just as little room in the Protestant Church, as there exists any cause or motive for invoking the glorified saints for their intercession. Now, if a warning against the delusion, that for the laity, absolution, forgiveness, and every favor and answer to prayer is only attainable by a human hierarchical intervention, may be called a weakening of authority—then certainly it may be said of Christ, that he perverted the people. This, however, is no longer a reproach, but a commendation, because he turned the people aside from authorities which do not deserve the name, not being divinely instituted and appointed. But this does not exclude the fact that he most expressly, though in the spirit of Christian liberty, claims the submission of believers to the official ordinances of the Church, which he has himself instituted and sanctified. The pastoral office, with its various spheres of operation, is established by him. He says to those who preach his word, "He who despises you, despises me." He points them out to us as stewards of the divine mysteries, and says to the members of the Churches, by the mouth of his apostle, "Let the elders that rule well, be

counted worthy of double honor." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls." It is thus the Lord supports the authorities of the Church which rest on divine institution, and only properly rejects, with all earnestness and emphasis, those unjustifiable assumptions which are contrary to the word of God.

The second accusation which is brought against the Lord Jesus by the Jews, is that of "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." Truly, a more unjust accusation than this they could not have invented against him. It is devoid of the slightest foundation; and we are compelled to believe that it occurred to them only because they were still smarting under the disgrace of the defeat they had experienced at his hands, when they endeavored to draw from him a disloyal expression. Luke mentions this affair in the twentieth chapter of his Gospel. The chief priests and scribes sought, even at that time, how they might lay hands upon him; but their evil conscience made them afraid of the people, in whose esteem they had already begun to sink considerably. That which they did not venture to execute by force, they sought to attain by craftiness, and under the assumed appearance of what was just and right. For this purpose they induced some worthless individuals of their party, disguised in the mask of piety, and pretending to be secretly his disciples, to attempt to take hold of his words, so that they might have an ostensible ground for delivering him up to the civil power. The bribed emissaries approach the Savior, in the garb of reverential submission, and ask, with the innocent mien of those who seek instruction, "Master, we know that you say and teach rightly, neither accept you the person of any, but teach the way of God truly. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or no?" The net was cunningly spread, but in such a manner that they were caught in it themselves. The Lord immediately saw through the snare, and tore away the hypocritical mask from them, by the simple question, "Why tempt you me?" He then asked them to show him a penny, which being done, he takes the coin, holds it up to them, and asks, "Whose image and superscription has it? They answer, 'Caesar's.'" And he said unto them, "Render, therefore, to Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." The narrative informs us that they could not take hold of his words before the people, and they marveled at his answer, and held their peace.

This single expression of our Lord's perfectly suffices to show us what was his political principle, if I may so call it. A heathen emperor then reigned over Judea, an enemy to God and his cause. But still he ruled, and wielded the scepter. The coin which bore his image testified of this. The Lord commanded that it should be returned to him to whom it belonged. What else did he intimate by so doing, than that which was subsequently enjoined upon us by his apostle in his name, in Rom. 13:1-3, where we read, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoever, therefore, resists the power, resists the ordinance of God; and those who resist shall receive to themselves condemnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will you, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise of the same." Christ, therefore, is so far from favoring revolt, that he threatens with judgment all resistance to the existing authorities, whatever they may be, as though it were a rebellion against the majesty of God himself. He enjoins us, in his word, to be "subject to our masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." If a tyrant rules over us, there is no question as to what is our duty, according to our magna charta, the Holy Scriptures. In the autocrat and the despot we have to recognize a chastening rod raised against us by the hand of God, and quietly endure it, while calling to mind our sins. Even the most crying injustice, inflicted upon us by legitimate authority, does not absolve us from the duty of obedience to it. If the government commands anything contrary to our consciences and the word of God, we may then offer passive resistance, but nothing more. We refuse obedience with all reverence, and patiently endure the consequences of so doing for the Lord's sake. These principles stand immutably firm, as being those of the religion of Christ. The Lord has proclaimed them, and, by his own example, has set his seal upon them.

The third and last accusation brought against Jesus is, that he had said of himself that he was "Christ, a king." They wish Pilate to understand this in a political sense. But how far the Lord was from causing or fostering such an idea of the object of his coming into the world, my readers well know. The Jews often attempted by force to make him act the part of a king; and would have borne him on their hands, and loaded him with

homage and crowns of honor, as the liberator of his people from the disgraceful yoke of foreigners. But as often as he perceived any movement of the kind, he escaped from the multitude, and hid himself. And when his own disciples expressed similar sentiments respecting the kingdom he came to establish, he never failed to reprove them severely, to rectify their mistakes, and to impress upon them, again and again, the fact that his kingdom came not with outward observation, but was within them.

The Jews also were well aware how far it had always been from his intention to found a kingdom according to their views; and this was the very thing which irritated them above everything else, and kindled their animosity against him. Nevertheless their effrontery and mendacity extend so far, that they now impute to him, as his desire and aim, what they had fruitlessly labored to induce him to attempt. They thus open out to us a new view into the treachery and craftiness of the human heart, and give evidence that they are well-schooled and tutored children of the father of lies.

You know that the endeavor to stamp Christ as an earthly king did not expire with the Jewish scribes and Pharisees. A Church exists, which ascribes it to the Lord, not in the way of accusation, but of commendation, that his intention was to found "a kingdom of this world." It represents Christ as handing over to Peter two swords, emblematical of spiritual and temporal power; and that from him they pass to his pretended successors the popes, as the head of the Church, and as far as kings and princes reign in the world, they bear the sword of authority only by commission from the Church, and as a fief of the latter. The Church is authorized, in case of their refusing the service claimed, to withdraw their power and authority from them, and to absolve the people from their oath of allegiance. This Church does not say with the apostle, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal;" but deems itself called upon, by means of both swords, to protect and enlarge its territories. It has excommunications and interdicts for its disobedient children, and the prison, and the scaffold for heretics. For its own interests, it declares war and institutes crusades. To celebrate the bloody eve of St. Bartholomew, it orders medals to be struck; and the history of Otaheite tells us of a mission by the mouths of cannon. A single glance into the Gospels will

deprive us of every doubt whether it was the intention of the Savior that his Church, the Bride of heaven, should be clothed in such attire. The Lord gives his messengers the salutation of peace on their way, and not the word of arbitrary power or excommunication. He girds them with meekness and with ministering love, and not with severity and inquisitorial rigor. He points out their work to them as that of the good Samaritan, and not as oppressors and inquisitors. He certainly requires "coals of fire" for his opponents, but only such as are heaped on their heads by patience and unwearied kindness. It is also his will that those who are without should be compelled to come in, but he will have them quietly sought for in the highways and hedges, and be greeted with the peaceful salutation, "Come, for all things are now ready!" He also desires that the fallen, and such as are going astray, should be restored from the error of their ways; but that it be done in the spirit of meekness. Besides this, he requires from his followers that they should forgive those who sin against them, seventy times seven times, and says in particular to those who bear the pastoral office, "You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and those who are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever will be great among you, let him be your servant."

But as certainly as Christ did not come to establish an earthly kingdom; so surely will his dominion eventually swallow up all the kingdoms of the world, and become itself an earthly empire. Yet will this not be accomplished by means of any powerful overthrow or assault from without: but by the inward operation and creative energy of the Holy Spirit. The potentates of this world will deposit their crowns and scepters in homage at Jesus' feet, in order to receive them back consecrated, and as a fief from the hand of the King of kings. The people, enlightened and returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, will submit with delight and affection to a government in which the gentle guidance of their Prince of Peace is alone perceptible. The legislation will have, as its basis, the word of the living God, and the economy of the state will rest upon the foundation of the Gospel. The offerings, which the common weal may require, will be tendered by the impulse of voluntary affection, and the "swords will be turned into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks." Daniel looked forward to this jubilee-period of the

kingdom of Christ, when he exclaimed, "But the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominion shall serve and obey him." In the same manner, Zechariah refers to this subjugation of all worldly empire to Christ, when he significantly predicts that "In that day, shall there be upon the bells of the horses, 'holiness unto the Lord,' and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." The song of praise for this period of triumph and fulfillment, lies already in the archives of divine revelation, and is as follows: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ! and our Lord comforts us with the anticipation of this period, while teaching us daily to pray, in blissful hope, "Your kingdom come!"

We have now been convinced, my readers, that nothing could be more groundless than were the accusations brought against our Lord before Pilate. Every investigation which took place terminated only in his greater glorification. We rejoice at this result; for you know how much we are personally interested in his coming forth justified from every tribunal. "Just and right is he." No deceit was ever found in his mouth, and he was the personification of every moral virtue, and in this respect, he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.

Christ a King

Let us now return to the Mighty Captive. He suffers himself to be judged, in order that he may subsequently interfere, both legally and effectually, on our behalf, who had become amenable to divine justice. In every step of his path of suffering, he proves himself to be the man who "restored what he took not away." But he would not have been such a mediator if, even in his form of humiliation, he had not been at the same time, "higher than the heavens." This his superhuman glory breaks forth victoriously on every occasion, through the obscurity of his lowliness, like the sun through the veil of clouds. Nor can he so entirely restrain it as to prevent at least a few glimmerings of it from constantly shining forth. Those who are the blindest, are aware of its reflection, and feel surprised. But the

sun's rays produce one effect upon a morass, and another on the slumbering germs of a well-tilled field.

To form a correct idea, however, of Pilate's state of mind, a different figure must be found to either of those just mentioned. For we still find in him a degree of humanity and of susceptibility for something better. He is not the cold, shallow, worn-out man of the world, to which many would degrade him. God, indeed, will judge him, but not with the lukewarm, who disgust him, and whom, like the Laodiceans, he will spue out of his mouth.

The governor after listening to the accusations of the priests and rulers, returns thoughtfully into his palace, and commands Jesus to be again brought before him. The sacred sufferer appears in silence in the chamber of his judge. It is evident that the Roman cannot avoid feeling a degree of veneration for the wonderful man; and who is there can do otherwise? Even the rudest scoffers feel, in their consciences, the sting of their attacks upon the Lord Jesus, and endeavor, by means of ridicule, to drown the reproving voice within them for their enmity to him.

Pilate begins his examination by asking, "Are you the king of the Jews?" This he seems to have uttered in a mollified tone, in the full expectation of his saying in reply, "God forbid, that I should seek after such high things!" Much would he have given to have heard such a declaration from his lips, partly, that he might have a legal ground for officially rejecting the accusation of the malignant Jews, and partly in order, in an easy manner, to get rid of the Nazarene, of whose innocence he is fully persuaded. Jesus, however, does not give the desired answer in the negative; but, on the contrary, he affirms it, after rectifying the false views of his kingdom, with which the governor was imbued. He begins his reply to Pilate's question, by asking in return, "Say you this thing of yourself, or did others tell it you of me?" These words were calculated to remind the judge of his duty, not to enter further upon things merely of a suspicious nature, which, like the charge brought forward by the Jews, bore the stamp of falsehood upon its front. "Of yourself," the Savior intended to say, "you do not surely speak thus, since, being in possession of intelligence respecting my conduct, you are doubtless sufficiently convinced of the absurdity of the Jewish accusation. But how does it

consist with the dignity of your office, that you condescend to treat such a groundless charge, in such a serious manner?"

There is also a profounder meaning in our Lord's words, which may be expressed as follows: "Is it of importance to you—and such it ought to be—to inquire, whether, and in what sense I am a king; or was the impulse to your question given you by the language of others?" Had Pilate been able to answer the first in the affirmative, that hour would have been to him a time of eternal salvation. But his answer was not of a kind to induce the Savior to initiate him more deeply into the mysteries of his kingdom.

Our Lord's question is still put in a certain sense to all. It is of the highest importance, whether as inquirers, we approach the kingdom of truth by impulse from without, or from a feeling of inward necessity. Thousands ask, "Who is Christ?" only because they wish to know whether this or that divine teaches correctly and scripturally respecting him and his cause. People of this description may attain to a degree of mastery in the knowledge of divine things; but this kind of wisdom, however comprehensive it may be, will never produce peace and salvation. Those, on the contrary, who approach the Lord and his word from an inward impulse, and for the sake of their soul's welfare, will behold "the King in his Beauty," and find unsealed the mystery of godliness.

The governor has not wholly misunderstood the Lord's words, even in their profounder meaning, and clearly perceives that Jesus seeks to make an impression upon him, and to incite him to be serious with regard to the question concerning his kingdom. But scarcely does he perceive our Lord's intention than he adroitly evades it, and says, with a degree of harshness, which makes it clearly appear that he is struggling against the idea of coming into closer contact with the mysterious personage before him, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you unto me. What has you done?" We see how purposely he tries to liberate himself from him, as though he feared lest the awe-inspiring influence which the deportment of Jesus exercised over him, might become stronger, and in the end overpowering. "Am I a Jew?" he asks, and thereby means to say, "Can you expect me to have any regard to the question whether you are really the promised Messiah or not? What have we citizens of Rome to do with the hopes of the Jews?"

Observe here how Pilate is the inventor of the often-repeated artifice of infidels—that of regarding both the Old and New Testament only as Oriental literature. They are anxious to discuss their estrangement from Christianity on the ground which Pilate takes, of not being a Jew. It is a current saying with such people, "Every nation has its own sphere of religious ideas; and hence what responds to the peculiarity of one nation, is not, on that account, for all." The prophets—no, even the Lord himself and his apostles, are treated just like the sages of Grecian antiquity, or the Saphis of Persia, and the Brahmins of India. There, as here, men investigate under the pretense of retaining what is good. But the idea of belonging to any particular religion, like that of Palestine, as if it were the universal religion, they reject. What blindness! Is the sun a particular light, and of no use to the north, because it rises in the east?

Our Lord easily perceives how little inclined the governor is to lend his ear to deeper explanations, and, therefore, he confines himself to the placing the charge made by the Jews in its proper light. "My kingdom," says he, "is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." How simple, and yet how striking are these words! How they overthrow the absurd accusation that his intention was to subvert the government! But do not leave unobserved how carefully he selects his words, while thus defending himself, lest he should infringe upon the truth even by a mere omission. He does not deny that he came to establish a kingdom, and expressly calls it *his* kingdom; he only repels the groundless suspicion of his having intended to overturn the existing authorities, and to establish a new political state. "Had this been my intention," says he, "then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." He does not, however, say that his kingdom makes no claim eventually to the government of the whole world, or he would have denied more than was consistent with truth. He only asserts that his kingdom was not of *this* world, and clearly intimates, by laying the emphasis on the word "this," that another aeon than the present would certainly see his delegates seated on the thrones, and his word and Gospel the magna charta of all nations. It is particularly to be observed that in the sentence, "Now is my kingdom not from

hence," the word "now," evidently refers to a period in which his kingdom should occupy a very different position than it did at that time.

Pilate listens with astonishment and with a degree of uneasiness to our Lord's speech, and then affected by a reverential impression respecting the person of the accused, he says, "Are you a king then?" One might have thought he would have said, "I clearly see that you are not a king." But it would appear that the idea became increasingly strong in him that this Jesus was really a king, although in a different sense from what the Jews declared he pretended to be. But the case is similar with regard to many in the present day. These people are still capable of a slight consciousness of a superior nature, and of an elevation of spirit into the regions above the senses, although they continue in their unbelief, and are never clear in their own minds about the person of Christ. Though they were to say a hundred times, with apparent conviction, that Jesus was nothing more than a man, yet it only requires that the Gospel, with its sacred imagery, be once expanded before them, and they are no longer able to utter the words with the same confidence. An obscure feeling which pervades their minds objects to it; and in the bottom of their soul the question of Pilate again is heard, "Are you a king then?" And when, notwithstanding, they try to defend the bulwark of their unbelief, nothing is left them but by constraint to belie the voice of truth within them, which thousands, alas! do, because a recognition of Christ as a king would cost them the delight they experience in the service of the world and sin.

I here call to mind a well-known learned man of Saxony, who after having all his life long attacked Jesus and his Gospel with all the weapons of sophistry, was in his old days partially deprived of his reason, chiefly through the fear of death, and frequently fell into religious paroxysms of a peculiar nature. He was almost daily observed conversing with himself while pacing to and fro in his chamber, on one of the walls of which, between other pictures, hung one of the Savior. Repeatedly he halted before the latter, and said to it, in a horrifying tone of voice, "After all, you were only a man!" Then, after a short pause, he would continue, "What, were you more than a man? Ought I to worship you? No, I will not worship you, for you are only Rabbi Jesus, Joseph's son of Nazareth." Uttering these words, he would turn his back upon the picture; but

immediately afterward he would return with a deeply affected countenance, and exclaim, "What do you say?—That you come from above? How terribly you eye me! O you are dreadful! But—you are only a man after all." Then he would again rush away, but soon return with faltering step, crying out, "What, are you in reality the Son of God?" In this way the same scenes were daily renewed, until the unhappy man, struck by paralysis, dropped down dead, and then really stood before his Judge, who, even in his picture, had so strikingly and overpoweringly judged him. Tradition relates also, respecting the man whom we have heard asking, under such peculiar excitement, "Are you a king then?" that, being exiled, he died as a lunatic at Lyons. Be that as it may, it remains true that there is nothing more dangerous than obstinately to resist the Spirit of Truth when he performs his witnessing, warning, and reproving office in us.

What answer does the Lord Jesus make to Pilate's question? "You say it, I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice." He is, therefore, a king. He boldly asserts it himself. Not for a moment did the shame and suffering he was enduring succeed in obscuring in him the consciousness of his superhuman dignity and majesty. May you who are our brethren in the Lord, in the midst of the weakness of the flesh, and the various afflictions through which you have to pass, never wholly lose the divine consciousness of your adoption. Christ is a king; you are, therefore, not in error who wear his uniform, and have trusted your life and destiny to his hands. You are perfectly justified, not only in speaking of Christ's kingdom, but also in bidding adieu to the last doubt of its final victory and eventual sway over the world, although his kingdom is not of this world, or, as he majestically expresses himself, like one looking down from the heights of heaven upon the earth, "Now is my kingdom not from hence"—that is, has no earthy origin.

Christ is a king. "To this end," says he, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness of the truth." Two objects are mentioned here; the first has reference to his royalty, by which he asserts that he was no adventurer, but was born a king, such as

the wise men from the east correctly honored when they hailed him as the new-born king of the Jews. The second has reference to his bearing witness. In the words, "I was born," he indicates his incarnation. But, lest Pilate, or any one else, should erroneously suppose that Jesus included his whole origin in these words, he adds, "I came into the world;" thereby intimating his heavenly descent, and his existence before he appeared in the flesh—yes, before the world was. We ought highly to esteem such testimonies of his eternal and divine nature from his own lips. Their value is increased in an age like the present which is so full of skepticism, and which so boldly dares to stamp the Lord Christ as a mere man. Had this really been the case, there would at once be an end of the Christian religion, and nothing would be left us but to close our churches and bury all our hopes; because the latter rest wholly on the divinity of Jesus Christ as upon their essential basis. Let us, therefore, cleave firmly to this doctrine, seeing that it is clearly and fully asserted in the sacred Scriptures, especially at a time when, to use the language of the apostle Peter, there are many "false teachers who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

It is pleasing to observe how the Lord, out of consideration for the governor, imperceptibly leads him from his kingly office to the circumstance of his bearing witness, and to the truth as its object. He hopes, by so doing, to touch the string which would be the first to reverberate at the sound of the Gospel. The perverted Roman was also an inquirer after truth, for this question belonged to the Grecian subjects of study which the Romans had also taken up, although in other respects more intent upon war than any other pursuit. A seeking after truth belongs to human nature, and is accustomed to be the last feature of it that perishes. Some one well observes here, that "Jesus lays hold of Plate by the only topic by which he could make an impression on him." Thus carefully does the Lord proceed in the exercise of his pastoral office, while taking into account the particular inward state of every individual whom he strives to save.

Christ, however, did not come into the world to join himself to the seekers after truth as their confederate, but rather to lead them on to the

aim they were in search of, and thus bring them to the Sabbath of repose. He did not come, as some think, to bring down truth from heaven to earth, but, as he himself says, "to bear witness of the truth." Truth already existed, interwoven in the history of Israel, and clothed in the inspired language of Moses and the Prophets. Christ only bore witness to it, and confirmed it in the most comprehensive manner, accomplishing prophecy in himself, and presenting, in his own person, the realization of the law's fulfillment. In his whole conduct he exhibits to the world the divine origin of the law, and, in the events of his life, that of prophecy. He bore witness of the truth, inasmuch as in his own person, while casting down all that is false, he was able to display it, in all its splendor, in the face of heaven, earth, and hell. He who looked upon Jesus, if the eye of his mind were not entirely blinded, saw in him the actual solution of the most important questions which can arise in the mind of man. He no longer needed to be told what was to be regarded, held, and believed of God and the world, heaven and earth, virtue and sin, and of man's vocation and his future state. He knew it all, and that with the utmost certainty.

But how was it that the Lord, who never abruptly passed from one idea to another, connected his witnessing for the truth with his kingdom and dominion? Did he mean to say that his kingdom was only a sphere of tuition, and he in so far only a king, as he was able to reign over the minds of men by his teaching? By no means. We have already observed that he was far from placing his regal power and dignity in the fact of his bearing witness to the truth. He does not bear such witness as a king, but as a prophet; and points out the way in which he will establish his kingdom, which he intimates in the words, "He who is of the truth hears my voice." Yes, those who hear his voice are the citizens of his kingdom.

The expression, "every one that is of the truth," betokens an inward preparation for conversion, which no one, however, experiences without the operation of "preventing grace." No one is by nature of the truth; but all men, as the Scriptures say, are liars, since they love darkness, rather than light, because the light reproves them for their sins, and disturbs their repose; and because they press error to their bosoms, and shut themselves up against the entrance of truth, which menaces their sensual

pleasures with danger, and urges them to a life of self-denial. Thus, as St Paul once expressed it, they "hold the truth in unrighteousness." But as soon as the Spirit, which, like the wind, blows where it wills, gains room, the love of delusion gives way to the ardent desire to be freed from it, and studious self-deception to the willingness to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good." Before the honest, serious inquiry after truth and peace, the visionary forms of those false ideas vanish, to which the poor soul had been previously attached. But when, by the operation of the Spirit of God, we have attained to this simplicity of heart, we become joined to those who are of the truth. Then, if the Divine Teacher utters his voice, how does our inmost soul echo to the sound of his light and life-giving words. If he then says, "Come unto me, you that are weary and heavy laden," how gladly do we accept the gracious invitation! If he then unveils his glory and beauty, how do our longing souls rush into his arms rejoicing! If he then displays the standard of his cross, how do we not hasten to it, to build tabernacles under its peaceful shadow!

O my dear readers, were you all of the truth, what a blessed thing it would be to write to and address you, and what an increase would the kingdom of God among us have to rejoice over! Then could I say with his beloved disciple, in writing to "the elect lady," "I rejoiced greatly when I found certain of your children walking in the truth;" and to his beloved Gaius, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." But it happens to thousands as it did to poor Pilate, whose ear was beginning to open to divine truth, but was soon closed again by the objections of carnal reason and the predominating influence of temporal things. Therefore, let us not cease, dear readers, to call upon the King of Truth to do violence to us, and not leave us until he has attuned the chords of our soul in such a manner that his word may find a full and abiding echo in us. Let us entreat, above all things, the hearing ear, the understanding, believing, child-like, and simple heart, and plead his gracious promise to guide the meek in judgment, and to teach the humble his way.

"What is Truth?"

In the whole of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, with the

exception of the words prefixed to our present meditation, we do not find a single passage which sounds anything like the complaining inquiry which so often reaches our ears: "Who will give us light, and solve the dark problem of human life?" On the contrary we every where meet with the presupposed fact that truth has not first to be sought, but has long since been bestowed upon man. The different relations in which the pious and the impious stand to it are not those of belief and doubt, but of a willing submission and a wicked resistance to it. The words in Deut. 29:29—"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever,"—stand immutably firm for all. He who would render it dubious whether God had ever spoken to the sojourners upon the earth, would have seemed to the Israelites like one who should doubt at noon-day whether the sun stood in the skies. The complaint of a want of certainty with respect to that which is above the senses is a folly of modern date, and a relic of heathenism. It is a question long since infallibly answered, both as regards the origin and object of created things, and the calling and destiny of the human race; and the cheering fact that it is so is testified by the words of Moses we quoted above. Those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children forever. But when, by the Holy Spirit, he states, that "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God," he intends we should understand that the truth is only revealed to us to the extent of our capacities, and as far as is necessary for our salvation. This conviction greatly tranquilizes us, in the face of so many unsolved enigmas which meet us in the doctrines of faith which are preached to us. When, for instance, our attention is directed to the doctrine of God's eternal existence, of the Trinity, the creation of the world, the fall of the angels and of man, the twofold nature in Christ, the final consummation of all things, etc., we rack our reason in vain, and our hearts and minds are distressed by their incomprehensibility, we ought then to say, in the words of revelation, "Secret things belong to the Lord our God." He has only partially revealed these things to us, but that which we do know abundantly suffices for the attainment of the great object of our salvation. We know now in part what we shall hereafter know perfectly. For that period we patiently wait, and feel assured, that when it shall have dawned upon us with its all-pervading and enlightening radiance, doubt and darkness will be forever dispelled, and give place to never-ending and

admiring adoration.

These brief observations may serve as an introduction to our present meditation, by which may the Lord be pleased to establish us in the conviction that He himself is the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life!

"He who is of the truth," said our Lord at the conclusion of his reply, "hears my voice." Pilate then said unto him, "What is truth?" Some have found in these words a gentle sneer; others the expression of a complete indifference to religion. But neither of these explanations fully accord with the man's character. The words are more profound and important. They shed light upon an entire age, and upon the inmost state of mind of thousands of its children.

We have already observed that Pilate lived in days which might be designated as those of the mature education of mankind, so far as we understand by that expression, intellectual and moral culture, to which the children of Adam, left to themselves and by the exercise of their own natural powers and abilities are able to attain. Not only had are reached its highest perfection, but philosophy was also at the summit of its boldest investigations; and even to the present day we admire the systems which, by the effort of highly gifted reasoning powers, they called into existence. But still there was no satisfactory basis for them to rest upon. Although the human mind had brought to light much that was probable, yet anything certain and infallible was sought for in vain. Even the greatest of all the sages of antiquity confessed that only if a God were to descend from heaven would it be possible for men to attain to that which was sure. No, the saying became common-place, that only one thing was certain, which was, that we could know nothing of things above the reach of the senses, and even this was not entirely certain.

Such were the views which first gave rise in Greece to that frivolous philosophy of life which, renouncing everything of a superior and super-sensible nature, placed the whole destiny of man in the enjoyment of this world and its pleasures, and which, in a short time, with all its attendant excesses and vices, became the religion of the great mass of the population. In the Roman empire, a certain moral discipline was preserved somewhat longer than in Greece. But after the Romans had

subjugated the latter to their sway, those who had thus become their subjects, soared above their conquerors in an intellectual and social point of view, and bequeathed to them, along with their unbelief, their frivolity and their sins. In the higher circles, the traditional belief in a number of deities was not only laid aside, but ridiculed as worthless and visionary; and thus the celebrated Roman orator, Cicero, made himself sure of the applause of his hearers, when, addressing an assembly of the people, he alluded to the punishments of the lower world only in an ironical manner. Scarcely any one any longer believed in Orcus, and its shades and horrors; and just as little faith did they place in the systems of the philosophers. In short, they believed nothing; yet still the negation of the head was by no means able to silence the cry for light and peace from the hearts of thousands.

Pilate stands before us as the true representative of the social culture of his age. Though we must not take it for granted that he ever deeply studied the various systems of philosophy, yet, like others of his own rank, he was doubtless acquainted with the essential results of philosophical investigation, while to the literature of his age he was doubtless no stranger. This man's path through life brought him into contact with the Lord from heaven, and thus placed him in a spiritual atmosphere, in which feelings and presentiments again awoke in him which seemed to have been long stifled by the breath of the frivolous culture of the age, which he had imbibed with his mother's milk. Christ, whose very appearance produced a strange effect upon this heathen, speaks to him of another world, of a heavenly kingdom, and finally of a truth which had appeared, and which, therefore, might be really found and known. Pilate then breaks out into the remarkable words, "What is truth?" The polished heathen of that age, and one of the better kind of them, displays to us by this question his inward state. Something of free-thinking frivolity certainly strikes us in this question on the outset, which causes the inquirer to smile, not only at the popular belief in idols, but, generally speaking, in everything which had reference to the sphere of religious ideas, as nothing but childish dreams and fantastic delusions. "What is truth?" was at that time the language of thousands: "That which we see with our eyes, and feel with our hands, is the only thing that is certain under heaven. No mortal eye sees beyond the limits of the region

of the senses; and though the plea of a poetic imagination may be able to satisfy those upon one stage of life and culture, it cannot satisfy all."

In Pilate's question, we may further perceive the skeptical philosopher of rank, who is not only aware that the researches of human thought lead to the most diversified and opposite results; but who also cherishes the idea that he has himself reflected and ruminated upon the labors of the wise of this world, and that by his own reasoning upon them, he has arrived at the conviction that nothing can be known or ascertained of things which lie beyond the bounds of visibility. "What is truth?" he exclaims—"One man calls this truth, another that, which is perhaps even something quite the opposite. Systems rise and fall. The man who seeks for truth, sails upon a sea without a haven or a landing-place."

In Pilate's question is also apparent the boundless pride of the Roman citizen, who, as respects enlightenment and culture, thinks himself far above all the other nations of the earth, and the Jews in particular. Pilate utters his inquiry with a degree of inward, though transient excitement, as if he would say, "You, a Hebrew rabbi, will surely not think that I, a Roman patrician, am going to seek instruction from you?" The pervading tone of Pilate's question is, however, of a better kind, and is only slightly tinged with the discords hitherto mentioned. It breathes of melancholy, dejection, and even the silent despair of a heart, which, with the belief in the existence of a world above the stars, cannot throw away the wish and the feeling of necessity for such a world. The soul of Pilate finds itself unhappy and desolate in the dreary waste of absolute unbelief, into which it is banished.

Were we to elucidate the governor's question, and explain it as proceeding from the inmost recesses of his soul, it would probably imply what follows: "You speak of truth, alas! Truth was never given to a poor mortal to be the companion of his steps. We inquire after it, but echo, as if in ridicule of our anxious desire, only returns our question back to us. We plant the ladder of investigating cogitation, but its steps only lead us into impenetrable mists. Not a single truth has rewarded the many thousand years' research of philosophic thought, and yet you, Man of Nazareth, speak of truth, as of a resident on the gloomy earth! Death has been silent from the first; the grave below is silent, as well as the stars

above; and do you wish to be regarded as having loosed their tongues and unsealed their mysteries?" In Pilate there was doubtless something of the proud philosopher, something of worn-out indifference, something of the professed skeptic, something of the frivolous free-thinker and scoffer, and something of the hasty, jealous, and haughty blusterer, who, with his inquiry, "What is truth?" also meant to say, "How could you venture to trouble me with your Jewish matter of faith, who have things of greater importance to think of?" But still there is something beside this—something better and nobler—an unperverted inquiring mind—a longing for deliverance, but bound down, alas! by the impure and gloomy elements, which enthrall him, so that he cannot act at liberty.

As often as this question of Pilate's occurs to me, it appears to me as if it had not been asked eighteen centuries ago, but as if uttered in the present day—no, it even seems to sound in my ears as proceeding from my immediate vicinity. It strikingly indicates many philosophers of our own times, and the so-called "height," which modern intellectual refinement has reached; only that the question, in the mouths of our contemporaries, sounds infinitely more culpable than from the lips of the Roman, whose eyes had not seen what we have; for at that time Jesus was not glorified, nor his Spirit poured out from on high, nor the world subdued by the preaching of the Gospel, nor the wondrous edifice of the Church of Christ established. But after all this has taken place, for a man to step back again to the position of Pilate, a mere heathen, is something no longer human but devilish. An infernal spark now burns in skepticism; and the dubiousness of the Roman, compared with the unbelief of our baptized heathens, is almost like an innocent lamb contrasted with a wily serpent. Unbelief is now no longer the blind bantling of a heart ensnared, and deluded by the spirit of this world; but the light-shunning offspring of a wicked and rebellious will. We feel a degree of pity and compassion for Pilate, but for infidels of the present day, nothing is left them but the fate of those who refuse to come to Christ, that they may have life, to whom is reserved "the blackness of darkness forever."

"What is truth?" It is soon found, when earnestly sought. There are many, who inquire respecting certain truths, but studiously turn their backs upon the truth of the Gospel, wherever it meets them. They would be glad

to see solved a number of problems in nature and in human life; but all their research is a mere effort of the imagination, and the interest they take in it only vain curiosity. They take part in discussions respecting the creation of the world, existence after death, and the kind of life beyond the grave. But they shun the truth as it is in Jesus, and seek in a variety of ways to avoid and evade it. Do you still ask if truth really exists? I tell you, it is in your heart and in your mouth, and your hands lay hold of it. Are not these truths, that you exist, that you bear indelibly in your bosom a consciousness of a higher destiny, but that you are a sinful being, removed far from your legitimate aim, and find, in your soul, no peace which can stand the test? Further, that eighteen hundred years ago, a man appeared upon earth, whom no one could convict of any other crime than that of calling himself "the Truth;" and of having announced himself as the Messiah, who should eventually subdue the whole world to his spiritual scepter; and that you, with all your boasted liberty and independence, are now experiencing the consequences of the fact that a long time ago, at a great distance, in a despicable corner of the earth, yonder despised rabbi of an inconsiderable nation, was executed like a slave; and that on his account, your destinies, in all their relations, are entirely changed from what they would otherwise have been—all this is beyond a doubt; and is not this, therefore, the truth?

Follow the clue of what you now acknowledge as so irrefutable; and you will soon become conscious that mankind is guided by an all-overruling power, and will then be able to swear that a God, who is love itself, must inevitably have revealed himself to his poor dying creatures. And it will not be long before you will behold these revelations beaming in a clear light from the writings of Moses and the prophets. Truth meets you in the nomadic tents of the patriarchs of Israel, as well as in the encampments of the people of God, when wandering in the wilderness. It speaks to you in a voice of thunder from Mount Sinai, and in gentler tones, from the hills and valleys of Canaan. You hear her voice on Bethlehem's plains, in the harmonious psalms of the "sweet singer of Israel;" and it greets you in the halls of the temple, in significant types and mysterious hieroglyphics. You approach Jehovah's seers, and your astonished eye looks up to a brilliant starry skies. They are thoughts of truth, which shine upon you with such supernatural radiance. Led by the hand of these holy seers, you

go forward, and are greeted at length by the Truth in person. "I am the Truth," says one, everything about whom, points him out as more than human; and all who long for the light, are heard exclaiming, "You are He!" That above the clouds there reigns a supreme governor of the world—who this God is—what is his will with respect to his creatures—for what purpose man was created—what is his high calling and true destiny—all this is revealed to you, beyond contradiction, in Jesus Christ. In his manifestation, the depths of Deity, the counsels of eternal love, the abyss of divine mercy, the secrets of life and death, of heaven and hell are unfolded. To every question—be it respecting the essence and marrow of the divine law, the nature of true virtue and holiness, the model of human nature, or whatever it may be—he is himself the decisive and personal reply. And when he speaks and acts, the spirits of doubt, delusion, and falsehood flee away, and light, certainty, and confidence approach us with their heavenly salutation of "Peace be with you!"

Then let the question of Pilate, "What is truth?" no longer be heard upon earth. It can now only be asked by imbecility or obstinate self-deception and diabolical hatred of the light. Truth has made its entry into the world, and dwells confidingly among us, accessible to all who sincerely seek it. A philosophy that acts as if it must first bring up truth from the deep, or fetch it down from heaven, will be punished for its base ingratitude toward the God of grace, by being left to grope eternally in the dark, to grasp at shadows, and never to reach the end of its fruitless investigations. The true object of philosophy now would be to fathom and exhaust the inmost consciousness of the human spirit, and, free from prejudice, to try the effect upon its indelible necessities of the truth which has appeared in Christ. If this were done, it would soon moor its bark, after its long aberrations, on the shores of Mount Zion, and joyfully exclaim, "I have found what I sought, I have reached my goal." All who seriously and sincerely inquire for truth will inevitably land, at last, in the haven of the Gospel. Hence the Savior was able, with the greatest confidence to say "He who is of the truth, hears my voice."

Let us thank and praise the all-sufficient God for the unspeakable gift he has bestowed upon us. "Behold, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand." The prophetic call to "Arise and shine for your light is come," has

long been fulfilled. May the admonition which that call includes be responded to by us, and its promise be experienced! Let us cheerfully make room, in our hearts and minds, for the Truth, which stands at our door, and let us walk as children of the light. He is the Truth, who is at the same time the Way and the Life. Let us cast the viperous brood of doubts beneath his feet, that he may trample upon them, and make him our all in all, for life, death, and eternity.

The Lamb of God

After his first conversation with Jesus, Pilate again comes forward into the open court before the people, bringing the accused with him. The governor's inward state is no longer unknown to us. We are acquainted with him as a man in whom all susceptibility for true greatness of soul was by no means extinguished. A silent admiration of the extraordinary personage who stood before him, pervaded the whole of the procedure respecting him. The words he uttered, the silence he observed, his look, and his whole bearing, his humility, and then again his sublime composure, his lamb-like patience, and undisturbed self-possession—all this made a powerful impression upon Pilate; and if he had given vent to that which passed fleetingly through his mind, he would, at least momentarily, have expressed something similar to the testimony given by the apostle John, "We beheld his glory, a glory as of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth." Yes, even Pilate bore within his bosom a mirror for the beauty of the Lord from heaven, only it was, alas! an icy mirror, over which the warm tears of penitence had never flowed. Where the latter are wanting, the mirror of the soul does not retain the rays of the Divine Morning Star, and receives its image at least but partially. Still, the dignity of Immanuel shone too powerfully into the soul of the Roman to leave him at liberty to act toward him as he pleased. To a certain extent, he had been inwardly overcome by him. He is compelled to absolve him from all criminality. He cannot avoid feeling a secret reverence for him, and as often as he is inclined to give way to selfish suggestions with regard to Jesus, he is condemned and warned by the voice of truth, which speaks within him, and is even constrained to act as the intercessor and advocate of the Just One. What majesty must have

shone around the Lamb of God, even while suffering and ignominy rolled over his head, like the billows of the ocean, and with what wondrous radiance must the Son of Righteousness have broken through the clouds of such deep humiliation, as to be able to constrain even a worldly-minded epicurean to such a feeling of respect!

As was the case with Pilate, so would it be with many of like sentiments in the present day, if they were to come into similar contact with Jesus. I have those in view who have long forsaken the word and the Church of God, and intoxicated with the inebriating draught of the spirit of the age, have given up Christianity as no longer tenable, and have renounced Christ himself without previous examination, as though he were merely a Jewish rabbi, fallible like all other mortals. Far be it from me unconditionally to cast such people away. They are not all of them so wholly immersed in worldliness as to be entirely incapable of a nobler elevation of mind and feeling. They are only partially acquainted with him whom they have renounced, and in him condemn a personage entirely a stranger to them. O, if they could only once resolve to approach nearer to him by an impartial study of the Gospel history, and that of his Church in its victorious progress through the world, I am persuaded that they would soon find it impossible to continue indifferent to him in future, no, that before they were aware, they would feel constrained either to do homage to Jesus, and to give themselves up to him with all their hearts, or else that they would hate him, as One whose claim to rule over us we cannot gainsay, but to whose scepter we refuse to bow.

Pilate frankly says to the chief priests and all the people, "I find no fault in this man;" thereby confirming the words of the apostle Peter, according to which we "are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." It certainly manifests great shallowness of thought and deficiency of judgment to say, that he only finds no fault in Jesus. When the latter testified that he was the Son of the living God, and the King of the kingdom of heaven, he was guilty of a great crime, if his assertions were false, and these lofty titles only assumed. But if he was correct in uttering such exalted things respecting himself, how was it that the governor had nothing better to say for him

than the meager testimony that he acknowledged him only to be guiltless? But even this assurance we gladly receive, and regard with emotion the man who is so favorably inclined toward the accused, and so powerfully affected by his innocence and moral unblameableness. Doubtless, after this testimony in his favor, Pilate would gladly have liberated him; but the Jews, the emperor, his position, and many other causes, prevent him from doing so. Oh, when it is only the conviction of the understanding, or even a natural presentiment, in place of a heart burdened with the guilt of sin, which connects us with Jesus—the Lord, when it comes to the point, will never find an advocate or intercessor who can be relied on. Such an one does not count all things but loss for Christ. For conscience' sake he would willingly stand in the breach for him with all boldness; but worldly honor, human favor, domestic and social peace, and the like, exercise over him a much more potent and overpowering influence. Far be it from me to act the part of a judge; but I am seriously afraid that among the number of believers in the present day, many may be found whose faith is only like that of Pilate. But this species of reverence for Jesus, however much of what is true and beautiful it may contain, will be found on the great sifting day only among the chaff which the wind drives away.

Pilate having uttered his inmost conviction of the innocence of Jesus, the chief priests, not a little enraged at their defeats foam out fresh accusations against the Righteous One. "They are the more fierce," says the narrative. They pour out a flood of rage and fury upon him, and now the saying of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet, like a lamb, he opened not his mouth."

The most significant and remarkable type introduced into the divine ordinances, as well as into Israel's history and ritual, was the lamb. It even meets us at the threshold of paradise in the sacrifice of Abel, as an object peculiarly acceptable in the sight of God. Later on, the lamb with its blood consecrates the commencement of the history of the Israelites. The sprinkling of the door-posts with the blood of lambs was the means of Israel's preservation in Egypt from the sword of the destroying angel, and the departure of the people from Pharaoh's house of bondage. From that time, the lamb continued to be the most prominent figure by which

God typified the future Messiah to the children of Abraham. Thenceforward it acquired an abiding footing in Israel's sacrificial rights in general, and in the yearly passover in particular. In the latter, each household was enjoined by the Mosaic law to bring a male lamb, without blemish or infirmity to the sanctuary, there solemnly confess their transgressions over it, then bring it, typically burdened with their sins, to the court of the temple to be slain; and after it was roasted, consume it entirely, in festive communion, with joy and thanksgiving to Jehovah. That which was prophetically typical in this ceremony was so apparent that even the most simple mind could not mistake it. Every one who was only partially susceptible of that which was divinely symbolical, felt immediately impressed with the idea that this divine ordinance could have no other aim than to keep alive in Israel, along with the remembrance of the promised Deliverer, the confidence and hope in him.

John the Baptist appears in the wilderness; and the first greeting with which he welcomes Jesus, which was renewed whenever he saw him, is, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world!" thereby directing the attention of the whole world to Jesus, as if there were thenceforward nothing else worth seeing in heaven or on earth than this Lamb of God; and by so doing, he certainly directs us to the greatest and most beatifying of all mysteries, and to the pith and marrow of the entire Gospel. For if Christ had been only the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and not at the same time "the Lamb," what would it have availed us? As "the Lamb," he is the desire of all nations, the star of hope to the exiles from Eden, the sun of righteousness in the night of sorrow to those whom the law condemns, and the heavenly lamp to the wanderer in the gloomy valley of death.

He is all this as "the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world." But this expression implies, not only that the sin of the world grieves his sacred heart, or that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and that he patiently bore the pain inflicted on him by their sins, and by his life and doctrine aimed at removing sin. The words have a meaning which cannot be properly fathomed. Christ bore the sin of the world in a much mere peculiar and literal sense than that just mentioned. He bore it by letting it be imputed to him by his Father, in a manner

incomprehensible to us, so that it became no longer ours but his. For we read in 2 Cor. 5:19, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." What can this mean, but that God did not leave the world to suffer for its trespasses, nor even for its sins. And if it be asked, "Who then did suffer if the world escaped?" We find the answer in the 21st verse, where it is said, "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This being made sin, must mean the same thing as was signified by imputing sin. Now, if any one objects and says that sin is something personal, and though it may be transferred by infection and seduction, it cannot be so by the imputation of the guilt of others to an innocent person: we reply, "Who are you, O man, that dare to call the word of God to account, which not only declares it possible, but also places it before us as something which has become a historical fact?"

Here we must not pass, unnoticed, the wonderful union and amalgamation into which Christ entered with the human race, the mysterious depths of which we shall never fathom here below. Eventually, we shall be astonished in what a profound and comprehensive sense Christ became our head; and how literally the title belonged to him of the representative of our race. But then we shall also learn to know and comprehend how, without infringing upon the moral order of the world, the guilt of others could be transferred to him, and how he could thus become "the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world."

Keeping this position of our Lord in view as Mediator and Surety, the accusations, which were heaped upon Christ by the Jews, acquire a deep symbolical signification. Although in the abstract, as far as they have reference to our Lord in his moral capacity, they were the most abominable slanders and falsehoods; yet in another respect, they have much of truth at their basis. The world, according to God's counsel and will, discharges on its representative, Jesus Christ, the transgressions of which itself is guilty; and the groundless accusations of the Jews serve only to place in the brightest and most brilliant light, the Lamb-like character of our great Redeemer.

Still more clearly does "the Lamb of God" manifest itself in Christ, in the

conduct which he observes, amid the furious accusations of his adversaries. Jesus is silent, as if actually guilty of all that they charge upon him. Pilate, unable to cope with the storm which roars around him from the crowd below, almost entreats the Lord to say something in his own defense. But Jesus is silent. Pilate, occupied solely with him, says to him, "Answer you nothing? Behold how many things they witness against you! Hear you not?" "But Jesus," as the narrative informs us, "answered nothing, not even a word, insomuch that the governor marveled greatly." How could he do otherwise, seeing that he only measured the Lord's conduct by a human standard? Every one else, at a moment when life was at stake, would have hastily brought together everything that could have overthrown the charges brought against him, especially, if so much had stood at his command, as in the case of Jesus; but he is silent. Every one else would at least have demanded proofs of the truth of the shameless denunciations of his opponents; but not a syllable proceeds from Jesus' lips. Every one else, in his situation, would have appealed from the mendacious priesthood to the consciences of the people, and have roused the feeling of what is just and right in those who were not entirely hardened, of whom, in the moving mass of men, there were doubtless many; but Jesus appealed to no one, either in heaven or on earth. Ah! had Pilate known who he was that stood thus meekly before him, how would he have marveled! It was he, before whose judgment-seat all the millions that have ever breathed upon earth, will be summoned, that he may pronounce upon them their final and eternal sentence. It was he before whom the sons of Belial, who now heap their lying accusations upon him, will at length appear bound in the fetters of his curse, and who, under the thunder of his sentence, will call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them, and hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. And he now stands before their bar, and is mute, like one who thinks he must give up all hope of gaining his cause. But he is silent also, because in the consciousness of his innocence, he deems it beneath his dignity to waste one word in reply to such accusations. He is silent, that the sting of conscience may penetrate still deeper into the marrow of the reckless mob, who do not themselves believe in the falsehoods they foam out. Pilate assuredly feels something of the dignity and majesty which manifested itself in our Lord's silence; and it is this which is chiefly the object of the governor's astonishment

and admiration.

But the Lord also observes silence with regard to those who blaspheme him in the present day. It is a silence of forbearance, but also partly of contempt; for they likewise blaspheme him against light and knowledge. Eventually he will speak to them, and then they will be constrained tremblingly to acknowledge that they would not have him to reign over them. Christ is silent, when his people murmur against him, and complain of his ways and guidance. He is mute, in this case also, from the profoundest feeling of innocence, well knowing, that while supplicating his forgiveness, they will kiss his hands for having led them just so, and not otherwise.

In other respects, Christ is not silent upon earth. He who has an ear for his voice, hears it in a variety of ways in every place. Witnessing for himself and his cause, he speaks at one time in obvious judgments, which he inflicts upon his foes; and at another, in tangible blessings and answers to prayer, with which he favors his friends. He speaks in the Sabbatic rest of soul, which those enjoy, who trust in him, as well as by the want of peace, the distressing care and fear of death, which are the lot of the ungodly. He speaks by the surprising confirmations which science, in its progress, is often involuntarily obliged to afford his word; as well as by the manifold signs of the times, which manifest nothing but a literal fulfillment of his prophesies. By fresh revivals of his Church, in spite of his enemies, who already begin to cry "Ichabod!" over her, he speaks within the bounds of Christendom, and bears witness in the heathen world, by new spiritual creations, which he wondrously calls into being, as of old, from apparently hopeless and worthless materials. Hence what we read in Psalm 19, literally becomes true: "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their sound is gone forth through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world."

But the chief cause of Jesus' silence amid the stormy accusations of his adversaries, has not yet been touched upon. It lies in his mediatorial position. In our Lord, the Lamb of God, the High Priest, the heavenly Surety, is silent, for he takes upon himself, without gainsaying, before the face of God, all that of which he is accused, because he is willing to suffer and repay, as the mediating and universal debtor, all that we have

incurred. It is with peculiar reference to this that John the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold!" for here beams our Morning Star, here shines our Sun of Peace. His blood, when viewed in the true light, appeases every storm, heals every wound, blots out every sin, and removes the curse pronounced against it. The believing view of the Lamb of God harmoniously dissolves all our inward discords, restrains every passion, makes the commandment, which is otherwise a heavy chain, into a gentle yoke, beneath which, led by the paternal hand of Deity, we joyfully pursue our way. In this looking to the Lamb consists "the victory that overcomes the world," and with the latter, every distress in life and death. But when our eyes open in the heavenly world, we shall behold the Lamb without a veil. No cloud will then conceal him from us any more. We sink low at his feet in humble adoration, and join with the hosts of the just made perfect, in the never-ending hymn, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive honor, and glory, and blessing, forever and ever." Amen.

Christ before Herod

Pilate's clear and decided testimony that he found no fault in Jesus, did not fail of its effect on his accusers. They stand aghast, and perceive the danger which threatens the result of their whole proceedings. Had Pilate manfully maintained throughout the tone of judicial decision with which he commenced, it would doubtless have burst the fetters imposed on the better feelings of a great part of the assembled multitude, and Christ have been set at liberty, and even saluted with new hosannas; while the tumult thus occasioned might have been attended with serious consequences to the chief priests and rulers. They were, therefore, compelled to oppose such a change in the state of things by every means in their power. They consequently again raise their voices with fresh complaints. But however great the clamor they make, they do not entirely succeed in concealing the embarrassment in which they are involved. Their accusations, though uttered more noisily than before, bear evident marks of their failing courage. Instead of denouncing the Lord, as before, as a rebel and a traitor—well aware that such a barefaced charge would no longer be responded to, and convinced of the necessity of supporting it by actual proof, they bring their accusation down to the unimportant assertion,

that "he stirred up the people by his teaching, which he began in Galilee, and continued throughout all Jewry."

How easy would it have been for Pilate, by a rapid and prudent use of this favorable moment, to have triumphantly rescued his prisoner, and with him, himself and his own conscience! In order entirely to confuse and disarm his more than half subdued foes, he only needed, in a few energetic words, to have pointed out the baseness of their conduct. But fear had taken possession of the poor man to such a degree as to deprive him of the free use of his reasoning faculties, and compel him to have recourse to the most foolish measures. In the uproar, which, however, only showed the weakness of the adverse party, he imagines he hears some new storm rolling over his head, and how does he rejoice when the mention of Galilee seems to him to open a new way of escape. He hastily inquires "whether the man were a Galilean?" and on being answered in the affirmative, he exclaims with the delight of a seaman, who, after a long and stormy voyage at length discovers land, "He belongs, then, to Herod's jurisdiction!" and immediately gives orders for Jesus to be conducted bound to the latter, who happened fortunately to be at that time in Jerusalem, on account of the festival; and he feels as if a mountain were removed from his bosom, on seeing the troublesome captive withdraw, under the escort of the chief priests, soldiers, and the crowd that followed.

We already know something of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee. He is the same wretched libertine who, after repudiating his consort, a daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king, and commencing an incestuous connection with Herodias, his half-brother's wife, at the instigation of the latter, caused John the Baptist, who had reproved him, in God's name, for his criminal conduct, to be beheaded in prison. For this crime his conscience severely smote him; and when he heard of Jesus and his doings, he could not be persuaded but that the wonder-worker was John whom he had murdered, but who had risen from the dead. A Sadducee according to his mental bias, more a heathen than an Israelite, and entirely devoted to licentiousness, he was nevertheless, as is often the case with such characters, not disinclined to base acts of violence, and capable of the most refined cruelties. Luke states respecting him that he

had done much evil; and the only ironical expression that ever proceeded from the lips of the "Sinner's Friend," had reference to this miserable man, who was so well versed in all the arts of dissimulation and hypocrisy. For, on one occasion, when a number of Pharisees came to Jesus, and said, "Get you out and depart hence, for Herod will kill you," the Lord immediately perceived that in these apparently kind advisers he saw before him only emissaries from Herod himself, who, because he had not the courage to lay violent hands upon him, hoped, by empty threats, to banish him from his territory. He, therefore, said in reply to the hypocrites, unmasking them, to their profound disgrace, as well as that of their royal master, "Go you, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils and do cures today and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following."

To this degraded libertine, therefore, in whom every better feeling had been gradually extinguished, our Lord is brought, in order that he may not be spared from anything that is ignominious and repulsive, and that there might be no judicial tribunal before which he did not stand. The envenomed hosts of priests and Pharisees, with wild uproar, arrive with their prey before the residence of the Galilean king, who, on hearing what was the cause of the appearing of the unwonted crowd, orders the heads of the people, with their delinquent, to be brought before him. Jesus silently and gravely approaches his sovereign. The latter, as the narrative informs us, "when he saw Jesus, was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him, and he hoped to have seen some miracles done by him."

It may seem strange that Herod had never before seen the face of Jesus, although he so often abode in Galilee. But the Lord had never honored Tiberias, where Herod resided, with a visit, although he had frequently been near it; and for Herod to take a single step, in order to make the acquaintance of the Nazarene, who was so much spoken of, naturally never crossed the mind of one so destitute of all religious interest, and at the same time, so proud and overbearing as his Galilean majesty. It afforded him, however, no little pleasure, so conveniently and without risk, to see his long-cherished wish fulfilled. "At all events," thought he within himself, "it will afford an interesting pastime, an amusing

spectacle. And if he will let himself be induced to unveil somewhat of the future to us, or perform a miracle, what a delightful hour might be spent!"

Herod, therefore, hoped to draw the Savior of the world into the circle of the objects of his amusement, even as he had dared to draw the head of John the Baptist into the sphere of his licentiousness. The king promised himself a recreation from the presence of Jesus, such as is expected from that of a juggler or a charlatan. In this respect, he represents those frivolous people who, according to the apostolic expression, "have not the Spirit," and to whom even the most sublime things are only a comedy. People of this description venture to intrude even into the sanctuary, and are apparently desirous of seeing Christ, at least as set forth in sermons, books, figures, or history, but only because of the aesthetic feeling thereby excited. Suffice it to say, that to such characters, even the church becomes a theater, the sermon a pastime, the Gospel a romance, and the history of conversions a novel. O how dangerous is the position of those, in whom all seriousness degenerates into empty jocularity, and everything that ought deeply to affect them, into jest and amusement! Before they are aware, this their volatility may end in an entire obtuseness to the more affecting descriptions of the last judgment, so that no more effect is produced upon them than is caused by the success of a scene in the drama; and the representation of the horrors of hell passes before them only like the exhibition of a magnificent firework, and causes them the same kind of feeling as the latter.

Herod regards our Lord, on his approach, with an inquisitive look, and after eyeing him from head to foot, presumes to put a number of foolish questions to him. Our Lord deigns him no answer, but observes complete silence. The king continues to question him, but the Savior is mute. Herod even suggests that he ought to perform some miracle. Jesus cannot comply with his wish, and gives him to know this by his continued silence more impressively than could have been done by words. The chief priests and scribes, indignant at his passive behavior, again begin their blasphemies, and accuse him vehemently. He regards them as unworthy of a reply, and continues to observe a silence, which is distressing and almost horrifying.

The Lord having refused to do the will of Herod and his satellites, the

miserable men infer from his behavior that he is unable to do anything, and begin to despise him, and even to mock him. Painful are the mortifications that Jesus has here to endure. Even the hurrying him about, here and there,—Pilate's sending him to Herod, to show the latter a piece of civility—Herod's returning the compliment by sending him back to the Roman governor, that the latter may have the honor of pronouncing the final sentence upon him—what degradation is inflicted on the Lord of glory in all this! But this is only the beginning of disgrace and humiliation. How much has he to endure in the presence of Herod and his courtiers, who treat him as a juggler and a conjuror! He is urged to amuse the company by a display of his are. His ear is offended by impertinent questions; and on his making no reply to them all, the measure of insult and mockery overflows. He is treated as a simpleton, unworthy of the attention he has excited, who, after having acted his part, and proved himself to be merely a ridiculous enthusiast, is only deserving of universal contempt. Herod deems it unnecessary to take any serious notice of the accusations which the chief priests vent against Jesus. He thinks that no great weight ought to be attached to the senseless things which such a foolish fellow might presume to say of himself. He is sufficiently punished for his folly by his helplessness being now made known to the whole world, and by his thus becoming the object of pity and public ridicule. He carries out these sentiments, by causing, in his jocular mood, a white robe to be put upon the Lord, in order to point him out as a mock king and the caricature of a philosopher, or, perhaps even to stamp him as a lunatic, since it was customary in Israel to clothe these unfortunate people in white upper garments.

Such, my readers, is the sacrificial fire which burns in the narrative we are now considering. And tell me how the Most Holy One, who inhabits eternity, could quietly have borne to see such degradation of the Son of his good pleasure, without casting forth the lightnings of his wrath upon the perpetrators of such indignities, if the Lord Jesus had endured this scandalous treatment only for his own person, and not at the same time as standing in an extraordinary position, and exercising a mysterious mediation? But you know that he stood there in our stead, and as the second Adam, laden with our guilt. He there heard the Father's exclamation, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the

man that is my fellow!" Here also was fulfilled the ancient prophetic saying, "The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." Thank God that such was the case; for I should never have been able, even if an angel from heaven had brought me the intelligence, to make room for the conviction that my sins would not be imputed to me, had I not, at the same time, been told what had become of the sins thus taken from me, since I know nothing more surely than this, that my blood-red sins cannot be arbitrarily pardoned and overlooked, or even pass unnoticed as trifles of no account. Were this the case, how would it be possible for me to believe any longer in a just and holy God? But the Gospel now comes in, and tells me most clearly the history of my misdeeds, how they were transferred to him who appeared in my place; and in his intervention, I now sensibly grasp the legal ground of my absolution. The Lord stands before Herod, as he did before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, not merely to be judged by men, but by God at the same time; and it is my sin for which he atones, and my debt which he liquidates.

No wonder, therefore, that he resigns himself to the poisoned arrows which here pierce his heart in its most vulnerable part—that without gainsaying he listens to the most wicked imputations, and with lamb-like patience lets himself be branded both as a blasphemer and a fanatic, a rebel and a conspirator—that he even bears with equanimity the circumstance that Herod's expectations respecting him are gradually changed into contempt for his person—that the Lord of Glory suffers himself to be degraded so low as to become the butt of the miserable jokes of a contemptible and adulterous court. What he endures is horrible to think of; and yet it lay in his power, with a wave of his hand, to dash the reckless company to the ground. But he does not move a finger, and remains silent, for he knows that here is God's altar, and the fire, and the wood; and that he was the Lamb for the burnt-offering.

But however deep the humiliation in which we behold the Son of God; it is nevertheless interwoven throughout with traits which are glorifying to him, and tend to establish our faith.

Even in the childish joy which Pilate evinces at the prospect of transferring the process against Jesus to another, his deep conviction of

the innocence and unblameableness of the accused is more clearly reflected than in all his oral assertions. His soul exults at the accidental information given him that Jesus belonged to the Galilean tetrarchate, which teaches us how fortunate the Roman esteemed his being thus able to escape from sharing in the guilt of condemning the Righteous One.

Of Herod it was said that he was "exceeding glad when he saw Jesus." This uncommon joy of the Galilean prince, that at last an opportunity was afforded him of seeing Jesus, face to face, is not less important in an apologetic point of view, and tends no less to the Lord's glorification than the joy of Pilate in being happily rid of him. The Savior must have excited a great sensation in the country, and not have displayed his marvelous powers in remote corners, but in places of public resort, that Herod thus burned with desire to make his personal acquaintance. And how uncommon and unique must the Lord's acts have been, that a man so totally dead to every better feeling, as that adulterer in a royal crown, should have such a desire!

Herod hoped, besides, that he would have seen some miracle performed by the Savior. This expectation is again a proof that Jesus had really sealed his divine mission by miraculous acts, and that the wonders he performed were universally acknowledged to be such. Herod does not intend first to try whether Jesus can work miracles, but takes his power and ability to do so for granted. But what a depth of inward corruption is betrayed in the fact that this man, in spite of his conviction of the Savior's ability to perform divine acts, not only refuses him belief and homage, but even degrades him to the state of an object of his scorn!

The tetrarch asks the Lord a variety of questions surpassing the bounds of human knowledge. He had therefore heard of the wisdom with which the Lord knew how to reply to questions of this kind, and to solve every difficulty. Hence he involuntarily does honor to Christ's prophetical office. And even in the circumstance that Herod did not venture to go further in his ridicule than the clothing Jesus in a white toga, when the latter observed a profound silence to his questions—he manifests a secret reverence for him, and thus proves anew that Christ must have actually spoken in an ambiguous manner of his kingdom, and of a dominion which he came to establish.

Finally, that the deep-rooted disagreement, which had so long prevailed between Pilate and Herod, was suddenly terminated and changed into a friendly feeling by the civility shown to the latter in transferring over to him the accused Rabbi, serves again as a proof how highly these men in power thought of the delinquent brought before them. The transfer of a common criminal, or even of a notorious fanatic and swindler, would probably have been attended by no such effect. But that Jesus of Nazareth was selected to mediate the renewed approximation of the two potentates, works favorably, and puts an end to all former ill-will and mistrust. Who does not perceive that this circumstance, however revolting in itself, again tends to glorify Christ in a high degree?

Something similar to that which occurred between Pilate and Herod, happens not seldom, even in the present day. Parties who most violently oppose each other in other fields of research become reconciled, and even confederates and friends, if only for a while, as soon as they join in the contest against Christ and his adorers. But what else do they evince thereby than that Christ stands in their way as an imposing power? An inconsiderable personage, whose claims on their submission they knew not to be well-founded, would never exercise such an influence over them; and finally, an individual whom they regarded as merely mythological, they would certainly put aside, as unworthy of their attention.

Whatever may be planned or executed against Jesus, he comes forth more than justified from it all. Hatred must glorify him as well as love. Persecution crowns him as well as devotedness to his cause. But if mutual opposition to him is able to transmute bitter enemies into friends; what bonds ought the mutual homage of the glorified Redeemer to cement! "I believe in the communion of saints," is a part of our creed. I not merely believe it, but thank God! I also see it. May the Lord however preserve it; for at this present time it suffers. Those who are united in Christ, fall out with each other, because they blindly embrace some school-formula as their Savior, instead of Christ, as if they were tired of him. This is a lamentable and deplorable circumstance. May the Lord overrule it, and awaken in the hearts of his children, sentiments of real brotherly affection toward each other!

Pilate Our Advocate

Pilate again finds himself in a great dilemma. By transferring the proceedings to Herod, he hoped to have escaped from his painful situation. But, contrary to his expectation, the Galilean prince sends the accused back to him again, leaving it to him to terminate the affair he had once begun. The governor, not a little disturbed at this mistake in his calculations, turns again to the accusers of the Savior, and renews his attempt to rescue Jesus, and with him his own peace of mind. He makes a speech to the priests, rulers, and the assembled populace, which, though it contains nothing but what we have already heard him state, is nevertheless worthy of our serious consideration, because in it, Pilate unconsciously and involuntarily appears as our advocate.

However strangely it may sound, Pilate becomes our advocate. He takes Christ, our head, under his protection, and us with him. He legally absolves him from all criminality, and in him his followers also. He begins his address by saying, "You have brought this man unto me, as one that perverts the people." In a certain sense, something of this kind may be asserted of the Savior with truth. For even as he testifies to his believing followers, that they are not of the world; so he also enjoins upon them not to be conformed to the world. He calls upon his people to "come out from among them; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God." In some degree, Christians will always be separatists. God has so organized them, that an union of fire with water is sooner to be thought of than of them with the multitude. Their convictions, principles, tastes, opinions, and views of things in the world, as well as their wishes, hopes, and desires, all are directly opposed to the world's mode of thinking and acting. They are by nature and kind separated from the unregenerate world, although the hearts of the children of God never detach themselves from the children of the world, but are incessantly inclined toward them in compassion and charity. But the latter refuse to be regarded as those who ought to undergo a change; and hence the conflict upon earth, with reference to which the Savior said, "Do not think that I am come to send peace upon earth, but a sword."

When the rulers of Israel charged Jesus with perverting the people, they wished it to be understood in a political sense. They declared him to be the ringleader of a band of conspirators, who strove to stir up the people against the emperor and the authorities, and was therefore guilty of high treason. Nor was our Lord either the first or the last of God's servants, on whom such suspicions have been cast. Even Elijah was obliged to hear from Ahab the angry salutation, "You are he who troubles Israel;" to which he calmly replied, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baal." In the same manner it was said to the king concerning Jeremiah, "We beseech you, let this man be put to death, for he weakens the hands of the men of war, and seeks not the welfare of this people, but their hurt." Later on, we find Paul accused before Felix, much in the same manner: "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." And all the subsequent persecutions of the Christians under the Roman emperors took place under the pretext that the followers of Jesus were dangerous to the State, their views being directed to the weakening of allegiance, and even to the subversion of the existing government.

This false accusation has been handed down from age to age, although even Pilate most earnestly took us under his protection against such calumnies. We hear him loudly declare before the assembled multitude, that neither the throne nor the state had anything to fear from Jesus and his disciples. "Behold," says he, "I have examined him before you, and find no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him, and lo! nothing worthy of death is done unto him." Indeed, how was it possible to convict him of a tendency to revolt, who established the universal principle, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's;" who seriously reproved Peter for assaulting, in his defense, one of the lowest officers of the civil authorities, by saying to him, "Put up again your sword into its place, for all those who take the sword, shall perish with the sword;" and who enjoins upon us to "be subject to the higher powers, since there is no power but of God," and when we are required to do that which is contrary to God's word, exhorts us to a passive behavior in obeying God rather

than man.

But events have recently occurred, which render needless any advocate on behalf of believing Christians, with reference to their political sentiments. The world now knows that the billows of rebellion find in them a rock against which they break, but not a bay into which they may pour themselves. Attempts to render their loyalty suspected will not in future succeed. The revolutionary party has repeatedly been obliged to confess that nothing interferes so much with their plans as the Christian religion. States, which only a few years ago persecuted their religious subjects, now invite them into their territories, as supporters of the throne and guarantees of public order. Laban speaks kindly to Jacob. Belshazzar clothes Daniel in purple. "When a man's ways please the Lord," says Solomon, "he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." There is something astonishing in the sudden annihilation of a charge which has been brought against the followers of the Lamb for more than a thousand years, such as has recently occurred. Let us rejoice at this revolution in public opinion with respect to the soldiers of Christ in the world, as indicative, in some small degree, of that triumphant period of Christ's kingdom, which is drawing near.

But all the charges brought against us are not refuted by our being exculpated from the single accusation of entertaining disloyal sentiments. It is further alleged against us that we adhere strictly to irrational doctrines, especially that of Christ's vicarious atonement; which, we certainly confess is the marrow of the Gospel, and the ground of all our hopes. If it is not true that the Son of God made the great exchange, in causing our transgressions to be divinely imputed to him, taking our debts to his own account, giving himself up to the sword of divine justice for us, atoning for sin in our stead, enduring the curse and condemnation, and emptying, as our Surety and Representative, the cup of horrors to its very dregs—if, I say, all this is not founded in truth, our sins then continue to lie as a heavy burden upon us; we are still under the curse, and must remain so to all eternity; then, no soul could be saved; and every passage of Scripture in which it is said to the sinner, "Your sins are forgiven you," is a falsehood, and every promise of mercy in God's name to the rebellious and transgressors is blasphemous. Everything of a

consolatory nature for fallen man, which the Bible contains, cannot then be of divine origin, but must proceed from Satan; for it is impossible that God, who can never abate anything, either from his law—the reflection of his unchangeable will—or from his threatenings—the emanations of his holiness—could arbitrarily, and without anything further, bless and beatify guilty sinners. If he were to do so, he would cease to be holy, just and true; that is, to be God. Such is our belief and confession. But what appears to us so glorious, acceptable, and rational in the highest sense of the word, the world calls an absurd and foolish doctrine, and an antiquated delusion. But here again, singularly enough, Pilate appears for us, and takes us under his protection.

The Lord Jesus has passed through every examination; he has been put to one test after another, weighed in every scale, measured by every standard, and narrowly inspected by the light of a threefold law—the Levitical, civil, and moral. The veil has now to be removed from the result of the proceedings against him. The judge, who has called the chief priests and rulers to be present at the solemn, and, as he supposes, decisive act, stands surrounded by a vast multitude; and when all are silent with expectation, he opens his mouth to pronounce the final sentence. He declares aloud to the assembled crowd, "You have brought this man unto me, as one that perverts the people, and behold"—this is said to the world at large,—"I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man, touching the things whereof you accuse him; no, nor yet Herod, for I sent you to him, and lo! nothing worthy of death is done to him." He concludes, and all are silent, because they feel that Pilate has spoken the truth.

Now, although he, who was free from sin, was in no wise guilty of death, either judicial or natural, which latter is called the "wages of sin," yet still, he dies. He dies, who, according to justice as well as the promise of God, ought not to die, but live; and dies a death which bears scarcely the remotest resemblance to a martyrdom. If, by his death, he had only designed to confirm the truth of his doctrine, he would have failed in his object; since we cannot possibly think highly of a doctrine, whose teacher, at the gates of eternity, is compelled to make the dreadful confession that God has forsaken him.

But, tell us now, why did Jesus die? "It is appointed unto sinners once to die, and after that the judgment;" but he was not a sinner. Even the redeemed have no other way to the heavenly world than through death, because their flesh is corrupted by sin. But in Christ's corporeality this is not the case; and yet he dies, and that in such a dreadful manner! Explain how this is. You take time to reflect. But however long and deeply you may study the subject, we tell you decidedly before-hand, that you will not bring forward any rational, convincing, and satisfactory solution of this mystery. Hear, therefore, how we view the subject, and consider whether there is room for any other. The monstrous fact that the just and spotless Jesus, notwithstanding his holiness, was condemned to death, would compel us to the conclusion that the doctrine of a righteous God, who rules over all, is a delusion—that the will of man or chance, alone governs the world—that there exists no divine retribution upon earth, and that it will not fare the worse with the impious than with the just—that no order exists, according to which he who perfectly keeps the law has to expect the crown of life, and that the Scriptures speak falsely, when they say that death is only the result of transgression—I say, we should be necessarily compelled to inferences of this kind, if we were not permitted to assume that the immaculate Son of God suffered death in our stead. This view of the subject furnishes the only key to the mystery of the ignominious end of the just and holy Jesus.

But if we presuppose an atonement made by Christ for sin—and we not only may do so, but are constrained to it by the clear evidence of Holy Writ—then all is plain; all is solved and deciphered, and a sublime meaning and a glorious connection pervades the whole. God threatened Adam in paradise, saying, "In the day that you eat of the fruit of this tree, you shall surely die." We did eat of that fruit, and incurred the horrible penalty. But the Eternal Son now appears, removes the latter from us to himself, and we live. On Sinai it was said, "Cursed be every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." We did not continue in them, and our fate was decided. But our Surety presents himself, endures the curse for us, and we are justly delivered and absolved. God has resolved to save sinners; notwithstanding he has said; "I will blot the name of him that sins out of my book." We believe in our salvation, for he inflicted upon Christ the

punishment due to us. God promised the crown of life only to the obedient; but after Christ, as our representative, obeyed in our name, God can bestow the crown on sinners and yet continue holy. Thus all becomes clear, and the most striking opposites harmoniously agree. And yet men dare to call our doctrine of the atonement made by Christ irrational and even absurd! Look how Pilate unconsciously stands in the breach for us, by testifying to the truth that Jesus was not guilty of death. Attempt, in a satisfactory and rational manner, if you can, to explain it, otherwise than by the atonement made by Christ, how it was that even the holy and immaculate Son of God paid the wages of sin.

Pilate takes our part once more. He clears us of a new cause of reproach. He does not, indeed, do this directly, but he gives occasion for our being freed from it. We are accused of dispensing Scripture consolation too lavishly. We are reproved for extending the grace purchased for us by Christ to the greatest sinners and most depraved criminals. We are told that we are not justified in so doing, and that such conduct is dangerous and injurious to morality. But there is something intimated in that part of the narrative under consideration which fully repels the narrow-minded reproof, and justifies our procedure as being quite evangelical.

After Pilate has solemnly declared that no guilt attaches to the accused, he continues, "I will therefore"—release him? not so, but "chastise him (that is, with rods) and let him go." Only think, what injustice! We are ready to say, "O Pilate, how is it possible that you should have recourse to such an expedient! Will you scourge him as a malefactor, who said to you, with the clearest expression of truth, 'I am a King and to this end was I born, that I should bear witness of the truth,' and from the whole of whose deportment shone the radiance, not only of spotless holiness, but also of supernatural descent? O to what length does the miserable fear of man mislead you, and the pitiful anxiety for a little worldly honor and temporal comfort!"

But let us be silent. Pilate's speech, "I will chastise him and then release him," is still the language of numbers of this world's children. He is chastised when men tear the crown of deity from his brow, and when they silently brand him as a deceiver and blasphemer; but then begin to commend his excellences and virtues, and thus release him after having

maltreated him. They deny that he is the only way to heaven, although he himself has said so, and in this way he is chastised; but then again, they applaud him as the most eminent of teachers; and thus he is let go. Men chastise him by insulting his members upon earth, and vilifying those who boast of his meritorious sufferings as the sole ground of their salvation; but again release him by making an outward obeisance at his communion-table, or by confessing that he was more than Socrates or Solon. Alas! we all carry about with us, by nature, a secret scourge for the Lord Jesus, and never omit to use it in one way or other. But if our conscience asks, after such a chastising, why we are so averse and opposed to this Just One, who never injured us, we are accustomed, instead of feeling penitent, to hide our own naughtiness behind the traitorous kisses we bestow upon him, and again release the ill-treated Savior by dubious marks of respect.

But to return. It was customary in Israel to chastise those with rods, who, after trial, were convicted only of slight transgressions, and then to release them. Pilate was anxious to treat Jesus as a delinquent of this kind. One might have expected after all that had passed, by which the innocence of Jesus was placed in so clear a light, that his mediating proposition would have been responded to. But no! God had determined otherwise. It was intended that Christ should suffer as a criminal of the worst description, and that the lot of a murderer and an outcast of the human race, should be his, and that not until then, should the hour of redemption arrive. But why was this? For what other reason than that, according to God's counsel and will, sinners and criminals, like Manasseh and Rahab, might have reason to believe that the great Surety suffered for them also. Jesus was obliged to descend into the regions of darkness, into the being abandoned by God, and into the extreme of ignominy and suffering, that the vilest transgressors might not despair of mercy.

If this doctrine is dangerous, why do the apostles proclaim it as from the housetops? If it is contrary to God, why has he confirmed it in the case of David, Saul, Mary Magdalen, and even in that of greater sinners than these? If it is pernicious, why do those who in themselves experience the truth of it, exceed all others in their hatred to sin, and their zeal for God and his glory? Does it make them negligent and unfruitful in good works?

The very reverse; for he who participates in the merits of Christ, becomes also by Christ's Spirit, a noble tree in the garden of God, which brings forth its fruit in its season. O it is well for us that the case is as we have described it! If Christ had not endured the fate of the chief of sinners, who, even among the enlightened, could glory in Christ, since the Holy Spirit teaches all such to testify with Paul, "Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief!"

Pilate has done us a good office. Not only has he cleared us from a grievous accusation, but, by the testimony he bore to the innocence of Jesus, he has also justified our view of the Lord's death and its import; and by his fruitless attempts to treat the Redeemer as a petty offender, he gave occasion to the Judge on the throne of majesty to frustrate his project, and by so doing, to make it known that Christ was to bear the curse even of the greatest sinner, according to the will and counsel of the Almighty. We feel ourselves deeply indebted to the Roman for the two last pieces of service which he has rendered us, for we confess that, with the atonement and satisfaction made by Immanuel, our peace as well as our hope stands or falls.

Jesus or Barabbas

We resume our place amid the wild and tumultuous assemblage before Gabbatha, the open court, where justice was accustomed to be administered. Pilate, who, the more he has to do with the dignified Man of Nazareth, is the more convinced of his perfect innocence, and whose reverence for the mysterious personage increases, continues his attempts to give the affair a favorable turn, both for the accused and himself. His very soul revolts at the idea of such a person dying the death of a criminal. Not a few of our contemporaries resemble him in this respect. They are those who, like Pilate, speak of the moral glory of Christ with a degree of enthusiasm, but the more they regard him from this point of view, the more they are offended at his cross. They feel a repugnance to the doctrine of the atonement made by him for our sins, simply because they wish sin to be regarded as an inconsiderable and trifling object, which they would be constrained to view as something important and

horrible, if they were compelled to believe that it could only be forgiven through the condemnation of the Son of God, and atoned for by his blood. Those who are unable to absolve themselves, as entirely free from sin, would then be forced either to take refuge with us in the wounds of Jesus, and to sue for pardon with the vilest malefactors, of which they have a horror, or carry about with them a smitten and uneasy conscience, to which they are equally averse. Hence it is altogether their interest to oppose the doctrine that the sufferings and death of Christ must be apprehended as vicarious. No, I do not hesitate to affirm that all the doctrinal systems which seek to neutralize or evade the view of Christ's sufferings as an atonement, proceed from a conscious or unconscious effort to weaken and lessen the enormity of sin. Those who are still satisfied with such systems, are not aware of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. But those who have become acquainted with its abominable nature in the sight of God, see the necessity of Christ's sufferings, and being justified by faith, have peace with God, through the atonement made for us by his Son.

The governor is lost in thought; his forehead burns; his mind is distressed. What would he not give for wise counsel in this painful emergency? All at once the horizon of his soul clears up. He has hit upon a happy expedient, the idea of which did not occur to him without superior intervention. Pilate calls to mind a custom which, though it was not founded on any divine ordinance, the Lord indulgently overlooked and bore with, from being willing to make use of it as the symbol of something of a superior nature. According to this custom it was permitted the people—as a figurative realization of the deliverance of their forefathers out of Egypt, and to increase the general joy at the festival—to ask for the liberation of some grievous offender from prison. Pilate grasps at this custom, like a shipwrecked mariner the floating plank, as the only means of deliverance which is left him. He hastily passes through his mind the various receptacles of crime, in order to discover in them some malefactor whom he may confidently hope the people will never prefer to the Nazarene. He soon thinks he has found such a one, or rather, God found him for him; for this was the very sinner whom the Lord deemed fit for the spectacle which was then to be presented to the world. The man thus selected is Barabbas, a vile

miscreant, a rebel, and a murderer. Who, thinks the governor, would grant life and liberty to such an outcast of mankind, in preference to the just Man of Nazareth? Pilate reckons upon the humanity and right-feeling of the multitude; but it is much to be feared that he has dreadfully miscalculated, particularly as he has chosen a political offender as the means of escaping from his painful situation, with reference to whom the morality of the people is generally accustomed to be much more indulgent than to any other kind of criminals.

Already secretly triumphing in the expected success of his plan, Pilate proceeds to the Proscenium, and in a tone of the fullest assurance of success, calls out to the crowd, "Whom will you that I release unto you? Jesus Barabbas (for such was the man's whole name, according to an ancient tradition) or Jesus the King of the Jews, which is called Christ. For," adds the Gospel narrative, "he knew that the chief priests had delivered him from envy." And such was actually the case; for that which vexed them the most was, that the people followed him. But how foolishly did the governor act, though otherwise so prudent, in reminding the proud men, by calling him "The King of the Jews," how his way had but recently been strewn with palm-branches and garments, amid the hosannas of the people; and how did he thus ruin him without intending it! But his speculation would have been a failure without that; for "God takes the wise in their own craftiness" who, disdaining the restraint of his word and will, seek success by their own inventions. The Savior's fate is now no longer in Pilate's hands. The majority of the multitude decides, and he is obliged to abide by its decision. Had he been bold enough to follow the dictate of his own conscience, and to have said with calm discrimination, "Justice shall be done, even though the world should perish; the guiltless Nazarene is free, and these cohorts here will know how to give effect to my decision;" his opponents, inwardly rebuked, would, doubtless, have shrunk back thunderstruck, and the people, roused from their delusion, would have loudly applauded the energetic judge. But Pilate now stands forever as a warning example of the consequence of endeavoring to satisfy both God, who speaks within us, and the world.

We meet with Pilate under various forms on the stage of the world in the

present day. Many a one, in recent times, has placed himself, like him, in a situation in which he must either set Barabbas free, or give up the Savior, because he was deficient in courage to brave every danger for the sake of Christ. Many, reckoning, like Pilate, on the instinctive moral feeling of the multitude, with whom they do not wish to be at variance, have cowardly asked, "Which will you choose, right or wrong, loyalty or treason? God's order or its overthrow?" and the unexpected reply has been thundered back to them, "We choose rebellion and treason!" and before they were aware, they had miserably stumbled, to their own dismay, on the slippery path of wishing to please men, and looked about in vain for the possibility of escape. Let us, therefore, hold fast, my readers, to what we know to be right. We thus become masters of our position and of the multitude, instead of being their servants. For degeneracy invariably yields to sacred courage, however outrageously it may be acting. We are sure to overcome when we act resolutely, although we seem to succumb; for God is always with those who are decidedly with him, while he suffers those to fall who endeavor "to serve two masters."

"Whom will you that I release unto you?" exclaims Pilate, seating himself on the marble judgment-seat to await the decision of the people. The latter waver and hesitate, which is no sooner perceived by the priests and elders than they rush into the crowd and exert all their eloquence to stifle the germ of right feeling which begins to awake in their minds, and to blow into a flame the dying spark of animosity to Jesus. Meanwhile, a remarkable episode takes place. A messenger, out of breath appears before the governor, sent by his wife, who is commissioned to say to him, "Have you nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this night in a dream because of him." What a remarkable circumstance! The brightness of the purity and glory of the fairest of the children of men was such as to penetrate into the heathen woman's world of dreams. We thus see how the life and actions of Jesus must have affected the hearts of those who were indifferent and even opposed to him, and compelled them to respect him. Yes, by night, when the bustle of the day is silent, and deep sleep falls upon men, the Spirit of Truth visits their tabernacles, and approaches the couches even of those who, careless about higher objects, revel in the intoxication of worldly delusions. With the arrows of his judicial decision, he pierces by night

into chambers, where all that has reference to things of a higher nature otherwise finds no response. By night, ill-treated conscience assumes its right, and makes itself again heard, even in the breasts of the most ungodly; and many are obliged to confess with the Psalmist, "You search my heart, and visit me in the night season." God had also evidently his hand in the distressing night-vision of Pilate's consort, and often exercises control over the airy region of the world of dreams, and when he pleases makes the imagination of the unfettered spirit subservient to his purpose. But though Pilate received a fresh divine warning and monition by the message from his wife, yet the man had already laid down his arms, and was no longer his own master. His wife's communication affected him deeply. His excited conscience, whispered to him, "Pilate, listen to the voice from another world, which warns you against the horrible crime of a legal murder." He hears it, indeed, and is dreadfully disturbed, but hopes the people will act justly. The people? Poor man! Is this your last despicable hope?

Pilate impatiently rises from his seat, and again calls out to the crowd with the mien of a suppliant, "Which of the twain will you that I release unto you?" We may easily infer that he added in his own mind, "You will surely decide for Jesus." But it is in vain to come with requests, where we have not the courage, in God's name, to order and command. The priests and elders have succeeded in instigating the people to side with them, and the unfortunate governor hears a thousand voices unanimously and daringly reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas."

Such are the two individuals presented to the people to choose from at their Easter festival. The man in chains and the Prince of life; the former a vile wretch, who in a sanguinary revolt, had been seized in the act of committing murder. He had probably acted the part of a false Messiah; and had exhibited one of those caricatures of Christ, by means of which Satan had so often attempted to render the true Messiah suspected, and an object of public ridicule. But Barabbas does not stand before us merely as an individual. He represents, at the same time, allegorically, the human race in its present condition—as fallen from God—in a state of rebellion against the Divine Majesty—bound in the fetters of the curse of the law until the day of judgment; but nevertheless dignifying itself with

pompous titles, without any real nobility of soul, and boasting of honorable distinctions without internal worth.

Before Barabbas was presented with Jesus to the people's choice, every prospect of his escape from the fate that awaited him had been cut off: and such is also our case. There was no idea of a ransom, nor of any liberation from the well-guarded dungeon, much less of a merciful sentence, which every one else might have anticipated sooner than this murderer. And believe me, that our case was not less critical than his. For what had we to give to redeem our souls? how escape the vigilance of those eyes, which "run to and fro through all the earth?" and how could a judge acquit us unconditionally, of whom it is said, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne?" Barabbas's situation was desperate, and ours no less. But what occurs? Without his own co-operation, and against all his calculation, a dawn of escape suddenly flashes through his prison. From Gabbatha resounds the governor's question to the people, "Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ."

How important the moment! How mysterious the change in the state of things! Barabbas thought that he should certainly be put to death. It is, now Barabbas or Jesus. The deliverance of the former has at least become possible; and by what means? Solely because the rebel and the murderer is offered to the choice of the people equally with Jesus, the Lord from heaven. The lot must fall on one or the other. One will be released; the other sent to the place of execution. There is nothing to justify a demand for the liberation of both. Which of the two will be chosen—which rejected? If Jesus of Nazareth is set at liberty, Barabbas is inevitably lost. If the former is rejected, then, hail to you, Barabbas, you are saved! His ruin is your redemption; from his death springs your life.

What say you, my readers, to this state of things? Viewed solely in a historical light, it is certainly of minor importance, except that it serves as a renewed proof that the Son of God was spared no disgrace nor humiliation—not even that of being placed on the same footing with a murderer, like Barabbas. But regarded in a superior light, that historical fact becomes of great importance. In the position in which Barabbas stood to Jesus, we all of us stood to Him. With respect to us, it might also have been said, "Who shall die—the transgressor or the Just One?" It was impossible that both should be spared. The sword of divine justice must strike, either to the right or the left. The curse, which we had incurred, must be inflicted. The sentence of condemnation pronounced upon us, impatiently waited its execution, that God might continue holy, just, and true. Here was the great alternative: these guilty creatures, or the Son of God in their stead, for he alone was able to atone for our sins. Thus we were quite in Barabbas's position. If Jesus was sent to execution, the hour of our redemption had arrived; but if he was spared we were irrevocably lost.

You already know the result. The affair takes the most favorable turn for Barabbas, and in him, for us. To Pilate's utter amazement, the voice of the multitude decides in favor of the rebel. "Release Barabbas!" cried the uproarious crowd, "and crucify Jesus." However wicked this decision may appear, compared with that of Pilate, who was anxious that Jesus should live, and not be put to death; still it was more in accordance with God's plan, and the method of salvation that it should be so. For if the people had effectually demanded Jesus to be liberated, and Barabbas to be executed, as Pilate wished, that demand would have been the funeral-knell of the human race, and the signal for our eternal perdition. But God so ordered it that the affair took a different turn; for the outcry of the people to crucify Jesus was the trumpet-sound announcing the day of our redemption.

Observe now the result of the decision. Barabbas and Jesus change places. The murderer's bonds, curse, disgrace, and mortal agony are transferred to the righteous Jesus; while the liberty, innocence, safety, and well-being of the immaculate Nazarene, become the lot of the murderer. Jesus Barabbas is installed in all the rights and privileges of

Jesus Christ; while the latter enters upon all the infamy and horror of the rebel's position. Both mutually inherit each other's situation and what they possess: the delinquent's guilt and cross become the lot of the Just One, and all the civil rights and immunities of the latter are the property of the delinquent.

You now understand the amazing scene we have been contemplating. We find the key to it in the words, "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It places before us, in a strong light, the mystery of our justification before God, through the mediation of Christ. In Barabbas's deliverance, we see our own. Left to ourselves, we should have been eternally lost. When Christ exchanged positions with us, our redemption was decided. Truly, he must be blind who does not perceive that in this Barabbas scene, a light was divinely enkindled, which should illumine the whole of the passion of God's only-begotten Son. This light would alone suffice to dispel every objection to the scriptural nature of our view of the doctrine of the atonement, if this were not also done by a whole series of striking passages from the apostolic writings. We certainly will not entirely deny that our idea of Christ's atonement may not include in it much that is human and gross, which will eventually be swallowed up by the pure and perfect apprehension of it, but there is nothing false or erroneous in it. The pith and substance of our judicial view of the suretyship of Jesus is most undoubtedly divine truth.

Let us then rejoice that such is the case, and indelibly impress upon our memories the striking features of the scene we have been contemplating. Let those of my readers who are humbled under a sense of their sin and guilt, behold their image in Barabbas; and one consolatory idea after another will occur to you from the sight. How comfortable the reflection that the man is wholly freed at the expense of Jesus; that however heinous his crimes, not one of them attaches to him any longer; that henceforward, no judicial procedure can be instituted against him for what he has done; and that nothing now prevents him from boldly appearing in the presence of his judge.

You also possess all these privileges in Christ, only in a more glorious form and a more abundant fullness. Since he became the criminal in your

stead, you are accounted as righteous for his sake; since he was rejected in your stead, you are admitted into favor with God; since he bore your curse, you are the heirs of his blessing; since he suffered your punishment, you are destined to share his happiness. Such being the case, how ought you, by faith, to rise into the blissful position assigned you, and to learn in the school of the Holy Spirit, boldly to say with the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, seeing that it is God that justifies? Who is he who condemns, since Christ has died—yes rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us?"

Barabbas

The most horrible and momentous cry that was ever heard under heaven has been uttered. To the governor's question, "Whom will you that I release unto you, Jesus or Barabbas?" the dreadful answer has been returned by the tumultuous crowd, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!" More than an echo of this cry resounds through the world to this day for all who daringly reject Christ as the Savior of sinners, and are eager on the contrary for the upholding of the honor, independence, and liberty of their "Old Man," likewise say, in fact, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!" "But is not this the language we have inherited from our corrupt nature, as such?" Undoubtedly it is. Yet even from the lips of faith we hear the same; only that in the latter case, the exclamation has an opposite meaning, with the nature of which we are already acquainted, and shall hear of it again on the present occasion. The release of Barabbas is the subject of our meditation, which, may the Lord accompany with his blessing, that so we may retire from it laden with a valuable store, like the bee from the flowery meadow or the fragrant heath!

The people, instigated by their rulers, have boldly and plainly expressed their will. They desire the pardon of the murderer, and the death of the righteous Jesus. From that moment, it is pitiable to see how the judge, entirely thrown out of his course, sinks deeper at every step, and writhes in the dust, like a helpless worm that has been trodden upon. Scarcely

aware any longer of what he was saying, he cries, out, "What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ?" Only think of his asking the raging multitude what he must do with Jesus, who, before he put the question to them, had already answered him in the most convincing manner. His conscience, his inward feeling of justice, the letter of the law by which he is bound, and even the warning voice contained in the dream of his wife—all tell him, clearly and definitely, what he ought to do with Jesus. He ought to pronounce him free, and then with all the power that stood at his command, take him under his protection against the uproarious multitude. But where is he to find courage for this? "What shall I do then with Jesus?" Truly these words are an eternal shame and disgrace to him.

But how many of our contemporaries share this disgrace with him, since they make what they ought to do with Jesus depend on the popular voice, the prevailing tone of society, and what is called public opinion! I have even often thought I heard preachers in their pulpits imitate Pilate in asking, "What am I to do with Jesus?" and I cannot tell you how discordantly the question sounded in my ears. They did not appear to know whether they ought to pray to Jesus or not—whether to confess him before the congregation to be God, or only man—whether to recommend him to them as redeemer or teacher; and nothing seemed more disagreeable to them than to be compelled officially to have to do with Jesus. But woe unto him who can still ask, "What shall I do with Jesus?" Such a one's mind is beclouded, and he is still very far from salvation. He who knows not what to make of Jesus must be a self-deceiving Pharisee, or his soul must resemble the mole that grubs in the earth. What has the blind man to do with his guide who offers him his arm? the sick man with the medicine presented to him? the drowning man with the rope that is thrown to him?—if we know how to answer these questions, how is it that we can be perplexed at replying to the other?

Pilate asks, "What shall I do with Jesus?" The people will not leave him long in suspense. The more they see their rulers timidly give way, and enter upon the path of concessions, the stronger grows their audacity. "Crucify him!" they cry, briefly and decisively. The governor, beside

himself with amazement at seeing the fabric of his calculations so suddenly overthrown, comes again before them with the unavailing question, "Why, what evil has he done?" But the people, scarcely deigning an answer to the miserable judge, repeat, with still greater insolence, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The increasing weakness and irresolution of the governor necessarily made the crowd believe that he himself did not regard it as any monstrous crime that Christ should be crucified.

Pilate appears as if he wished to say something more; but the people have now the upper hand, and they refuse to hear him. Wild uproar drowns his voice. In spite of every effort, he can no longer make himself heard. The heartless succumbing man has then recourse to a symbolical act. He calls for a vessel with water; and, on its being presented to him, washes his hands before all the people, and cries out, as loudly as he can, to the tumultuous mob, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see you to it!"

An exciting scene! This renewed judicial testimony to the innocence of our great High Priest, is to us very satisfactory. Pilate's urgent desire and earnest endeavor to rid himself of the crime of condemning the righteous Jesus can only aid in strengthening our faith. But we are deeply affected at the sight of the poor depressed man—how he writhes under the scourge of his own conscience, and ineffectually strives to wash away from his hands the bloody spots, however much he may object to acknowledge them. "I am innocent!" he exclaims. But what avails such an assertion? The monitor in his bosom does not confirm it; and though he were to do so, yet the minutes of the proceedings are referred to a higher tribunal, where the decision will sound very differently. He washes his hands. O why this ceremony? Where is the fountain which yields water able to cleanse from spots like those that adhere to him? There is indeed a stream which would have produced the desired effect, but Pilate is ignorant of it. O that he had directed to himself the words he addressed to the Jews in addition to his testimony, and had said, "See you to it," instead of "See you to it!" If, in lieu of his innocence he had professed his guilt, and instead of the unavailing washing, had resorted to the blood of atonement—then he would have been safe for time and eternity, and his name have secured a place, not merely as now, in the Church's creed, but

also in the list of the citizens of Christ's kingdom. But Pilate, under the influence of beggarly pride, will not acknowledge himself as overcome, although hell and the world never set their feet more triumphantly on the neck of a more discomfited man than he. But man is by nature so constituted that he would rather give himself up to Satan in the snare of the most idiotic self-delusion than do honor to the truth, which humbles him for his good.

"See you to it!" exclaims Pilate, hurling the entire impious act on the heads of the Jews; thereby returning upon the priests and scribes—not without God's permission "to whom vengeance belongs"—with increased horrors, the very words with which they erst, with cruel and unpitying coldness, repelled the despairing Judas. They feel indeed the sting of those words, but know how to conceal their embarrassment and shame behind a horrible outburst of impiety. "His blood be upon us and our children!" they cry, in Satanic defiance, and all the people join with them.

Dreadful indeed! As long as the world stands, a more horrifying, self-anathematizing speech has never been heard. But listen! Does it not seem to you as if a voice of thunder sounded down from the throne of Deity, crying out, "Be it unto you according to your wish! Let his blood come upon you as you desire!" And oh! only cast a glance at the history of Israel from the moment when that unhappy demand was made upon Him who does not suffer himself to be mocked, to the present hour, and it will prove that you heard correctly. How did the blood of that Righteous One come upon his murderers, when the proud city of Jerusalem was laid in ashes by the torches of the Romans, and scarcely so much wood could be procured as sufficed to prepare crosses for the children of Abraham! How did it come upon them, when, having slain the Prince of Peace, they were driven out, like useless chaff, to the four winds of heaven, and condemned thenceforward to roam about in inhospitable regions, without a home, the scorn of all the world! How did it come upon them, when, as the offscouring of all nations, and as if they were unworthy to tread the ground, they yielded up their lives by thousands and tens of thousands, under heathen, Mohammedan, and even Christian swords and daggers! And when we now look at them, as being still a proscribed people, according to Hosea's prophecy, "Without a king and without a

prince, and without sacrifice, and without an image, without an Ephod, and without Teraphim"—is it not as if we read the cause of their miserable banishment on their foreheads, in the words, "His blood be upon us and upon our children?" But the mercy of God is great. He has still thoughts of peace toward his ancient people, who, however degenerate, are not yet given up. In due time he will cause the horrible language of the curse they invoked upon themselves to have the validity of a prayer in his sight, and the blood of his Son, as already experienced by individuals of that race, to come upon all Israel as an atonement. The prophet Hosea adds the joyful promise to the threatening so dreadfully verified. "Afterward, they shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king." And Zechariah opens to us the prospect of a time, "when ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." The Lord himself says, in the most significant manner, referring to the termination of their wretchedness, "You shall not see me henceforth, until you shall say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" And what is the language of the apostle Paul, with reference to them. "God," says he, "is able to graft in again the branches which were broken off. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."—Rom. 11.

The people, with diabolical determination, have declared their will, and sealed their fate with an imprecation, than which a more impious one has scarcely ever been heard in the world. The governor is no longer able to cope with this manifestation of firmness on the part of the people. He sees himself robbed of the last particle of his moral armor, and compelled to lay down his arms, and surrender in the most disgraceful manner. How do we read? "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required, and released unto them Barabbas, who for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will that he should be scourged."

This is, therefore, the result of all the serious and powerful warnings which had been given to Pilate. He had received such decided impressions of Jesus' moral purity and innocence, and had even been admonished by a voice from the other world, as well as by his own

conscience; and yet this disgraceful defeat—this cowardly retreat—this shameful yielding to the will of the crowd! O what is man with all his propriety of feeling and will, so long as he stands in his own strength, and has not yielded himself up, with his whole confidence, to God and his grace! The Lord says, "My strength is perfected in weakness;" and hence we find St. Paul saying, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me."

Barabbas is free, although still ignorant of the decision made in his favor outside his prison, and of the fortunate lot which is fallen to him. Dejected, and even despairing of deliverance, he continues lying in his gloomy dungeon; and in every noise that reaches him from a distance, he imagines he hears the tread of the executioner coming to lead him away to the scaffold. At length he plainly hears the massive bolts of his prison door drawn back, and the rusty hinges creak on its being thrown open—but—dare he trust his own eyes? What a sight! Instead of the executioner, a messenger from the civil authorities rushes in with a smiling countenance, and brings him the amazing and almost incredible intelligence that he is free—that his life is saved. Scarcely are the words out of his mouth, before he begins to loosen the fetters from the astonished delinquent, and urges him to rise up and leave the prison. You may suppose that the criminal for a long time imagined that it was all a dream. Perhaps he thought it was only some horrible joke played off upon him, or that it was intended he should breathe the fresh air for a few moments, in order afterward to be replaced in his horrible dungeon. But the messenger repeats still more emphatically the assurance that he is safe, and then explains to him what has caused his liberation. Barabbas now learns that the sentence of death has been removed from him forever, and that he has no longer to do with courts of justice, judges, or jailers; that no accusation will be listened to against him; that he is restored to the full possession of the rights and privileges of citizenship, and so situated as if he had never committed a crime; but that the sole cause of this happy change in his circumstances lies in the fact, that One who was perfectly guiltless had taken his place, and trodden the path to the cross in his stead. The people, at their Easter election, had decided on the death of this righteous man, and for his liberation.

All this is told to Barabbas. In the herald who informs him of it, we see the image of a true evangelist. Yes, know you spiritually poor—you who are bending under the weight of your transgressions, and are crying for mercy—that we have to bring you a similar message to that which Barabbas received, only of a far greater, more glorious, and incomparably more blissful nature than his. Nor are we permitted to withhold or diminish it in any degree. After Christ has made the mysterious exchange with you, we are commissioned of God to inform you, in plain terms, that from the moment in which the holy Jesus took your place, you assumed his, and are installed into all the rights and immunities of the citizens of his kingdom. You are now justified in the sight of God, and accepted of him. No condemnation any longer attaches to you. No sin will any more be laid to your charge, no accusation given ear to against you. This we can tell you, yet not we, but the infallible Word of God, in plain terms; and we call upon you in God's name to believe this word, and to rejoice in it to the honor of Christ.

How does Barabbas act after receiving the glad tidings? The Bible does not tell us; but we may easily imagine it. If he had said to himself, "It is impossible that this can have reference to such a criminal as I;" and had resisted, when his chains were being removed, how should we designate such conduct? You would call it senseless, and be justified in doing so. But I fear that this reproach may attach to some of my readers; for equally foolish are many of our believers. Suppose that Barabbas had rejected the message with a protest, and had replied to the herald in the following manner,—"What you say is absurd, and cannot be founded on truth." What would have been the consequence? By so doing, he would have insulted the herald and the authorities that sent him in the most infamous manner, and have branded them as liars. But such is precisely your case, my friend, who, in your legality, resist the grace of God in Christ. You unceasingly offend, not merely a human messenger, but the Holy Spirit, who speaks to you in the Scriptures; the apostles of the Lord, who so plainly testify to you of Divine mercy; and Christ himself, who assures you that whoever believes shall be saved. Yes, you infringe upon the glory of God, as if he only offered you a partial deliverance, and had not wholly and completely provided it. Suppose that Barabbas had replied to the announcement of his liberty, "No, for the present at least, I

will not leave my prison, but will first become another man, and prove that I have amended myself." What do you suppose the authorities would have answered? "Do you imagine," they would have said, "that you are liberated for your own sake? You would never have been free on that ground. Though you might have become ten times better, you would never be able to remove the guilt you have contracted. In the eye of the law, you would continue a murderer as before; and if you do not make a free use of the pardon offered you, know that you will vainly calculate upon ever being legally liberated."

Take to heart, my dear readers, this official announcement, for it is of high importance, and points out to you the way in which you ought to walk. Suppose Barabbas had said, "I will remain a prisoner, until, after being injurious to society, I have shown myself a useful member of it." This might have sounded nobly; but, strictly examined, would it not also be absurd? Doubtless you would have replied to him, and said, "What folly! before you can become useful to society, you must become free. For, of what service or benefit cant you be to others, as long as you are fettered and in prison?" Take this lesson also to heart, my friends. It is applicable to so many, who foolishly seek to become holy before they make room for the comfort of pardoning mercy.

Probably, however, not one of all these ideas occurred to Barabbas. I doubt not, that on receiving the joyful message, he gladly accepted it, and gave himself up to a transport of delight. He immediately shook off his chains, left his dark dungeon, exchanged his convict dress for the attire of a citizen, and made every use of the liberty offered him. He returned to his family, joying and rejoicing, and never forgot how much he was indebted to the mysterious man of Nazareth for life, freedom, and all that he possessed, who was condemned in his stead, and by his death, saved his life.

And you, my readers, who, like Barabbas, may be still languishing in the gloomy dungeon of inward anxiety, care, and sorrow, go and do likewise. Believe the Gospel message, that for Christ's sake, you are eternally liberated from curse and condemnation. Listen no longer to the accusations of Satan, the world, or your own consciences. Enjoy the fruit of the suretyship of your great representative. Live in peace, and rejoice

in hope of the glory of God.

The Scourging

The path of the Holy One of Israel becomes increasingly dark and obscure. The night-piece of his passion carries us from the region of the tragical into that of the horrible and appalling. His sufferings increase to torture, his disgrace to infamy; and the words of Isaiah, "He was despised and rejected; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him," are completely realized. We now proceed to the consideration of an act which is calculated to make the blood run cold in our veins. It is the scourging and subsequent crowning with thorns, of the righteous Jesus. We draw near to the appalling scene, and after having viewed it historically, we will endeavor to fathom the mystery concealed under it. May the Spirit of the Lord guide us into all truth, and teach us to penetrate by faith, where human reason fails!

After the momentous decision has been made at Gabbatha, and the lot of the murderer has fallen upon the just: the latter is, for a while, removed from the view of the people, having been given up to the armed band of executioners' assistants, and led away by them, amid wild uproar, like a sheep for the slaughter, into the inner court-yard of the palace. There let us follow him, although we do so with reluctance; but we must be witnesses of the scene, since it is the will of God that we should be aware of what our restoration and redemption cost our great Surety.

What now takes place? A deed, the sight of which might rend even nerves of steel and iron, and respecting which, a feeling comes over us as if it were improper and even sinful to behold it with the naked eye. Look at yonder pillar, black with the blood of murderers and rebels. The iron collar which is attached to it, as well as the ropes which hang down from its iron rings, sufficiently point out its cruel object. Look at the crude and barbarous beings, who, like bloodthirsty hyenas in human form, busily surround their victim. Observe the brutal vulgarity of their countenances, and the instruments of torture in their hands. They are scourges, made of hundreds of leathern thongs, each armed at the point with an angular

bony hook or a sharp-sided cube. Such are the instruments of torture prepared for Him, who was dear to God, as the apple of his eye. We naturally think he could not and ought not to descend to such a point of degradation, but that all heaven must interfere to prevent it, or that the world must perish under it. But it takes place; and neither does heaven protest against it, or the world sink into ruin.

See, see—the execution of the sentence begins! Good God, what a spectacle! The executioners fall upon the Holy One like a host of devils. They tear off his clothes; bind those hands which were ever stretched out to do good, tie them together upon his back, press his gracious visage firmly against the shameful pillar, and after having bound him with ropes in such a manner that he cannot move or stir, they begin their cruel task. O do not imagine that I am able to depict to you what now occurs. The scene is too horrible. My whole soul trembles and quakes. Neither wish that I should count to you the number of strokes which are now poured upon the sacred body of Immanuel, or describe the torments, which, increasing with every stroke, sufficed in other cases of this kind, to cause the death of the unhappy culprit, before the formal execution which this scourging usually preceded. It is enough for us to know that it lasted full a quarter of an hour; streams of blood flow from his sacred form. What avails it? The scourging continues without mercy. The arms of the barbarous men begin to grow weary. What signifies that? New tormentors release those that are fatigued. There is not a nerve of the divine sufferer that does not thrill with nameless pain and smart. But such is the intention. The scourges cut ever deeper into the wounds already made, and penetrate almost to the marrow. His whole back appears an enormous wound. Each fresh drop of blood which flows from his opened veins, falls like a drop of oil—not into the fire of pity, which these men know not, but into that of their infernal fury and thirst for blood; and that which they at first performed with a kind of seriousness and solemnity, they proceed with, after the last remains of humanity are choked within them, as an amusement, with shouts of horrid mirth and glee. No abyss yawns to receive these bloodhounds. Certainly, there must be no God—no avenger of innocence in heaven, or, as we have often already seen, the passion of our Lord must have a most extraordinary and profoundly mysterious meaning.

After the horrible act is finished, another instantly follows, which almost exceeds it in cruelty. The agonized sufferer is unbound from the bloody pillar, but only to be tortured afresh. The material rods have done their duty, and mental ones of the bitterest and most poignant mockery are now employed against him. Their ridicule is directed against his kingly dignity, even as it was, on a former occasion, against his prophetic office. A worn-out purple robe, once the garment of the leader of a Roman cohort, is produced. This is thrown over his back still bleeding from every pore, while the barbarians exult aloud at this supposed witty and appropriate idea. They then break off twigs from a long-spiked thorn-bush, and twist them into a circle, which is afterward pressed upon his sacred head as a crown. But in order to complete the image of a mock king, they put into his hands a reed instead of a scepter, and after having thus arrayed him, they pay mock homage to him with shouts of derisive laughter. The miscreants bow with pretended reverence to the object of their scorn, bend the knee before him, and to make the mockery complete, cry out again and again, "Hail, King of the Jews!" It is not long, however, before they are weary of this abominable sport, and turn it into fearful seriousness. With Satanic insolence, they place themselves before their ill-treated captive, make the most horrible grimaces at him, even spit in his face, and in order to fill up the measure of their cruelty, they snatch the reed out of his hands, and repeatedly smite him with it on the head, so that the thorns of the horrible wreath pierce deeply into the skull, while streams of blood flow down the face of the gracious friend of sinners. Merciful God, what a scene! O horror unexampled, and without a name!

My readers, how can we reconcile such revolting occurrences with the government of a just and holy God! A great mystery must lie at the bottom of them, or our belief in a supreme moral government of the world loses its last support. And is not this really the case? Have you not already perceived that the references of that scene extend back, even to the commencement of the history of mankind? Did it not seem to you as if, instead of the Lord Jesus, you saw our first father standing before you, and suffering the punishment due to his transgression in Paradise? If so, you have hit upon the right clue to explain that otherwise inexplicable scene. Believe me, there is a closer connection between the garden of

Eden and the court-yard of the Roman praetorium than might at first sight be supposed. Debts incurred in Eden are there liquidated, and sins committed in Paradise are there atoned for.

Consider, for a moment, what was the crime by the commission of which, the first of our race plunged himself and all his descendants into destruction. He who was so abundantly blessed by his Maker, lusted, nevertheless, after the forbidden fruit, and ate of it. He who was adorned, by the kindness of God, with innocence and beauty, was not satisfied with that attire, but stretched out his hand to grasp a crown which did not belong to him. He refused to be God's servant any longer, but would be himself a god. No longer satisfied with the rod of dominion which had been granted him, as lord of the earth and every earthly creature; he sought, in a certain sense, to seize the scepter of the Almighty himself. His presumptuous desires tended to the being independent of the Lord in heaven, to the right of unconditionally ruling over his own destiny, and even to unlimited freedom from every law which he did not impose upon himself. "Independence" was the motto which flamed upon his banner. He wished to be a king—not as he ought to be, under God, but a sovereign, independent as God himself, as autocrat, to whose egotistic will everything should bow.

But in this tendency of his heart lay the most decided falling away from God; and alas for us! that, in its germ, it was transferred over to, and inherited by us, like a subtle poison. Who will venture to pronounce himself free from it? Who does not feel those sentiments daily blossoming and bearing fruit in him, in a thousand different ways? Do not we all naturally strive, as a heathen writer has expressed it, "always after that which is forbidden?" Is it not self, instead of God, that we would gladly place upon the throne; and does not its glorification lie incomparably nearer our hearts than that of our Creator? Does not the arrogant desire accompany us at every step, to mark out, as little deities, our own path of life; and do we not all bring with us into the world the rebellious inclination to evade the laws of Jehovah, and instead of them, arbitrarily to make our own laws? Assuredly it is so! We all bear about in us the likeness of our fallen progenitor; and if we refuse to hear of it, we only, by so doing, again evince our inherent pride, and the inward

darkness into which we are fallen.

Tell me, now, what, according to your opinion, ought to have been the fate of Adam for lusting after the forbidden fruit, and for his impious infringement of God's prerogatives? "At least," you think, "the scourge instead of sensual delight; a crown of thorns instead of the longed-for diadem; and a robe of mockery instead of the imperial purple." You have judged rightly. Look now into the court-yard of Pilate's palace, and convince yourselves that all this, of which you deem him worthy, really befell him. "Whom;" you ask, astonished, "our first father, Adam?" No other than he, and we, his seed, in him. Yes, see there the presumptuous luster, the culpable insurgent, and aspirer to the crown in Paradise; except that you do not behold him there in person, but as represented by him, who, as the second Adam, took upon himself the guilt of the first.

Such is the secret cause of the bloody events we have been contemplating. Away, therefore, with all false sentimentality! with the partial and selfish indignation at the barbarous crew! Apart from the fact of our being innately no better than they—they are the unconscious instruments in the hands of retributive justice. What befalls Christ, befalls us in him, who is our representative. The sufferings he endures, fall upon our corrupt nature. In him we receive the due reward of our misdeeds; and now say, if it be too much? With the shudder at the sight of the martyred Lamb of God, ought to be joined a thorough condemnation of ourselves, a profound adoration of the unsearchable wisdom and mercy of God, and a joyful exulting at the glorious accomplishment of the counsel of grace. Our hell is extinguished in Jesus' wounds; our curse is consumed in Jesus' soul; our guilt is purged away in Jesus' blood. The sword of the wrath of a holy God was necessarily unsheathed against us; and if the Bible is not a falsehood, and the threatenings of the law a mere delusion, and God's justice an idle fancy, and his truth a mere cobweb of the brain —then, nothing is more evident than this, that of all the millions of sinful and guilty men who ever trod the earth, not a single individual would have escaped the sword, if the Son of God had not endured the stroke, and taken upon himself the payment of our debts. This he undertook. Then it thundered upon him from the clouds; the raging billows of a sea of trouble roared against him; hell poured upon him all its tortures and

torments, and heaven remained unmoved. What was all this but the fate which awaited guilty sinners? But since Christ endured it, the crosses, which were erected for us, have been thrown down; the stake which waited for us has been removed; the cannon which were pointed against us have been dismounted, and, from the royal residence of the Lord of Hosts, the white flag of peace is held out to us poor dwellers upon earth.

The case has been well stated by an ancient writer, in the following words: "Adam was a king, gloriously arrayed, and ordained to reign. But sin cast him down from his lofty throne, and caused him the loss of his purple robe, his diadem and scepter. But after his eyes were opened to perceive how much he had lost, and when his looks were anxiously directed to the earth in search of it, he saw thorns and thistles spring up on the spot where the crown fell from his head; the scepter changed, as if to mock the fallen monarch, into a fragile reed; and instead of the purple robe, his deceived hand took up a robe of mockery from the dust. The poor disappointed being hung down his head with grief, when a voice exclaimed, 'Look up!' He did so, and lo! what an astonishing vision presented itself to his eye! Before him stood a dignified and mysterious man, who had gathered up the piercing thorns from the ground, and wound them round his head for a crown; he had wrapped himself in the robe of mockery, and taken the reed, the emblem of weakness, into his own hand. 'Who are you, wondrous being?' inquired the progenitor of the human race, astonished; and received the heart-cheering reply, 'I am the King of kings, who, acting as your representative, am restoring to you the paradisaical jewels you have lost.' Our delighted first father then bowed himself gratefully and reverentially in the dust; and after being clothed with the skin of the sacrificed animal, fathomed the depths of the words of Jehovah, 'Adam is become like one of us.'"

What I have now related to you is a parable, but one which rests on an historical basis. For, in fact, the great exchange which Christ made with us, as regards the reversion and the right, has again placed us in the full possession of paradisaic glory, seeing that we are "begotten again to a lively hope, and to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto eternal salvation."

Ecce Homo!

We stand, in spirit, before Gabbatha. The judgment-seat is still empty. The scene, as we are aware, has been transferred for a time into the inner court-yard. We know the horrible things which have there occurred. The evangelists describe them with a trembling hand. They mention the scourging only briefly. We think we see them covering their faces with their hands at this terrific scene; but they cannot conceal from us the tears which silently steal down their cheeks.

Impatience begins to seize upon the multitude outside; when suddenly, the gate of the praetorium again opens. Pilate approaches, visibly affected, followed by One who is surrounded by a troop of jeering barbarians. Oh, what an appearance does he present! You shudder, and cover your faces. Do so, and permit me, meanwhile, to relate a brief narrative to you.

Heaven's pearly gates were once thrown open, and a Holy One descended into the world—such a one as the sons of men had never seen since the fall. He was glorious beyond compare, and came to verify the dream of Jacob's ladder, which connected earth with heaven. Love was his banner, compassion the beating of his heart. He sojourned three years among mortals, shedding light on those who were stumbling in darkness, filling the cottages of the wretched with temporal and spiritual blessings, inviting the weary and heavy laden to come to him, in order to give them rest, and irradiating the darkness of the valley of death with promises upon promises, as with so many golden lights from heaven. "I am not come," said he, "to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many." He testified that he came to redeem his people from their sins; that he would not leave them comfortless, but would bring them to the Father, and elevate them to be fellow-heirs with him in his glory. And how did he fulfill his promises, whenever any ventured to take heart and filially confide in him! O what blessings must such a guest have brought with him to a world lying under the curse! Even the angels around the throne might have envied the pilgrims in this valley of death by reason of this visit. And as regards the children of men—"Doubtless,"

you say, "they received him with exultation, melted into tears of rapture, conducted him in triumph, and knew not what they should do to manifest their gratitude to their heavenly friend and deliverer."

Truly, one might have supposed that such would have been the case. "What, and was it not so?" My friends, lift up your eyes, and look toward Gabbatha. "Gracious heaven!" you exclaim, "Who is yonder sufferer?" O, my friends, whom do you take him to be? Look him narrowly in the face, and say if wickedness could have vented itself worse than it has done on this person? Alas! they have made of him a carnival king; and as if he were unworthy of being dealt with seriously, they have impressed upon him the stamp of derision. Look at the mock robe about his shoulders, the theatrical scepter in his hands, and on his head, which is covered with wounds and blood, the dreadful crown of thorns. But who is this man, thus horribly disfigured? I think you will no longer seriously inquire. The lamb-like patience, and the superhuman resignation with which he stands before you, point him out sufficiently clearly. No less does the majesty betray him, which, in spite of all the abasement he experiences, still shows itself in his whole deportment, as well as the divinely forgiving love which even now beams from his eye. Who would be found acting thus in a similar situation? Yes, it is the Holy One from on high, who stands before you, the picture of agony. "Behold the man!" exclaims the heathen judge, deeply affected, and faintly impressed with an idea of some superior being. Ah, had Pilate clearly known, what he only obscurely felt, he would at least have said, "You have here before you the moral pattern of our race, the flower of humanity, and holiness personified."

"Behold the man!" The hope is once more excited in the governor, that he would still be able to accomplish the liberation of Jesus. "Now," he thinks, "the blood-thirstiness of the raging multitude will certainly be satisfied. In the presence of One so full of dignity and meekness, the fury of the most cruel must subside, and right feeling return, even to the most hardened." Let us see what occurs. The people are about to reply to the governor's appeal—the people, that thousand-headed giant, of whom so much is said in commendation, and whose appearance is so imposing; whose united voice is supposed to be always correct, and even

proverbially esteemed equal to the voice of God. But what is the echo which resounds from the bosom of the powerful monster in reply to the governor's exclamation, "Behold the man!" "Crucify him! Crucify him!" rends the air, as if proceeding from a single tongue.

"But are these impious men aware of what they are doing?" Certainly not, in all its extent. You must not, however, suppose that they are acting merely as in a dream. O no! In the person of Christ, they would gladly dash to pieces the mirror which mutely renders them conscious of their own deformity. In the Nazarene, they would gladly extinguish the light of the world, which they hate, because they feel more at ease in the darkness of deception, than in the broad daylight of unvarnished truth. They would gladly get rid of the disagreeable monitor who reminded them of the awfulness of eternity; for they are vexed at being disturbed in the quiet enjoyment of their earthly husks. They neither desire an external conscience, nor the exhibition of a model of virtue, nor an awakener from their deadly sleep, nor, generally speaking, any moral authority over them. On all these accounts, they are exasperated against the Holy One of Israel, and have nothing left for him but the implacable cry of "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Thus they are judged. In the manifestation of him who was "fairer than the children of men," our fallen nature has taken occasion to make it evident that its corruption is radical, its disease desperate, and its inmost tendency nothing else than enmity against the Most High God. The many thousand additional proofs of this which history furnishes, we may dispense with, after our race, in the murder of the Lord from heaven, has pronounced sentence upon itself, and filled up the measure of its guilt. The mute sufferer in the purple robe and crown of thorns, sits in judgment upon it, and silently testifies that without mediation and an atonement, the seed of Adam, in its whole extent, is exposed to the curse.

That which manifests itself at Gabbatha, is only the mature fruit of a seed, which grows, openly or secretly, in us all. Do not call this assertion unjust. As long as we have not experienced the second birth by water and the Spirit, we do not act, with regard to Jesus, in a manner essentially different from the wretched men at Gabbatha. Like them, we are offended at the holiness of Jesus. Like them, we spurn them from us, when he is

desirous of rending the web of deceit we have spun around us. Like them, we spit upon him in spirit with our scorn, when he gives us to understand that we ought to bow the knee of homage to him as our ruler. Tell me, does not Christ still wear, in a hundred different forms, the purple robe and crown of thorns in the world? Is he not exposed to public ridicule, and treated as a liar and an enthusiast, because he bears witness to his superhuman dignity? Is not his name, even to this day, proscribed by thousands, like scarcely any other? Does not an ironical smile dart across the lips of many, when it is mentioned with reverence and fervor? Is it not regarded, in many circles, as much more pardonable to be enthusiastic for Voltaire, than that it should occur to us to be serious in our love to Jesus? As soon as we begin to be so, are we not inundated with disgrace and reproach, and in us, the Lord himself? Truly, the sins which were committed on the bleeding form of Jesus, are so little to be regarded as the sins and impious acts of a few, that the accumulated guilt of the whole human race is only thereby made apparent. The horrible and cruel scene at Gabbatha is not yet at an end. It is daily renewed, although in a somewhat less striking manner. The words, "Behold the Man!" point not only to what is past, they have also a condemning reference to the present. Alas, the world became a Gabbatha! The thorn-crowned martyred form exhibited there mutely condemns us all without distinction.

But the presence of the divine sufferer acts not merely judicially and condemnatory. It also exercises an influence commanding homage and reverence. However deeply abased the Savior may appear, he is still a king. Even in his blood-stained attire, he accomplishes a truly regal work, and in so doing, ascends a throne on which no eye had previously seen him. It is not the throne of government over all created things; for to this the Father had long before elevated him. Do not mistake, while contemplating the man thus covered with disgrace. If he sways even the feeble reed in his hand, legions of angels would hasten down for his defense, and lay his foes beneath his feet. Just as little is the throne he here ascends that of an avenger and a judge. This also he had previously occupied. Let no one deceive himself; beneath his robe of mockery, he still conceals the thunder, and the lightning; and consuming fire, if he permitted it, would issue from his thorny crown, as from Jotham's bush

of old, and devour his adversaries.

"But if he possessed the power to do this, why did he not make use of it?" I answer, because beneath the robe of mockery he wears another and a different one, the purple of a compassionating love, which longs for the salvation of the lost. The new throne, which he ascends on Gabbatha, is that of a King of poor sinners and of a "Prince of Peace." It is the throne of grace, from whence forgiveness flows down, instead of retribution, and promise proceeds instead of command. To this throne no other way is open to him, but that on which we have seen him walk. Before the curse could give way to blessing, the sword of justice to the olive branch of peace, the obligations of sinners must be fulfilled, their debts liquidated, and thus divine justice satisfied. This is the great work in which we see the Redeemer now engaged. Through suffering, he acquires fresh power; immersed in ignominy, he clothes himself with new glory.

"Behold the man!" Yes, fix your eyes upon him, and strike your hands together with astonishment at the sight. In the mock robe in which he stands before you, he gains victories and triumphs which he never could have won in the sumptuous robe of his divine majesty. In it, he overcomes eternal justice, while compelling it to change its sentence of death upon the sinner into a sentence of grace. In it, he overcomes the irrevocable law, by rendering it possible for it to withdraw the curse pronounced upon us, without infringing its authority and dignity. He overcomes sin, from which he rends its destructive power; Satan, whom he deprives of his last claim to us in the way of right; and death, from which he takes away the sting, and the armor of a king of terrors. To the man, so disfigured as scarcely to be recognized, belongs, henceforth, the earth, as the price of payment for his blood; and no destroying power, which, as the consequence of sin, had, by divine permission, entered into the world, has any more a legal claim upon it. From its pillars he removes the insignia and armorial bearings of all usurping authority, and replaces them with the sign of the cross, the mark of his peaceful sway. And no one dare to interfere and say to him, What do you? He is complete and unassailable in his own right. The world is his, that he may let his love rule over it, and not his wrath; and if he henceforth treats penitent sinners as if they were replete with holiness and virtue, who will be bold

enough to contest his right to do so?

"Behold the man!" Yes, it is a strange ornament that decks his head; but know, that in this wreath he possesses and uses a power of which he could not boast while only adorned with the crown of Deity, which he inherited from all eternity. In the latter, he could only say to the dying thief, "Be you accursed!" In the former, he is able to say to him, "This day shall you be with me in paradise!" In the heavenly crown, he could say nothing else to a Magdalene, a tax-collector, or a paralytic, than "Depart from me!" and give them over to perdition. But in his crown of thorns, it is in his power to say to these guilty souls, "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven you!" In the former he certainly reigned, but over a hopelessly ruined race, devoted to destruction; in the diadem of thorns, he rules over a world replete with great and glorious anticipations.

"Behold the man!" A feeble reed is his rod of office; but with the scepter of Omnipotence, which he wielded from the beginning, he did not perform the wonders which he works with this mark of abasement and weakness. True, the gates of hell opened for transgressors at a wave of the former; but when he sways the latter, the doors of the paradise they have forfeited open for them at his pleasure. With the former, he was Lord over mankind only as over a lost race destined for the slaughter; with the latter, he now tends a flock of them called to eternal salvation. The scepter of his majesty did not menace the kingdom of darkness in its claim on fallen man, since retributive justice, which is the basis of God's throne, bounded his power with impassable limits. With the scepter of his lowliness, on the contrary, he overturns the seat of the prince of darkness, taking away from him territory and population, and that so justly, that hell itself dares not object to, nor call it in question.

Can you mistake the conqueror of the world in Him whom you see before you? Does not the "stronger" stand before you, who takes away the spoils and armor of the "strong man," and makes an end of all opposing authority? But know, that in the same attire in which he there yields himself up to the world, as to any legal claim, he continues to overcome it. It is not in the form of "the Master in Israel," nor in that of the glorious Son of the Eternal Father, but in the form of the divine sufferer, that he inclines the hearts of those toward him whom he has purchased with his

blood. He meets his children usually in his wreath of thorns, and gathers, even to this day, the recompense of his sufferings in his robe of mockery, and not in the purple of his Eternal Majesty. The sons of the desert continue estranged from him as long as he meets them only in the garb of a teacher, or with the insignia of his superhuman royalty. But no sooner does he display before them his suffering form, than they begin to be astonished, and feel attracted, as by a wondrous and magnetic power; and when they hear, as from his bleeding lips, that all he endured was for their sakes, it is his purple robe they first lay hold of, his crown of thorns to which they first pay homage, and his reed-scepter to which, in joyful obedience, they bow their necks, as to that of their rightful Lord. Yes, the sight of the suffering Savior is still the mighty power which silently changes lions into lambs, breaks and melts the stony heart, and prepares the way for his most glorious achievements.

"Behold the man!" Yes, keep your eyes fixed upon him. Even as he is the Judge and Conqueror, so he is also the Benefactor of the world. We know that he no longer stands on Gabbatha. He has long ago ascended the throne of glory, in a different robe and a different diadem to that in which we there beheld him. But he left us his thorn-crowned image in the Gospel; and Oh, the wonders it has wrought in the world, and continues to perform, whenever the Holy Spirit illumines it! Even as in that degraded suffering form, the Lord from heaven saved the world, so he still shows himself in it as the world's benefactor. Thus arrayed, he exhibits himself in the lonely cell of the weeping and contrite penitent, and how is the heart of such a one relieved at the sound of "Ecce Homo!" for "He bare our iniquities." In this form he shows himself to those who are severely tempted; and the sight of him who has trodden Satan under his feet, renders their victory secure. He appears in this form to those who are grievously afflicted, and scarcely do they behold him than they breathe more freely, and exultingly exclaim, "Through the cross to the crown!" In this form he approaches his children, when rejected and despised by the world; and when they see him, though only through the lattice, they feel already fresh courage, and boldly say, "We desire no other array from you who are his adversaries, than that in which you once clothed our Glorious Head." In this form he silently draws near to those who feel grieved at the base ingratitude and coldness of the world; but in

his presence, how quickly does their sorrow turn to deep confusion at their desire for human praise and empty honor! In this form he restores those to his flock, who had again let themselves be seduced from him by the allurements of the world. A compassionate and warning look from his eye, from under the crown of thorns, causes them again to melt in contrition at his feet. In this form he appears to his children when the shades of death begin to fall around them, and their feet already tread the dark valley; and when their half-closed eyes behold him, they feel that heavenly peace flows down to them from his crown of thorns, and that, from the reed in his hand, the king of terrors, overcome, shrinks back with all his horrors, and as if the purple robe of their divine friend extended itself like a peaceful canopy over them. Cheered by his presence, they exclaim with good old Simeon, "Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen your salvation!"

O may he thus appear to us, likewise, when our day declines, and the darkness of night surrounds us! May he then unveil his suffering form before us, when the gloomy path presents itself to our view, which we must tread alone! When our pulse ceases to beat, amid the unavailing tears of those who are dear to us, and the world passes away from us forever; when no human are any longer avails, and even the consolation of human affection no longer reaches the heart, O may he then accompany us in our solitary path, in his purple robe and crown of thorns, and all that is dark around us will be changed into heavenly light and glory! For it is in this form above every other, that the great truth is expressed, that the sentence of death and the curse are removed from our heads to his, in order that free access to the throne of grace may be granted us, when clothed in the robe of his righteousness. O how much sooner does a poor sinner take heart to lay hold of the hem of his purple robe, than of that of his garment of light; while from the thorny wreath around his brow, the mysterious benediction of Moses is pronounced upon us: "The good-will of him that dwelt in the bush come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

Let, then, the sound of "Ecce Homo!" ever vibrate in our hearts, and nothing in the world ever cause his suffering form to fade from our

mental view. This ought never to be the case, if we desire that the peace of God, courage in striving against sin and the world, and comfort in life and death, should abide within us. The wisdom of the just consists, as Paul expresses it, in knowing nothing among men save Christ, and him crucified. Dying daily to ourselves and the world, in fellowship with the dying Redeemer, in order daily to rise with him to the new life in God, is our vocation. Let us be satisfied with it, remembering that "we have here no abiding city." How long may it be before we hear the sound of another "Ecce Homo!" But if we then lift up our eyes, a different form will present itself to our view than that which we saw on Gabbatha. The King of Glory will then have exchanged the robe of mockery for the starry mantle of Divine Majesty, the wreath of thorns for a crown of glory, and the reed for the scepter of universal dominion. He inclines the latter to us graciously as the symbol of his especial favor, saying, "Come, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" And while from the interior of the heavenly city of God the never-ending hallelujahs of the blessed above greet our ears, our full hearts respond to the ecstatic acclamation, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory, and blessing."

The Close of the Proceedings

The judicial procedure against the Lord of Glory hastens to its close. Events crowd upon, and even overthrow each other. The great and decisive moment is at hand, and the occurrences which take place, claim our sympathy in an increasing degree.

"Crucify him!" was the people's answer to the pathetic appeal of the more than half-vanquished governor, that the life of the Lord Jesus might be spared. This response completely dispossessed Pilate of his last and imaginary safe position. Behold him, now a mere object of compassion and pity, helpless, and wholly at a loss, inwardly torn and tortured by the scourge of his better-self; without faith, though not free from superstition, and therefore the football of human and infernal powers, which exert their influence over him. He again affirms the innocence of the accused, but instead of terminating the proceedings by the liberation

of Jesus, as he ought to have done, he demeans himself so far as to give the cowardly advice to the Jews to take him and crucify him without his authority: really, our compassion for the weak-minded and unprincipled man begins greatly to diminish, and with respect to him, we are tempted to soften our reprobation of the people thus misled and strengthened in their delusion by Pilate's weakness, and to transfer it entirely to him. Can we feel surprised that the people become more bold, the more they see the judge vacillate and give way? "We have a law," they cry out very determinedly, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." The people are not satisfied with simply putting Jesus to death, but in order to avoid the appearance of revolt, they desire that Jesus should be executed under all the forms of public justice.

The new accusation here brought by the Jews against Jesus, that he made himself the Son of God, is very deserving of notice. By this, they in fact assert that Jesus, in the proceedings against him, had assumed this high and honorable title. That they therefore consider him guilty of a capital crime, may serve us as a criterion of the extent and sublimity which they attached to that appropriation. How could it have occurred to them to regard the latter as anything impious, had they taken it for granted, that Jesus had declared himself to be a Son of God in no higher sense than that in which all men, and especially the pious and such as keep the law, might so call themselves? But it was quite clear to them, that by the title of Son of God, Jesus intended to place himself high above every creature, and even on an equality with the all-sufficient God himself. And if our Lord had intended less than this, it was his sacred duty, on this occasion, to reject the assertion of his accusers as false, or to rectify it as a great mistake. However, he neither does the one nor the other, but observes silence, and by it, openly confirms the accusation brought against him as well-founded.

"We have a law," cried the people; and such they had, indeed—a positive law, revealed from heaven, and contained in the written word of God. A law, clearer than the sun, deeper than the sea, and as the pure reflection of the holiness of God, and the perfect expression of his unchangeable will, valid for the whole world for time and for eternity; and know, that until God shall become less holy than he is, and not until then, will the

requirements of that law be lessened and mitigated. When the justice of God once begins to decline, and his truth to vacillate, then, and not until then, will the transgressing his law be of less moment, and the curse of the law be less feared. But as long as there is in God no shadow of a change, his law retains its majesty and implacable severity; and as long as justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, he who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, is rejected of God and under the curse. Hence the law of which we speak, cannot be a favored or welcome guest upon earth. As long as we live without union to Christ, we should rejoice if the law did not exist. For what does it effect, but show us in a clear light, our estrangement from God, and by means of its threatenings, cause a hell in our consciences? How many thousands has it robbed of their peace and all the enjoyment of life and imprisoned them, for the rest of their days, in the gloomy dungeons of terror and despondency! Where is the wonder, then, if they execrate the law, and are always endeavoring to unnerve and make it void. For if the law was not in the world, sin would be no longer sin, and men would imagine they could reach heaven as they listed. But to wish that there were no law, would be to desire that God should cease to exist. For if there is a God in heaven, he has a right over his creatures, and the will of God, as the personal abstract of every virtue, cannot be less holy than the law of the Scriptures, which requires a perfection, "even as the Father in heaven is perfect."

The Jews of that day had still a consciousness of the existence of a divine law. The world in the present day has long ago lost this consciousness, and has swept away the positive command, by a reckless, arbitrary, self-chosen, and shallow morality. This substitute, which *capitulates* to our corrupt nature, does not hurl a curse, but unavoidably brings one after it. It is rebellion against the law to endeavor to weaken and neutralize it; and, believe me, in due time it will avenge itself on all such, and dreadfully vindicate its honor.

"We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." Very true, presupposing that he had spoken falsely in the great things he asserted of himself. The charge of a treasonable blasphemy would then have lain upon him. Such, however, was not the case, for he was really what he gave himself out to be. But let us

remember, that he was now appearing in our stead; and in this position the people's sentence proves correct. You know, however, that he died, the just for the unjust, and thus he became the end of the law to all them that believe. We died with him, without personally feeling the suffering of death. In him we emptied the bitter cup, which was destined for us on account of our sins. Henceforward the law no longer stands in our way, but only ministers to us in offices of love. Henceforth it may only say to us, "Behold the righteousness reflected in my demands, and know that it is now yours in Christ Jesus. As personally holy as I require men to be, you shall eventually be presented before God." The law is also appointed to us, who delight in the law of God after the inward man, to live so as entirely to please him, who has bought us with his blood; to unfold to us, in every case, what is pleasing to the Lord, and with which we may infallibly serve him; and in addition to this, to show us its threatenings and its curses, as a conquered general shows to his victors, the ordnance, which, during the conflict, were dismounted by their superior fire. It is to such performances that the law is now enjoined. It is our friend, though occasionally disguised under a gloomy mask, and makes again the sound of its lifted rod to be heard by us. This it does, only to drive us back to the wounds of Jesus, or still deeper into them. But having again reached this city of refuge, it greets us in its true and wholly reconciled form. It has forever forsaken its hostile and menacing position with regard to us. "Christ is the end of the law;" and whoever is conscious of being a sinner in the sight of God, let him read these words to his complete satisfaction. In them lies the spring of my peace, as well as the dying song, with which I hope, at length, gently and blissfully to fall asleep.

"He made himself the Son of God," cried the assembled crowd. "When Pilate heard that saying," we are informed, "he was the more afraid." We well understand the reason. The words were in unison with his deepest presentiment. He had long felt, while the Holy One was before him, as if transported into a supernatural region. The remembrance of his childish dreams of heavenly beings, who appeared as dispensing benefits to mankind, of sons of God, who favored the earth with their visits, awoke again in his soul, accompanied by more serious and gloomy thoughts; and although it did not occur to him to conceive of such a messenger from Olympus in the person of the Nazarene, yet the reality of a superior

world impressed itself so strongly upon him, that, with his enlightened understanding, he felt himself greatly perplexed. Jesus had therefore declared himself to be the Son of God. This seemed to the governor to be something highly remarkable and significant. All that he had seen of the man with his own eyes seemed only to confirm this assertion respecting him. "The Son of God!" Pilate, had he been willing to have given vent to the feeling, which in single moments overpowered him, would have almost called him so; and what was there in the wondrous man to render it incredible that he should be of other descent and superior in nature to other men? Pilate is deeply affected. His mind feels a degree of mysterious apprehension of which it had never before been the subject. He is anxious to inquire more particularly who the Nazarene is, and for this purpose retires with him again into the interior of the palace.

Here a memorable conversation takes place between them. Pilate begins it with an inquiry, which includes within it nothing less than the vital question of the whole of the Christian religion. "Whence are you?" says he. You perceive that we have rightly judged of what had occurred within him. His inquiry does not refer to the city or town, but rather to the world, from whence Jesus proceeded. He wishes to know whether he is a son of earth, or has come from some other sphere of the universe. This of itself has become a problem to Pilate. How clearly, therefore, must the stamp of eternity have shone upon our Lord's forehead, even in his menial form!

"Whence are you?" We perceive from the emphasis laid upon this question, that if the Lord had replied, "I am from heaven," the governor would not have started back amazed, but would only have said, "Then my presentiment has not deceived me, for it has already seemed to me as if you were only a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth." But the Lord gives him no such answer, and even thinks fit to leave him without any information. We must not regard this as strange; for what benefit would Pilate have derived, if the great mystery had then been revealed to him, that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh?" The heart of the heathen governor was not prepared for it, and his inquiry concerning the descent of Jesus, strictly regarded, must have proceeded more from vain

curiosity than from a desire for salvation and a need of help. Besides this, such a disclosure respecting Christ's true person and nature could only have increased Pilate's responsibility, and have aggravated his condemnation at the last day, and hence it proceeded both from compassion and sparing mercy, that Jesus maintained a profound silence at his question. How little Pilate would have felt inclined to bow to the scepter of the Son of God, had he recognized him as such, is sufficiently evidenced from the conduct which he observed immediately after the question. For on Jesus not at once replying to him, he feels offended, and addresses the Lord, in a tone of extreme excitement, with the arrogant and haughty words, "Speak you not unto me? Know you not that I have power to crucify you, and have power to release you?" Hear him, only! How evident he makes it appear what spirit he is of! Ah, the finest feelings and presentiments of the natural man are only like a rapid vernal vegetation upon a moral morass, which just as rapidly decays. The man must be born again, or else he continues sold under sin as from the first; and his life, however moral and pious it may appear, will only be an uninterrupted chain of relapses.

"Speak you not unto me?" Does not the man act as if the Lord committed high treason by not immediately giving him the desired information? What presumption! what price! "Know you not," continues he, "that I have power to crucify you, and have power to release you?" Oh, what delusion, what ridiculous and beggarly pride in one who had just before, in the presence of his subjects, manifested a weakness which should not have allowed him to use any longer the word "power" without blushing, especially with reference to crucifying and releasing!

But let us listen to what the Lord says. With the majestic composure of his regal self-consciousness, he replies to the judge who so boldly boasted of his authority. "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above; therefore he who delivered me unto you has the greater sin." Admirable words, perfectly worthy of the Lord from heaven and the Son of God! According to them, Pilate appears, although acting, in his own estimation, as self-existent and independent, as an unconscious instrument in the hands of the living God for a sublime purpose, only moving within limits appointed and marked out by an

invisible hand. He is unable to do anything but that which God enables him to do. Notwithstanding his cowardice and want of principle, he would not have delivered Jesus over to his murderers, if it had not been pre-determined in heaven. He walks, indeed, in his own way, but in leading-strings of which he is unconscious. He bears, indeed, his guilt; but, while acting thus culpably, he promotes a great and sacred object, of which he is ignorant.

The Lord immediately follows up what he has said, that was calculated to humble and put the governor to shame, with something different and more consolatory. "Therefore," says he, "he who delivered me unto you has the greater sin." Pilate had not understood our Lord's words, when he spoke of a power given him from above, and had regarded the Lord with surprise and astonishment. It is not his misunderstanding his words, which evidenced itself in his gestures, to which the Lord refers. He intends to say, "Because you are ignorant of me, and know not why I am come into the world, your guilt is less than that of him who delivered me into your hands." The latter was primarily the high priest Caiaphas, this son of Abraham, this master in Israel, who had grown up in the light of Moses and the prophets, and, therefore, knew what the title "Son of God" signified, and was in a position to recognize this Son of God in Christ. He, nevertheless, pronounced the sentence of death upon our Lord, as a blasphemer. This sin was the greater because committed in the daylight of scriptural illumination, and against superior light and knowledge. It was so, because it was not committed from weakness, but purposely; not from being taken by surprise, but considerately; not from cowardice, but from wickedness. But observe how the Lord here again appears great. How he shows himself afresh as the king over all, yes, as the judge of the world. With the certainty of an infallible searcher of hearts, he weighs sin and guilt in the balances of the sanctuary, appoints the measure of future punishment, opens, at the same time, to the unhappy governor a prospect of mercy and possible forgiveness, and in the latter trait, again manifests the compassion of his heart, which thirsted for the salvation of sinners.

The Lord's words have not entirely failed of their effect on the mind of the governor. He clearly feels in them the sublime as well as the benevolent and charitable motive which dictated them; and hence he is induced to

return to the open court, and, with fresh zeal, to repeat the attempt to liberate Jesus. But he then hears from the crowd below the words which break the mast and rudder of the bark of his good-will, even on venturing out of the harbor. "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend; for whoever makes himself a king (like him for whom you are pleading) speaks against Caesar."

This outcry hit the governor's weakest and most vulnerable side. He knew his master, the Emperor Tiberius, too well, not to foresee that an accusation like that which had just been raised against him, if it reached his ear, would find only too strong a response in his suspicious mind, and would cost him, the governor, his office, and who knows what beside. He, therefore, felt assured that the emperor who, as we are informed by a contemporary writer, regarded the crime of *leze majesty* as the highest of all accusations, would, without previous inquiry, pronounce the severest sentence upon him so soon as he should be informed that his viceroy had set a man at liberty who had attempted to claim the title of king over Israel. But the emperor's favor was everything to Pilate, for with it stood or fell his official dignity. No, the emperor's anger would have endangered his liberty and life, and it was a grave question with Pilate whether he ought to sacrifice these blessings to justice and peace of conscience. He certainly judged differently in the sequel; like many among us, with whom it seems also a question whether the peace of God is the chief of blessings, who will afterward view the matter in a different light. God grant that the hour of their awaking from the devil's snare may not come too late, that is, only when no choice will be left them, because, having too long and obstinately chosen the curse against their better knowledge, they are already given over to hardness of heart.

No sooner does Pilate hear the unfortunate words, "You are not Caesar's friend," than his little remaining ability to resist gives way. He does not indeed entirely give up his efforts to set Jesus at liberty; but what he undertakes for that purpose, is with the despairing consciousness that a successful result is no longer to be expected. With the instability of one who is completely driven from the field, he steps forward from the praetorium once more, again brings the accused with him upon the stage, ascends with assumed solemnity the judgment-seat, and then again

begins to harangue the people. But all he now adduces, only proves the boundless confusion which reigns within him, and seems only to be calculated fully to frustrate his purpose. "Behold your king," cries he, pointing to the suffering Savior, torn with stripes, and covered with ignominy. Who does not feel from this exclamation, that it was prompted by a mixture of compassion for the Man of Sorrows, and of bitter scorn toward the hated Jews? He wishes at one and the same time, to gain them over to favor Jesus, and to give them a very painful blow. The people naturally felt only the poisoned sting of his speech, and not its moving power, and that which Pilate might have foreseen occurs. The insulted multitude rise up, like an irritated viper, and cry out more resolutely, angrily, and furiously than before, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate now loses all self-possession. His passion even removes the object of his efforts from his view; like a madman destroying his furniture, so Pilate destroys the last hope of Jesus' rescue, while pouring oil into the flame of the people's rage already brightly burning; he calls out maliciously and with bitter sarcasm to the raging crowd, "Shall I crucify your king? You think," is his meaning, "to blacken my character with the emperor as a protector of, and fellow-conspirator with a rebel; but you are the rebels; for here is your chief to whom you pay homage." But he no longer knows what he is saying. Inward discomfiture and despair, accompanied by a powerless thirst for revenge, and ridiculous arrogance, render him beside himself. The chief priests, on the contrary, know better how to preserve their coolness. To the ironical question, "Shall I crucify your king?" they have immediately an answer at hand, which, though it casts a horrible light upon themselves, could not have been more ably chosen, had it been their intention, through it, to give the governor a moral death-blow. With pretended loyalty and devotedness toward the Roman sovereignty, they cried briefly and forcibly, "We have no king but Caesar," and thus give themselves, as regards Pilate, the menacing aspect as if it were they, and not he, who defended the endangered authority and sovereignty of the emperor. But the supposition that the matter might be regarded in the same manner by Tiberius, as well as the idea of the dreadful punishment, which would impend over him, if, in the emperor's gloomy soul the suspicion should arise that the subjugated Hebrews were more faithful to him than his own servant, quite overpowered the governor. He now gives Jesus up to the

people to do with him as they list. They have gained a complete victory; but woe, woe to the poor unhappy beings! While vociferating, "We have no king but Caesar!" in which they rejected the true Messiah, as well as their hopes in him, they verified Jotham's parable of the trees, who chose for their king a fiery bramble-bush, and unconsciously pronounced sentence and predicted a curse upon themselves for thousands of years. To this hour the Jews have no king, but live without laws and without a home, as tolerated aliens under foreign dominion.

We take our leave of Pilate, and bid him farewell, not without sorrow. He was fitted for something better than that which we saw him display. But he wished to serve two masters—God, who spoke in his bosom, and the world at the same time; and hence his fall and his ruin. He was desirous of doing what was right, but not wholly. His sentiments were noble, but he did not make room for the Divine Spirit to confirm the feeling in him until it became a permanent conviction and resolute will. The seed of all the sanctifying impressions he received, fell under the thorns of his unbroken pride and worldly-mindedness, and these sprang up, and overpowered and choked it. Pilate fell a sacrifice to his want of decision and weakness of character, even as numberless others, though often the subject of fine feelings and resolutions, incessantly become a prey to the power of Satan.

We have very scanty intelligence respecting the governor's subsequent fate. We merely know that his inward state became gradually more gloomy, and his severity increased; from whence we reasonably infer that his peace was at an end, because his conscience condemned him on account of the crying injustice committed upon the Holy One of Israel. In consequence of heavily oppressing the people, in which he afterward indulged, he was removed by the Syrian Proconsul, in the last year of the reign of Tiberius, and banished to France. It is a question whether, in his exile, he came to himself, and learned to know the King of the Jews in the glory of his mediatorship. The curse which hovered over Pilate's head was written clearly enough to induce us to hope that its contents would bring him to reflection, and kindle in him a desire for mercy and forgiveness. The primitive fathers speak of documents which Pilate sent to Tiberius respecting his judicial proceedings against Jesus, and his death, by which

the latter was induced to cause Christ to be received among the gods. We have no reason to doubt the truth of this ancient tradition; and for the sake of those who cannot believe in the superhuman majesty of Christ, sincerely regret that these documents are lost. But to me, the whole conduct which Pilate, though a heathen, observed toward Jesus, seems sufficiently glorifying to him. Pilate occupies his place in the apostle's creed as a witness for the holiness and superhuman dignity of the Lord from heaven, as well as that Christ was delivered up and crucified, not merely according to human will and design, but in accordance with the divine plan of redemption and mercy.

We conclude, while impressively calling to mind the words of the Lord, "He who is not with me is against me," and those of the apostle, "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace;" as also the prayer of the Psalmist, "Uphold my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not."

The Way to the Cross

"Then delivered he him therefore unto them." How mournful and horrifying this sounds! Alas for Pilate! Had he but known who it was, and all that he gave up in thus delivering him! We have tasted only a little of his heavenly manna, but we would not give him up for all the world. "Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." We confess, indeed, with deep humiliation, that we are frequently guilty of denying his name, and whenever this is the case, we go out, weeping bitterly, with Peter, and after having been comforted by him afresh, we again say, with stronger emphasis than before, "We will never again deliver him up." We renounce the friendship, favor, and honor, of his adversaries. If the whole world were offered to us, Jesus is not to be had in exchange. Our union with him bears the stamp and signature of eternity.

"Then delivered he him unto them." Oh, if Pilate had had any idea of whose instrument he was at that moment! But he is unacquainted with the precious words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-

begotten Son," and those of the apostle, "He who spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all: how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" These testimonies, however, are known to us; we also know their mysterious depth; we hang down our heads at the words, "Then delivered he him unto them," sink down in the dust, and adore.

"Then." He was now ready and prepared for the last great sacrificial act. He had fulfilled the law, had victoriously endured every trial of faith, and had proved himself in every ordeal to be pure and unalloyed gold. He was "the Lamb without spot," obedient beyond compare, and it was just such a sacrifice as this that the God of holiness required. He must first be found worthy of a crown before he could bear the curse. All is now in readiness.

"Then delivered he him." Now close the temple, you sons of Aaron; the types and shadows with which you had to do have done their duty, now that the substance has appeared. Lay aside the band from your foreheads, and the breastplate, you ministers of the sanctuary; for know that another now justly adorns himself with both, and that your priesthood has reached its termination.

The act of delivering over the accused has taken place; Jesus is now in the hands of his enemies, like a lamb amid wolves, or a dove in the claws of the vulture. How was David in the right when he said, "I will rather fall into the hand of the Lord, than into the hands of man." Look how they treat the Holy One, now that they have him among them. They again assail him with the bitterest mockery, cruelly and rudely tear the purple robe from his bleeding body, and put on him his own clothes again, not from compassion, but because it seems to them that the horrible death to which they are now preparing to conduct him, is no longer to be treated as a jest or a scoff, but requires a certain solemn seriousness.

Have not the modern enemies of Christ arrived at a similar stage in their conduct toward him? When, fifty years ago, the French illumination spread itself over the nations like a poisonous atmosphere, Christ again stood as a mock king on the stage of the world; and he who thought he possessed anything of wit and humor made use of them to brand both him and his cause with the stamp of ridicule. The proceedings have since

assumed another and more serious appearance. It is almost unanimously agreed, in the present day, that Christ is too great and too noble for mere trifling. His person and doctrine are thought worthy of being treated scientifically, and thus they put on the dishonored Jesus his garment again, inasmuch as they do not hesitate to restore to him the honor of being one of the wisest and noblest men that ever trod the earth. But all this gravity, regarded in the light, is nothing else than a solemn introduction to the act of crucifixion. Christ, doubtless with gravity and decorum, is declared in the name of science, to be a mere man, and therefore an enthusiast and a blasphemer, justly condemned to be crucified, because he had affirmed on oath that he was more than a man, and hence was guilty of blasphemous perjury, in the judgment of the most modern philosophy. In truth, notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary, the anti-christian spirit has only entered upon a new and more dangerous phase of development, and has approached considerably nearer its perfect maturity. Beneath the scoff and scorn of earlier times there was always an accusing conscience, which was endeavored to be kept down and overpowered. Behind modern unbelief is encamped the deepest and most hopeless state of death. With philosophical pride they feel assured of the incontrovertible foundation for their views of Christ, and thus has unbelief expanded itself into strong delusion.

The change of garments which took place in the court of the praetorium reminds me of an act in our own life. In the days of our blindness we had also divested the Lord Jesus of the glory of his inherent splendor, while presuming to deny one or other particular concerning him, so as to leave him little more than the title of a Jewish Rabbi, or the Sage of Nazareth. But how did we afterward alter our course, when the Lord stripped us of the garments of our imaginary righteousness, and in the mirror of his law exhibited to us our real form! How hastily did we then put upon Immanuel his own clothing! We first gave you back your Messiah-crown, and then your sacrificial and priestly robes, and, finally, your diadem as the King of Glory; for the awakened necessities of our hearts had rectified our vision, and sharpened it for your beauty. Amid many tears of repentance and delight, we again clothed you in your original attire. You now stands before us in your full and complete array, and we will never cease to bow the knee before you, and to rejoice, and say with Jacob,

"Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise!"

After the soldiers had made their preparations, the awful sign appears, which has since become the standard of the kingdom of Christ, and the token of our salvation. During the space of three thousand years it had been constantly symbolized to the view of the believing Israelites. It is even reflected in the peculiar manner in which the dying patriarch Jacob, with crossed hands, blessed his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. It glimmered no less in the wave-offerings of the tabernacle and temple, which, as is well known, were accustomed to be waved so as to make the form of a cross appear. In the wilderness, the sign was elevated to support the brazen serpent, and the spirit of prophecy interwove it in the figurative language of David's Psalms, when placing in the mouth of the future Messiah the words, "They pierced my hands and my feet."

Look, yonder they bring it! According to the Roman custom, all who were condemned to the punishment of the cross were compelled to carry that instrument of their death to the place of execution; and even the divine sufferer is not spared this disgrace and toil. Without mercy they lay on his wounded back the horrible instrument of torture; and, after having given him for his escort two grievous criminals, similarly burdened and condemned to the same death, they open the gate of the courtyard toward the street, in order at length to satisfy the people, who had been impatiently awaiting the cruel spectacle. A low murmur of malicious joy and profound excitement pervades the mass when the three cross-bearers make their appearance. The procession sets itself in motion. In the van, an armed troop on foot and on horseback; then the three victims, with their crosses, surrounded by their executioners; behind these, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the nation; and, finally, the crowding, gaping, innumerable multitude.

We silently join them in spirit. Oh, what a path is that which we now tread! Only think, it is thus the unhappy world repels the man who entered upon it heralded by angels, and in the midst of heavenly songs of praise. It is thus she rewards him for the unwearied love with which he poured upon her the abundance of all conceivably benefits and mercies! Oh, who that is still inclined to doubt whether mankind was worthy of eternal perdition without the intervention of a mediator, let him cast a

look at this path of suffering, and convince himself of the contrary! For why is the Holy One thus dragged along, unless it be that we loved sin too ardently not to hate a man, even to the death, who made himself known as the deliverer from it.

Look there, he bends beneath his heavy burden! Dreadful and horrible is his situation! All his friends have forsaken him, and even heaven is silent above him, as if it also had rejected him. An ancient legend states, that Veronica, a young maiden, stepped up to him weeping from the crowd, and with compassionate hand wiped the bloody sweat from his wounded brow. In gratitude for this service, the Lord left her his image on the napkin. This is only a fiction and a legend, but the sentiment it conveys is significant and true. Whoever is brought by love to the Savior, he impresses his thorn-crowned likeness on their hearts, as the gift of his reciprocal affection; so that he who has received it, henceforth carries it about with him as a most valuable legacy, and can never more turn away his eyes from beholding it.

According to another legend, as Jesus was passing by, the Jew Ahasuerus stepped out of his dwelling, and with devilish hatred, hit, with his foot, the Holy One of Israel, in consequence of which, he began to totter beneath his load, and even to sink to the ground. This occasioned the denunciation, that he should henceforward wander restless and fugitive through the world, and not die until the Lord should come again. This Ahasuerus is "the Wandering Jew." Here again we have to do with a myth; but it also has its truth and deep meaning. The wandering Jew represents the people of Israel, who crucified our Lord, and in satanic delusion pronounced upon themselves the awful anathema, "His blood be upon us and our children." They now roam about, fugitive and homeless, aliens among all nations, the offscouring of the world; and die not, and will not die, until the Lord shall come again to complete his kingdom upon earth. But then they will die, by ceasing to be an excommunicated and outlawed people, and rise again as a new and glorious race, singing Hosanna to David their true King. The wondrous stars of the promises given to Abraham's seed shine for thousands of years, and send their beams to the end of days.

Yonder they conduct the Man of Sorrows! One cannot reflect who it is

that is thus laden with the accursed tree, without feeling one's heart petrified with surprise and astonishment. But it is well for us that he traversed the path. Only observe now the form of the Lamb which takes away the sins of the world, is so clearly expressed in him. Behold him, and say if you do not feel as if you heard the ancient words proceed from his silent lips, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, a body have you prepared for me. Lo! I come, I delight to do your will, O my God! yes, your law is within my heart." Had he shrunk back from this fatal path, his road to suffering would have represented to us that on which, when dying, we should have left the world. Instead of soldiers, the emissaries of Satan would have escorted us; instead of the accursed tree, the curse of the law itself; instead of fetters, the bands of eternal wrath would have encircled us, and despair have lashed us with its fiery scourge. Now, on the contrary, angels of peace, sent by Eternal Love, will at length bear us on a path of light, illumined by heavenly promises, to Abraham's bosom. To whom are we indebted for this? Solely to the man who totters yonder under the most horrible of all burdens; and who carries away with him everything which stood opposed to us and threatened us with destruction.

Certainly, it may still be the case, that during our earthly pilgrimage we are led on similar paths to that on which we see Jesus, our Head, proceeding. For the world hates his members like himself; and Satan ceases not to desire to have his redeemed, that he may sift them as wheat. But heaven is no longer closed over our path of suffering and disgrace, nor does the black cloud of rejection and the curse obscure it. The sword of God has returned to its scabbard, and peace and hope are the gracious companions who walk by our side. Christ has deprived our fearful path of its horrors, our burdens of their overpowering weight, our disgrace and need of their deadly stings, and placed us in a situation to say with the royal psalmist, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me."

Blessed, therefore, be the path of our Prince of Peace to the cross! Let us not cease to accompany him daily thereon in the spirit. It will unspeakably sweeten our own painful path; for why does he take this

horrible road, but to enable us to traverse ours with heads erect, because we are freed from curse and care. Upon his path he not only carries all our sins to the grave, and breaks a passage through all the obstacles which blocked up our access to the Father, but he makes, at the same time, all the bitter waters of the desert sweet, and neither leaves nor forsakes us, until he brings us safe to our heavenly home.

Simon of Cyrene

Pilate, driven from the field by the determined opposition of the enemies of Jesus, contrary to the voice of justice in his bosom, has delivered the Holy One of Israel into the hands of his murderers, who hasten to carry the execution into effect as quickly as possible. No appeal was permitted to a rebel after being sentenced; on the contrary, a Roman law commanded that such should be led away to execution immediately after sentence had been pronounced. This was believed applicable to him, whom the people thought they could not remove soon enough from human society, as being a rebel against God, against Moses, and against the emperor.

We left the Savior at the close of our last meditation on the road to the fatal hill. The procession moves slowly forward enveloped in clouds of dust. What a running together from every side! What a tumultuous noise and horrible din! Spears, helmets, and drawn swords glitter in the sunshine. Soldiers on foot and horseback, priests and scribes, high and low, shrieking women and crying children, Jews and heathens, all mingled together in the crowd. At the head of the procession, surrounded by guards, the three delinquents, panting slowly forward under the weight of their instruments of death. Two of them robbers and murderers, and between them, he, to whom, on closer observation, the whole of this hideous exhibition has reference. Behold that bleeding man, who, according to appearance, is the most guilty of the three! But we know him. He also bears his cross, and thus claims our sympathy in the highest degree.

Crosses were often seen, under the dominion of the Romans. A rebellious

slave was very frequently condemned to this most shameful and painful of all punishments. But there is something very particular and peculiar about the cross which we see the Holy One of Israel bearing to Calvary. If we refer to the roll of the Divine Law, Deut. 21:22: "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall in any wise bury him that day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), that your land be not defiled, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance." This remarkable ordinance of God was punctually observed in Israel. As often as a criminal was nailed to the tree of shame, he was regarded, according to the words of the law, as an object of profound abhorrence to the Almighty, and the people were conscious that God could only look upon the land with anger and disgust, so long as the dead body of the criminal was not removed out of his sight. But such of them as were enlightened, well knew that all this included in it a typical meaning, and had a prophetic reference to one who should hang upon a tree, on whom the vials of heaven's wrath would be poured out, but in whose atoning sufferings, the curse and condemnation of a sinful world would reach its termination. But who would dare to seek in Christ, the individual thus laden with the divine curse, and assert that the ordinance in the wilderness had found its fulfillment on Golgotha, if the word of God itself had not justified such a conclusion? That such is actually the case, turn to Galatians, 3:13, where the apostle states frankly, and without circumlocution, that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ."

In the type of the brazen serpent, as well as in the divine ordinances respecting one that was hanged on a tree, the clearest light is thrown on the horrible cross which the Son of God is carrying to Calvary. Those beams evidently form the stake upon which, according to the promise, the storm of Divine judgment should be discharged. It is the scaffold where, according to Romans. 3:25, God resolved to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. The Moriah where, for the benefit of a sinful world, the curse pronounced in paradise is endured in the sacred humanity of

the great Surety. The altar of burnt-offering, on which the Lamb of God submitted to the sum total of that punishment which ought in justice to have fallen upon me; and the dying bed, where death, over which Satan has power, and to which I was subject by a sentence of the Supreme tribunal, is permitted to seize upon, and slay another, in order that he might forever lose his claim upon me. Such is the mysterious cross which you see borne toward Calvary. It is the sepulcher of a world; for the innumerable host of those that are saved, died, in the eye of God, with Christ upon it. It is the conductor which carries off the destroying flash from our race, by his attracting it upon himself; the tree of life, "the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations."

Jesus carries his cross. When did he ever show so plainly in his outward circumstances that he bore the curse, as now? If the voice of God had sounded directly down from heaven, and said, "This Just One is now enduring the sentence pronounced upon you," it could not have afforded us more certainty than by this living figure of bearing the cross. Its language is powerful, and points out, even to a simple child, wherein we ought to seek the final cause of Christ's passion. We find the Holy Sufferer, as you know, outside the gates of Jerusalem. The Scriptures attach great importance to the fact that he was led away out of the holy city. Thus we read in Hebrews 13:11, 12, "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Here Christ is evidently represented as the true antitype of the Old Testament sin-offerings. But since we know the nature of these, and how, by this devotional act, the sins of the transgressors were imputed to the animals to be sacrificed; that thus they became objects of abhorrence, and their bodies were not only removed from the neighborhood of the temple, but even burned with fire, in testimony of what was justly due to the sinner; and that the latter, after such sacrificial act, was absolved and declared blameless; so it almost clearly appears, that in the passage above quoted, the apostle cannot and does not intend to say anything else than that Christ, on his being led out of the gates, was in fact burdened with our sins, and bore our curse. Thus it is we that tread the path to the place of execution; for he does so in our stead. That such is really the case, and

that He does not proceed upon that road as the holy Jesus, but as the representative of our sinful race, becomes more apparent at every step. Hence it is comprehensible how the Eternal Father could give him up to such nameless ignominy and torment. It is on this account that no angel from above hastens to his aid; no fire falls from heaven to consume his murderers; rather do the clouds pass quietly and silently over the dreadful scene, as if assent were given above to the horrible transactions below; no, the Just One may, for this reason, while wearied to death, be ready to break down under the burden of his cross, without any one in heaven or on earth appearing to grieve at it. The gates of the eternal sanctuary are closed; the portals of the Almighty's abode are shut; and the same God who delivered righteous Lot out of Sodom, Daniel from the den of lions, and commanded the enraged Laban to speak only kindly to Jacob, and who says to all his saints, "Fear not, for I am with you"—this Keeper of Israel seems to slumber and sleep with regard to his best Beloved, and to have forgotten respecting him who was his "fellow," his sweet words of promise: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." All the circumstances in which we see the Savior are truly dreadful and appalling; but all exclaim, with the most powerful emphasis, "Behold the Lord Jesus, laden with the sinner's curse!"

We have been contemplating Jesus with the sinner's cross. The scene now changes, and a new figure presents itself to our view—the sinner with the cross of Jesus.

The Holy One had proceeded forward some distance with his heavy burden, when his blood-thirsty attendants begin to fear lest he should break down under his load, and entirely succumb from exhaustion before the execution. To prevent this, they look about for some one on whom they may lay the cross of Jesus for the remainder of the way; and their eyes soon light upon a stranger, just coming from the field, whom they the sooner select for this purpose from thinking they see in his looks a secret sympathy with the Nazarene. This was Simon, born at Cyrene, in Africa. We are not informed whether he belonged, at that time, to the secret friends of Jesus; but he was certainly regarded as such by the

people, and probably not without reason. At least Simon's two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were afterward designated as true Christians; and the inference from the sons to the father is probably correct. Suffice it to say, this Jew, Simon, was stopped, and compelled to bear the Lord's cross. At first he resisted being thus burdened and disgraced, but he soon reconciled himself to it, and then bore it willingly.

With reference to this circumstance, the words of Jesus are accustomed to be applied—"Whoever will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me;" and occasion is then taken from the history of this part of the passion, to treat of the reproach we have to bear for Christ's sake. But this seems to me not entirely correct, since Simon does not bear his own cross, but that on which Jesus died. Something very different is, therefore, reflected in the symbolical form of the cross-bearer. It presents to our view the inward position of faith with respect to the cross of Christ, that is, to the sacrifice and act of redemption accomplished upon it. We ought to be cross-bearers in the same sense in which Simon was, only spiritually so. We are such, when the cross of Christ becomes ours in the way of self-accusation, believing appropriation, and continual dying with Christ.

He who, in spirit, sees Jesus proceeding toward Calvary under the burden of his cross, will, in so far, immediately become like Simon, in being compelled, by compassion and right feeling, to remove the dreadful load from the innocent Jesus, and cast it upon the wicked Jews, or upon a blind and merciless power, which he calls fate and chance, or even upon the all over-ruling God himself, whom he secretly accuses of not having prevented such a piece of crying injustice. But relieving Christ of his burden in this manner, only proves great mental blindness. It is true, the commencement of all Christian life begins by our being inwardly constrained to take the burden from the Savior, not, however, in order to hurl it upon others, but in sincere self-condemnation, to take it upon ourselves. An enlightened conscience urges upon us the conviction of our own guilt. We shrink back from it, and resist with all our power, but in vain. The holy law, the dreadful mirror of the Divine perfections, now no longer misunderstood, stands before us, and who will undertake to belie or deceive it? Possibly the lightning that strikes us, flashes upon us, at

first, only from one of the ten commandments. We then think we may be able to save ourselves in the other nine, and we cast ourselves, as into a safe fortress, perhaps into the first command, "You shall have no other gods before me." But the Spirit, who has now begun to enlighten us, conducts us ever deeper into the inmost nature of the divine law, and it is then said to us, "You who suppose you have kept the first commandment, have you loved God from your infancy, with all your heart, and mind, and strength?"

On hearing this heart-searching question, we hasten to turn our backs on the first, and then flee, say to the sixth. We are aware of never having sought another's life, nor ever committed murder. Nevertheless, we now hear it thundered in our ears, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer;" and thus the supposed fortress of the sixth commandment has a breach.

We cast ourselves into the ninth, and think we have never been guilty of bearing false witness. But it is then said, "How do you dare to appeal to the ninth commandment? Have you never told a falsehood, never deceived, dissembled, nor flattered? We hear, but do not let the voice of conscience finish its speech, before we retire, without hesitation, into the seventh, and say, very confidently, "I have kept this, I never committed adultery." But we immediately hear the appalling words, "He who looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery;" and we flee from the seventh commandment as from a fire which threatens to consume us.

Where now? possibly to the fifth. Alas, both father and mother accuse us. To the eighth? It really seems as if we should find shelter there for we are no thieves. But woe unto us! not far from it stands the tenth, with its injunction, "You shall not covet!" This finally strips us of everything, and terminates the whole process by a general condemnation. All our boasting is then at an end. We hesitate, indeed, to give up. We assemble together all our so-called good works; but scarcely do we begin to derive comfort from this dubious source, when a light shoots down upon it from the sanctuary of God, in whose bright and burning rays, even our best performances appear as a worm-eaten fruit of impure self-love.

Thus we are compelled to pronounce sentence upon ourselves. But what

threatens transgressors, such as we, during the remainder of our existence? "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul that does evil." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." We read and tremble, "Woe is me," we exclaim, "Miserable man that I am! I am already condemned, and accursed, and lost!" We refuse to believe it, but the appalling words, "You are the man!" resound on every side; and it seems as if the very walls of our chambers, and the joists and beams cried out against us. A thousand reminiscences of past transgressions crowd around us like avenging spirits exclaiming, "You shall surely die!" and the dreadful words haunt us even in our dreams. We imagine we read them in the stars, and that they are written on each of our days. Thus we are at length compelled to acknowledge that the sentence is just. Christ's cross is laid upon us, that is, we find ourselves guilty of the cross, since we feel that we are ourselves exposed to the curse which Christ endured upon it.

When, in this sense, we have taken the cross of Christ upon us, God who has humbled us, is accustomed, in due time, to comfort us. We again arise from the darkness and horrors of self-condemnation into the crimson-colored sunshine of the atonement. In the cross of Christ, we recognize the mysterious tree, on which the sentence which menaced us with eternal destruction has long ago been endured. We apprehend the mystery of the cross in its consolatory depth, and enter into a new relation with it, embrace it as our only refuge, and believingly appropriate the merits of him who suffered upon it. We now take it in a different manner upon us than before; certainly more from necessity at first than desire. Proud human nature resists the idea of being saved by grace. In the sequel, however, we become reconciled to the wondrous burden, and finally bear it with delight, even as an heir his inheritance, as a king his scepter, as a warrior his sword and shield, as a conqueror the flag of victory, as a liberated debtor his receipt in full, and as a nobleman the diploma of his nobility.

Thus, in a spiritual sense, we become like Simon of Cyrene. We enter into the most vital, fervent, and blissful fellowship with the cross of Christ. We are every where and continually occupied with this cross, and it becomes the sign by which we are known. If listened to in our chamber, we are heard praying beneath the cross. If we say, "Abba, father," it is the cross

which encourages us to do so. If we hope for a favorable answer to our requests, the cross emboldens us to expect it. If our conversation is in heaven, the cross is the heavenly ladder, on the steps of which we rise above the world, death, and hell. The cross forms the focus of all our heartfelt melody. If a gleam of joy rests upon our foreheads, the cross is the sun from whence it proceeds. If we are courageous, it is in the shadow of the cross. If we overcome the temptations of the wicked one, the cross of Christ is the banner under which we conquer.

We do not indeed always embrace the cross with equal warmth and fervor. Occasionally, we bear it with indifference, unwillingly, and even as a burden. This is the case either when the root of our life again sinks imperceptibly deeper into the soil of this world; or when the Lord causes our mountain to stand strong, and we take fresh occasion to please ourselves with our own doings. But God, who is as faithful in humbling as in comforting us, knows how to render the cross sweet to us, by giving up our old man to a renewed crucifixion, and by reviving and refreshing in us the consciousness of our wretchedness in the midst of distress, disgrace, and pressure. Generally speaking the experience of all who, in faith, take upon them the cross of Christ, agrees in this, that they are ever longer drawn into the death of him who hung upon the tree. They decrease. They consciously become personally poorer, more worthless and helpless—no, in time, nothing remains in them of which they might boast as a ground of justification. But the more completely they suffer shipwreck as to everything of their own, the more valuable does the cross of Calvary become to them, as the only plank of rescue from the surge. How fervently is it then again embraced, how highly and loudly praised, and how bedewed with warm tears of grateful thanksgiving, until at length the whole inward life moves round the cross, in ever closer drawn circles, like the revolving planets round their several suns.

May the Lord be pleased to impress the form of Simon the cross-bearer ever more clearly upon our inner man; and in order that this figure may be the more fully produced in us, may he the more and more comprehensively unveil to us the corruption which adheres to us by nature! It is only thus that we learn to bear the cross of Christ with a holy pride. Only thus does it become to us a tree of life, from which we may

pluck heavenly fruit. Only thus does it serve as a wondrous weapon, by means of which we overcome the world, death, and Satan.

The Daughters of Jerusalem

At length, to alleviate in some measure the oppression of our hearts, a trait of humanity appears in the exhibition of utter obduracy and cruelty which presents itself to our view, on the road to Mount Calvary. It becomes evident that even beyond the little circle of his disciples, sympathy for the Holy One of Israel still exists! for even tears of sorrow flow on behalf of the severely tried sufferer. But observe that these manifestations of compassionate feeling afford him no consolation, on the contrary, he is induced to refuse, and even reprove them. This surprises and astonishes us; for we here see to what a severe sifting the feelings even of those who wish well to the Savior, are subjected, and how much we may be in danger of imagining that we love him with that love which forms the soul of the new man, while we are still wholly destitute of it.

The road which leads from Jerusalem to Mount Calvary is crowded with people. O that it were so now in a spiritual and ecclesiastical sense, for no other leads to life and salvation! Certainly, those whom we meet with there, are not such as sympathize with Jesus in his sufferings; on the contrary, the number of such is probably very small. But let us rather meet with decided opponents on the way to the cross, than that the road to it should remain solitary and waste. Alas! in the present day, it lies very desolate. Crowds are seen on the way to the idol temples of the world, and the pavilions of the lust of the eye and the flesh. But how few there are whose hearts are accustomed to beat louder when it is said to them, "The passion-week has returned, and we are again preparing for our pilgrimage to Calvary, where the foundations of our eternal redemption are laid." Numbers, I fear, continue to fall a prey to spiritual death. Few of them succumb under acute diseases; the majority die of the wasting disease of *complete indifference*. With them it has gradually come to such a pass that even that which is the most sublime under heaven fatigues them, and the words, "Church, divine service, and sermon," make them

yawn. Unhappy mortals! They know not that in these characteristic features they already bear the brandmarks of impending judgment, and the signs, if not of rejection, yet of the capability of it. Satan even does not seem to think these people worthy of an energetic attack. Like dead trees, they fall to him of themselves, and he finds them in his net before he spreads it.

You, my readers, do not belong to this pitiable race. We still meet you in spirit on the way to Calvary. It is true this is the way to heaven, but beware! it has also its fissures and pits which terminate in endless deserts. We read in Luke 23:27, that a great multitude of people followed Jesus. These were by no means all of them adversaries and bad characters. Many of them only wished to see what would become of him, and therefore took at least a historical interest in his person and his cause. Know, however, that this does not suffice to save us. Take it to heart that your situation is the same as that of these people.

We meet also, in the present day, with not a few, and their number is increasing, who have directed their attention to religion, the Church, and the affairs of the kingdom of God, as others do to politics, the arts, or any other subject. What progress Christianity is making in the world—how the churches are attended in such and such a place—what this or that society is accomplishing—what may be done to promote public worship—how respect for the Articles of Faith is to be increased—what this or that sect believes and teaches—no, even in what sense this or that doctrine is to be apprehended, and the best mode of expressing it—these are the objects for which they interest themselves, after which they inquire, and of which they love to speak. All this is beautiful and praiseworthy; but it may be the case that in the midst of the Holy Land, in which their attention is engaged, they may be ripening for perdition equally with those lamentable beings who have found their element in the steppes of extreme indifference, or the morasses of frivolity.

There is a natural feeling for divine things which may even become very active, by which the "Old Man" is not in the least injured, nor the game of the prince of darkness spoiled. How this feeling may even extend to the scenes of our Savior's passion may be easily conceived. This narrative which, with the rich varieties of its scenes, personalities, and characters,

reflects the world, how should it not be able to exercise an attractive influence, where, apart from every feeling of religious necessity, which may be fast asleep, it meets with a susceptibility for that which is purely human? But such a sympathy is not essentially different from any other, and has nothing in common with the life of faith, on which alone the eye of God is fixed.

Of a somewhat nobler nature than that just described, is the interest felt by those whose sympathy with the history and cause of Christ is excited by their veneration for the latter as the Holy One of Israel. Some of these characters were also among the crowd that followed; and we do not infrequently meet, in our own circles, with such as are thus of a more refined nature. Christ presents himself to their admiring gaze as the perfect model of all moral human greatness. They are also convinced that Christ must be formed in men, and become all in all to them, if the golden age is to be restored. Nor does anything hinder them from celebrating, with lively emotion, the Lord's passion, while magnanimously irritated against the reckless race that could crucify the only immaculate one that ever trod the earth. But do they also pray with us, and say, "O Lamb of God that take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us?" O no! This never occurs to them. As little as they have any idea that Christ, to whom, as "the flower and model of mankind," they gladly give all honor, could have been anything more than this—so little do they dream, that from mankind something further is required in order to be saved, than the combined efforts of their own moral strength, and the persevering energy of their own will to resemble that living example. Hence these worthy people go with us, indeed, on the path of the Church, and, in a certain sense, even the way to Calvary; and yet it is beyond a doubt that they are entirely deficient in the first and most essential requirements of true inward religion—a contrite heart, and a living faith in Christ as the Mediator, and equal with God. Exasperated against the murderers of Jesus, they unconsciously join in signing the sentence of death against him. For since they refuse to rise above his human nature, they stamp him, who declared on oath that he was essentially one with the Father, as a blasphemer who was worthy of death. While reproaching the Pharisees, they are in reality of the same mind with them; for they are as unwilling as the latter to know anything of a Jesus, who treats them as sinners, and

calls upon them to let themselves be redeemed by him.

The women, whom we see following the Divine Sufferer with weeping and lamentation, present to us a third kind of relation to Christ, and particularly to Christ as suffering. Here we seem to meet with the true kind of devotion for the solemn occasion. For we perceive heartfelt sympathy with the Man of Sorrows, fervent emotion at the sight of his cross, no, even tears wept in the presence of the reviling adversaries by whom he is surrounded; and in all this a decided confession that an innocent man is being conducted to the place of execution, who is worthy of supreme love and esteem, instead of scorn and hatred. What do we require more than we see concentrated here? Nor does the Lord omit to deign attention to these sympathizing witnesses of his sufferings. He turns to them. For what purpose? To praise and console them, and to cheer and strengthen himself at the sight of them? By no means. The Lord Jesus rejects the grief of the mourners as mistaken, and judges their tears to be useless and unprofitable. He who, every where, and even in the deepest sufferings, was able to preserve the most perfect serenity and presence of mind, and never for a moment lost sight of pastoral solicitude for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, with which he was intrusted, says to the weeping women who followed him, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and your children."

These serious words deserve to be taken to heart, not only by the women, but also by many among us. They reprove all those whose devotion for the cross likewise consists in a mere natural emotion, excited by the tragical end of the righteous Jesus, and who have nothing else but tears of pity and sentimentality for the Savior. How much pleasing emotion, occasioned by a lively representation of the Redeemer's passion in musical oratorios, ecclesiastical solemnities, or liturgical devotions, is here rejected! It is scarcely to be conceived what a fullness of impenitence and pharisaic self-righteousness may be concealed beneath such outbursts of feeling. One individual, in his devotions on the anniversary of the passion, is, in reality, affected only by his own virtue. He thinks the world loves to defame the noble-minded, and that it knows him not, even as it knew not the Savior on the way to his crucifixion; and it is this which affects his heart. O impious pride of the worthless sinner, thus to

compare himself with the Just One from on high! Another says to himself, "I will console myself in my misfortunes, with the reflection that you, the Man of Sorrows, did not walk upon roses, but did rise from the cross to the crown;" and at this idea, his eyes overflow. O culpable delusion, as if he suffered guiltlessly, like Jesus, and as if God were obliged to show mercy to him because of his sufferings!

A third, who has thousands like him, ascribes to himself the tears of sympathy, which the sufferings of Christ draw from him, as a species of righteousness, and exalts them as testimonials of his goodness of heart, thus making them a ground of consolation and hope. O lamentable mistake! "Weep not for me," says our Lord. Do you hear it? He forbids the lamenting and condoling with him. He is not some unfortunate person of a common kind. He does not succumb to any superior power, either human, or the force of oppressive circumstances. If he pleased, he could in a moment stand before us in a crown, instead of with a cross. He freely gave himself up to his sufferings, in order to accomplish that which his Father had given him to do; and the idea of "a tragical end," in its usual acceptance, is by no means applicable to the passion of our Lord. The tears of sentimentality and pity are nowhere so much out of place as on Calvary. While resigning ourselves to such emotions, we mistake the Lord Jesus—no, even degrade him, and as regards ourselves, miss the way of salvation marked out for us by God. Hence the Savior exclaims, once for all, "Weep not for me!" thus placing himself entirely out of the ranks of the wretched and unfortunate of this world.

"Do tears, therefore, not belong to our devotions on this solemn occasion?" Doubtless they do; but their object must be a different one to the person of the Lord. Hear him say himself; "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children!" "Ourselves!" you exclaim. Yes, my readers. In the immolation of Christ, the measure of the world's iniquities was full. It was sinful from Paradise downward. That this was the case, was strikingly evident in the days of Noah, Nimrod, the judges and kings of Israel. But "The transgression of the Amorites was not yet full." That even the last pretense for excuse and leniency might disappear, and the hatred of holiness, the base ingratitude and abominable self-seeking of the children of Adam might be manifested still more evidently, opportunity

was afforded the human race to exhibit its real and inmost nature, when holiness in person was placed in contrast with it, and the Lord God poured upon it the fullness of his compassion. Both these took place in the mission of Christ, the only-begotten Son, the good Shepherd. And how did the world act? It loved darkness rather than light; was filled with animosity against him who came to redeem it from sin; and rejected him who hurt its pride by the call to regeneration and conversion. It nailed to the cross the herald and bearer of the grace of God.

"The world?" you ask. Yes, the world. Only look a little more closely, and you will find yourself amid the crowd which yonder conducts the Lord of Glory to the slaughter. In one or other of those individuals, you will see your own likeness. If not in Judas, yet in Annas; if not in Annas, in the hypocritical Caiaphas, or in the worldly-minded Pilate, or else in one of the unprincipled senators, or some other individual, you will somewhere meet with the mirror which reflects your own moral form. Look around, and say if the scenes on Gabbatha and Calvary are not incessantly renewed? If, even at present, a certain degree of courage is not required openly to confess the name of Jesus? If those who love Christ are not still reviled as pietists and hypocrites; and if those who wish to recommend the Prince of Peace to others, are not every where angrily repulsed? No, feel in your own bosom, and say if by nature you would gladly have to do with Jesus? What feelings are excited in you, when he places you among publicans and malefactors, or calls upon you to offer up to him your mammon, or some other idol? Or when he meets you, with a reproving gesture, on the path of sensual enjoyment, and requires that you should live to God and not to the world, and walk in God's ways and not in your own; what are you then accustomed to feel? anything else than disinclination, repugnance, displeasure, and vexation? Do you not hear of anything rather than of him; and does it ever occur to you to melt in gratitude at the Savior's feet, when you hear it announced that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life?"

O my friends, to this hour Christ appears to stand among us, only that by his presence our corruption and depravity may be the more conspicuous! How is it, then, that you do not understand the words, "Weep not for me,

but weep for yourselves?" Truly, all appropriate devotion, at this sacred season, begins with lamenting over ourselves, and judging, condemning, and acknowledging ourselves worthy of eternal death. The daughters of Jerusalem hear terrible things said to them, but not that they may sink into hopeless despair. On the contrary, it is here the love that seeks that which is lost, which speaks to them, and would gladly lead them, at the proper time, to repentance. "Weep for yourselves and your children." This is an unmistakable allusion to the dreadful malediction which the infatuated crowd at Gabbatha called down upon themselves, and with it, the indication of that sin, which was principally to be lamented as Israel's chief crime, and consequently as the chief source of all their subsequent misery.

The Lord Jesus says, in continuation, "For behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck." What an announcement! That which was previously mourned over in Israel as a great misfortune, and an equally great disgrace—the being barren and childless—will then be commended as an enviable privilege.

"Then," continues our Lord, obviously referring, both here and previously, to passages in the prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, for he lived in his Father's word, as in the proper element of his holy soul—"Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us." The Savior's sphere of vision evidently extends itself here beyond the terrible days of the destruction of Jerusalem. His words manifestly generalize themselves, and point to the judgment of the last day. Those who will then be found rejecting, through obstinate unbelief and persevering impenitence, their truest friend and only Savior, will find themselves in a position in which they will prefer annihilation to a continuance of existence. They will call upon the hills to crush them and bury them forever beneath their mass of ruins. But the mountains stand and fall at God's command, and he, who will then be their enemy, has decreed for them another fate than that of annihilation. They will then implore the rocks to hide them from the face of the angry Judge; but no outlet of escape will be found on the whole earth or under it, which will remove them from the searching look of him, "whose eyes are as a flame

of fire." What a horrible prospect! And only consider, that he who thus lifts the veil, is not some wild zealot, to whose threats no great importance need be attached; but it is he who is at the same time the truth and loving-kindness itself. How does this strengthen the emphasis of that address, by which we are called to repentance in a more powerful and impressive manner, than was ever before heard upon earth.

Our Lord concludes his speech to the daughters of Jerusalem with the words, "For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" We cannot misunderstand these words. In them the great cross-bearer represents himself as a mirror of the wrath of God. Since he is the Just One and the Life, he calls himself "the Green Tree." Glory and happiness became him individually, and not suffering; yet he endured unparalleled disgrace and torture. But that which he experiences, must be of the same nature and description with that which is threatened, and which awaits the ungodly. Had it been otherwise, the inference which the Lord bids us draw from his sufferings, with regard to the future fate of the impenitent sinner, would not be true, and the comparison he makes inappropriate. If they were only merciful sufferings which befell the Savior, how could they serve as a criterion for the future lot of those with whom divine grace had nothing more to do? But Christ's sufferings were vicariously endured punishments; and his words have now a meaning, which is this: "I, the Green Tree, bear imputatively only the sins of others; and the thrice holy God is not angry with me personally. Yet how horrible is the cup which is given me to drink! Judge from this what will eventually be the fate of those, who, as dry wood and unfruitful trees, will have to suffer for their own iniquities, and at whose judicial visitation, the wrath of a holy God will by no means conflict with his love and tenderness." Therefore let us not overlook the danger in which we are, so long as we are found carnally-minded, estranged from God, and unthankful despisers of the delivering grace of him, whom the Almighty tore from his paternal bosom, in order that by him he might deliver us unworthy creatures from destruction, and bring us back to himself. Let us be conscious of our enormous guilt, and no longer delay, with the holy grief of a tax-collector or a Magdalen, sincerely and heartily to weep over ourselves.

It is thus, I repeat it, that our devotions should begin, when commencing the solemnities of the passion-week. But should they begin with it only, and not end in the same manner? Look at the Savior. Why does he travel the path of suffering? Because he intends to pay our debt, and blot out our iniquities. Let us follow him in spirit; for how much are we interested in this his passage to Calvary! He goes to nail the handwriting that was against us to his cross. The Green Tree gives itself up to the flames, which ought to consume the dry. The path he treads is a sacrificial one, a path of satisfaction and mediation. Had he not trodden it, we should have been the heirs of eternal death, or else the throne of God must have sunk into ruin, and the justice of God would have degenerated into injustice. But he did pass through it, and now deliverance is secured, however heinous our guilt. Let us approach his cross in spite of Satan and the world, open before him the tear-bedewed pages of our book of transgressions, implore mercy upon our knees, lay hold of the great absolution in the blood of the Lamb, and resign ourselves entirely and unconditionally to the thorn-crowned King, that, along with the bands of the curse, he may also loose us from those of the world and the flesh. After this has been done, we may say with propriety, that we have celebrated the passion of our Lord.

May he grant us all such a celebration! We implore it the more fervently now that we are about to enter the Most Holy Place of the history of our great High Priest's sufferings. Let us prepare ourselves for this solemn approach by calling to mind the infinite blessings which Christ has purchased for his people by his death on the cross, and by loving him, who thus loved us, and gave himself for us!

THE MOST HOLY PLACE

The Crucifixion

"The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him." Let these words of the prophet Habakkuk be the language of our hearts on entering into the Most Holy Place of the Gospel history.

The most solemn of all days in Israel, was, as we well know, the great day of atonement, the only day in the year on which the high priest entered into the most holy place in the temple. Before he approached that mysterious sanctuary, the law enjoined that he should divest himself of his costly garments, and clothe himself from head to foot in a plain white linen dress. He then took the vessel with the sacrificial blood in his hand, and, thrilling with sacred awe, drew back the veil, in order, humbly and devoutly, to approach the throne of grace, and sprinkle it with the atoning blood. He remained no longer in the sacred place than sufficed to perform his priestly office. He then came out again to the people, and, in Jehovah's name, announced grace and forgiveness to every penitent soul.

We shall now see this symbolical and highly significant act realized in its full and actual accomplishment. The immaculate Jesus of whom the whole Old Testament priesthood, according to the divine intention, was only a typical shadow, conceals himself behind the thick veil of an increasing humiliation and agony; that, bearing in his hands his own blood, he may mediate for us with God his Father. Removed from the sphere of reason's vision, and only cognizable by the exercise of faith, he realizes and accomplishes all that Moses included in the figurative service of the tabernacle. The precise manner in which this was accomplished, we shall never entirely fathom with our intellectual powers; but it is certain that he then finally procured our eternal redemption.

My readers, how shall we best prepare ourselves for the contemplation of this most solemn and sacred event? At least we must endeavor to do so by holy recollection of thought, devout meditation, a believing and blissful consideration of the work of redemption, and by heartfelt and grateful adoration before the throne of God.

May we be enabled thus to draw near by the help of his grace and mercy!

Once more we return to the road to the cross, and, in spirit, mingle with the crowd proceeding to the place of execution. They are just passing the rocky sepulchers of the kings of Israel. The ancient monarchs sleep in their cells, but a dawning resurrection gleams upon their withered remains when the Prince of Life passes by. The procession then enters the

horrible valley of Gehenna, which once reeked with the blood of the sacrifices to Moloch. But there is another still more dreadful Gehenna; and who among us would have escaped it, had not the Lamb of God submitted to the sufferings, which we now see him enduring?

We are arrived at the foot of the awful hill, but before ascending it, let us cast a look on the crowd behind us, and see if, amid all the hatred and rancor that rages there like an infernal flame, we can discover any traces of sympathy and heartfelt veneration for the divine sufferer. And lo! an estimable little group meets our eye, like a benignant constellation in the darkness of the night. O we know them already, these deeply distressed mourners! We first perceive the pious Salome, the blessed mother of the two "sons of thunder." She desires to see her children an example of faithfulness unto death, and we know that both James and John, the former of whom was the first martyr for the new kingdom of peace, afterward showed themselves perfectly worthy of such a mother. Near Salome walks Mary, the near relative of the blessed Virgin. She had also the great privilege of seeing her two sons, James the Less and Joses, received into the immediate fellowship of the great Master. But alas! when the sword came upon the Shepherd, they were also scattered with the rest of the flock; while it seemed to their excellent mother a paramount duty to appear, instead of her children, and by her own fidelity, to cover their flight. And lo! yonder walks Mary Magdalene, sobbing aloud, who had experienced, above others, the delivering power of him, who came to destroy the works of the devil. O how she appears dissolved in grief and sorrow! She has only one wish more, and that is, to be able to die with him, without whom the earth seems to her only a gloomy grave, a den of murderers.

But who is she with tottering step, leaning on the disciple whom Jesus loved, dejected more than all the rest, who covers her grief-worn face? It is the severely tried mother of our Lord, in whom Simeon's prophecy is now fulfilled, "A sword shall pierce through your own soul also." But she had scarcely the smallest presentiment that it would be accomplished in such a manner. Truly, what she feels, no heart on earth ever experienced. But look up, Mary! Cast yourself, with all your grief, into the arms of the Eternal Father. Do you see your son going to be crucified? He also sees

his. He who is crowned with thorns is his Son as well as your. O look at the dear disciple, who though inconsolable himself, tries to support the deeply grieved mother of his Lord. What a scene! But how gratifying is it to perceive, that love for the Man of Sorrows has not wholly become extinct upon earth! Nor shall it ever expire. Be not concerned on that account. In that mourning group you see only the first divinely-quickened germs of the future kingdom of the Divine Sufferer. From a few, a multitude that no man can number will before long proceed.

After this cursory retrospect of the Savior's attendants, let us again put ourselves in motion with the crowd. Only a few steps upward, and we reach the end of the dreadful pilgrimage. Where are we now? We are standing on the summit of Mount Calvary—Golgotha—horrifying name—the appellation of the most momentous and awful spot upon the whole earth. Behold a naked and barren eminence, enriched only by the blood of criminals, and covered with the bones of executed rebels, incendiaries, poisoners, and other offscourings of the human race. An accursed spot, where love never rules, but where naked justice alone sits enthroned, with scales and sword, and from which every passer-by turns with abhorrence, a nocturnal rendezvous of jackals and hyenas. Only think, this place so full of horrors, becomes transformed into "the hill from whence comes our help," and whose mysteries many kings and prophets have desired to see, and did not see them. Yes, upon this awful hill our roses shall blossom, and our springs of peace and salvation burst forth. The pillar of our refuge towers upon this height. The Bethany of our repose and eternal refreshment here displays itself to our view. Truly the ancients were in so far correct in their assertion, that Mount Calvary formed the center of the whole earth; for it is the meeting-place where the redeemed, though separated in body by land and sea, daily assemble in spirit, and greet each other with the kiss of love. Not less correct were they in the legend that Father Adam was buried beneath Mount Calvary—this hill being really Adam's grave, when by the latter we understand the fallen sinful man, whom we all carry about in us, and who was crucified with Christ on Golgotha. It is strange that to this day the learned dispute the position of this hill, and that there is scarcely a prospect of ascertaining the place with certainty. But it was the divine intention that the material mount should be exalted into the region of that which is

spiritual; and such is actually the case. It finds its abiding-place in the believing view of the world.

On that awful mount ends the earthly career of the Lord of Glory. Behold him, then, the only green, sound, and fruitful tree upon earth, and at the root of this tree the ax is laid. What a testimony against the world, and what an annihilating contradiction to everything that bears the name of God and Divine Providence, if the latter did not find its solution in the mystery of the representative atonement! Behold him, then, covered with wounds and ignominy, and scarcely distinguishable from the malefactors among whom he is reckoned. But have patience. In a few years, Jerusalem, that rejected him, glorifies him in the form of a smoking heap of ruins, as the beloved Son of the Most High, whom no one can assail with impunity; and surrounded by the lights of the sanctuary, living monuments arise, in three quarters of the globe, bearing the inscription, "To Christ, the Redeemer of the world." But before these things take place, a horrible catastrophe must occur. The life of the world only springs forth from the death of the Just One. The hour of his baptism with blood has arrived. Collect your thoughts, my readers, while you witness it.

Alas! alas! what is it that now takes place on that bloody hill? O heart of stone in our breasts, why do you not break? Why, you cold and obdurate rock, do you not dissolve in tears of blood? Four barbarous men, inured to the most dreadful of all employments, approach the Holy One of Israel, and offer him, first of all, a stupifying potion, composed of wine and myrrh, as usual at executions. The Lord disdains the draught, because he desires to submit to the will of his heavenly Father with full consciousness, and to drink the last drop of the accursed cup. The executioners then take the Lamb of God between them, and begin their horrid occupation by tearing, with crude hands, the clothes from off his body. There he stands, whose garment once was the light, and the stars of heaven the fringe of his robe, covered only with the crimson of his blood, and divested of all that adorned him, not only before men, but also, in his character as Surety, before God—reminding us of Adam in paradise, only that instead of hiding himself behind the trees at the voice of God, he cheerfully goes toward it; reminding us also of the Old Testament high

priest, his mysterious type, who, before he entered into the Most Holy place to make an atonement, exchanged his rich attire for a simple white robe.

After having unclothed the Lord, and left him, by divine direction, only his crown of thorns, they lay him down on the wood on which he is to bleed; and thus, without being aware of it, bring about the moment predicted in Psalm 22, where we hear the Messiah complaining, and saying, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bull have compassed me about; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." O what a dying bed for the King of kings! My friends, as often as we repose on the downy cushions of divine peace, or blissfully assemble in social brotherly circles, singing hymns of hope, let us not forget that the cause of the happiness we enjoy is solely to be found in the fact, that the Lord of Glory once extended himself on the fatal tree for us.

O see him lie! His holy arms forcibly stretched out upon the cross-beam; his feet laid upon each other and bound with cords. Thus Isaac once lay on the wood on Mount Moriah. But, the voice that then called out of heaven, saying, "Lay not your hand upon the lad!" is silent on Calvary. The executioners seize the hammer and nails. But who can bear to look upon what further occurs! A deep and anxious silence pervades the crowd, like that which is accustomed to fill the house of mourning when the coffin is nailed down. And, probably, not only on earth, but also in heaven at that moment, profound and solemn silence reigned. The horrible nails from the forge of hell, yet foreseen in the sanctuary of eternity, are placed on the hands and feet of the righteous Jesus, and the heavy strokes of the hammer fall. Reader, do you hear the sound? They thunder on your heart, testifying in horrible language of your sin, and at the same time of the wrath of Almighty God. O how many sleepers have awoke from their sleep of death under the echo of those strokes, and have escaped from Satan's snare! Awake also you that are asleep in sin, and rouse yourself likewise you who are lulling yourself in carnal security! How many a proud and haughty heart has been broken into salutary repentance by those strokes! O why does not your heart also break? For know, that you did aid in swinging those hammers; and that the most crying and impious act which the world ever committed, is charged to

your account.

See, the nails have penetrated through, and from both hands and feet gushes forth the blood of the Holy One. O these nails have rent the rock of salvation for us, that it may pour forth the water of life; have reft the heavenly bush of balm, that it may send forth its perfume. Yes, they have pierced the hand-writing that was against us, and have nailed it, as invalid, to the tree; and by wounding the Just One, have penetrated through the head of the old serpent, like Jael's nail through the head of Sisera. O let no one be deceived with respect to him who was thus nailed to the cross! Those pierced hands bless more powerfully than while they moved freely and unfettered. They are the hands of a wonderful architect, who is building the frame of an eternal Church—yes, they are the hands of a hero, which take from the strong man all his spoil. And believe me, there is no help or salvation, save in these hands; and these bleeding feet tread more powerfully than when no fetters restrained their steps. They now walk victoriously over the heads of thousands of foes, who shortly before held up their heads with boldness. Hills and mountains flow down beneath their steps, which they never would have leveled unwounded; and nothing springs or blooms in the world, except beneath the prints of these feet.

The most dreadful deed is done, and the prophetic words of the Psalm, "They pierced my hands and my feet," have received their fulfillment. The foot of the cross is then brought near to the hole dug for it; powerful men seize the rope attached to the top of it, and begin to draw, and the cross, with its victim, elevates itself and rises to its height. Thus the earth rejects the Prince of Life from its surface, and, as it seems, heaven also refuses him. But we will let the curtain drop over these horrors. Thank God! in that scene of suffering the Sun of Grace rises over a sinful world, and the Lion of Judah only ascends into the region of the spirits that have the power of the air, in order, in a mysterious conflict, eternally to disarm them on our behalf.

Look what a spectacle now presents itself! The moment the cross is elevated to its height, a purple stream falls from the wounds of the crucified Jesus through the air, and bedews the place of torture, and the sinful crowd which surrounds it. This is his legacy to his Church. We

render him thanks for such a bequest. This rosy dew works wonders. It falls upon spiritual deserts, and they blossom as the rose. We sprinkle it upon the door-posts of our hearts, and are secure against destroyers and avenging angels. This dew falls on the ice of the north pole, and the accumulated frozen mass of ages thaws beneath it. It streams down on the torrid zone, and the air becomes cool and pleasant. Where this rain falls, the gardens of God spring up, lilies bloom, and what was black becomes white in the purifying stream, and what was polluted becomes pure as the light of the sun. That which dew and rain is to nature, which without them would soon become a barren waste, the crimson shower which we see falling from the cross is to human minds. There is no possibility of flourishing without it, no growth nor verdure, but every where desolation, barrenness, and death. Let us therefore embrace the cross, and sing with the poet:

"Here at your cross, my dying God,
I lay my soul beneath your love,
Beneath the droppings of your blood,
Jesus, nor shall it e'er remove!"

There stands the mysterious cross—a rock against which the very waves of the curse break, a lightning-conductor, by which the destroying fluid descends, which would otherwise have crushed the world. He who so mercifully engaged to direct this thunderbolt against himself, hangs yonder in profound darkness. Still he remains the Morning Star, announcing an eternal Sabbath to the world. Though rejected by heaven and earth, yet he forms, as such, the connecting link between them both, and the Mediator of their eternal and renewed amity. Ah see! his bleeding arms are extended wide; he stretches them out to every sinner. His hands point to the east and west; for he shall gather his children from the ends of the earth. The top of the cross is directed toward the sky; far above the world will its effects extend. Its foot is fixed in the earth; the cross becomes a wondrous tree, from which we reap the fruit of an eternal reconciliation. O my readers, nothing more is requisite, than that the Lord should grant us penitential tears, and then, by means of the Holy Spirit, show us the Savior suffering on the cross. We then escape from all earthly care and sorrow, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. For our

justification in his sight, nothing more is requisite than that, in the consciousness of our utter helplessness, we lay hold on the horns of that altar, which is sprinkled with the blood that "speaks better things than that of Abel." And the Man of Sorrows displays to us the fullness of his treasures, and bestows upon us, in a superabundant degree, the blessing of the patriarch Jacob on his son Joseph:—"The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills."

There stands erected the standard of the new covenant, which, when it is understood, spreads terror around it no less than delight, and produces lamentation no less than joy and rejoicing. It stands to this day, and will stand forever, and no more fears those who would overturn it than the staff of Moses feared when those of the magicians hissed around it. And wherever it is displayed, there it is surrounded by powerful manifestations and miraculous effects. We carry it through the nations, and without a blow of the sword, conquer one country after another, and one fortress after another. Look how the missionary fields become verdant, and a spring-time of the Spirit extends itself over the heathen deserts! Hark how the harps of peace resound from the isles of the sea; and behold how, between the icebergs of the north, the hearts begin to glow with the fire of divine love! From whence these changes—these resurrection-wonders? From whence this shaking in the valley of dry bones? The cross is carried through the land, and beneath its shade the soil becomes verdant and the dead revive. When this wondrous cross is exhibited, with a correct exposition of its hieroglyphic characters, "lightnings, thunderings, and voices," are accustomed to proceed. Stones melt in its vicinity, rocks rend before it, and waters, long stagnant, again ripple, clear and pure, as if some healing angel had descended into them.

"I am crucified with Christ," exclaims the apostle, and by these words points out the entire fruit which the cross bears for all believers. His meaning is, "They are not his sins, for which the curse is there endured, but mine; for he who thus expires on the cross, dies for me. Christ pays and suffers in my stead." But that of which Paul boasts, is the property of us all, if by the living bond of faith and love, we are become one with the crucified Jesus. We are likewise exalted to fellowship with the cross of

Christ in the sense also that our corrupt nature is condemned to death, and our old man, with his affections and lusts, is subjected to the bitter process of a lingering death, partly through the spirit of purity which dwells and rules within us, and partly by the trials and humiliations which God sends us, until the lance-wound of the death of the body makes an end of it. But it is while enduring these mortal agonies, that we first see the cross of Calvary unfold its full and peace-bestowing radiance. It arches itself, like a rainbow, over our darkness, and precedes us on our path of sorrow like a pillar of fire. O that its serene light might also shine upon our path through this valley of tears, and as the tree of liberty and of life, strike deep its roots in our souls! Apprehended by faith, may it shed its heavenly fruit into our lap, and warm and expand our hearts and minds beneath its shade!

The Dividing of the Clothing

The scene we are about to contemplate, is remarkable even for those who are either unable or unwilling to share in our belief. It represents the taking possession of an inheritance, in which—at least in some respects—we ourselves are nearly interested. A dying bed presents itself to our view—an individual at the point of death—a legacy, and the heirs. Happy is he who is justified in numbering himself with the latter! Let us approach near, and direct our attention, first, to the testator, and then to his legacy and heirs.

A testator, as you are aware, is one who bequeaths an inheritance. We find such a one in that part of the Gospel narrative which we are about to consider. The place where we meet with him is indeed the last where we ought to seek him. We are standing on the summit of Mount Calvary. The company by whom we are surrounded, are certainly, in part, of high rank,—senators, priests, and centurions meet our view. We might suppose, that if there was a testator here, he could be found only among these dignitaries. But such is not the case. Look up, and behold the bleeding man upon the accursed tree between two companions in suffering. No, he who dies like this severely smitten man, does not die well; and we are inclined to exclaim, "Let not our end be like the end of this sufferer!" O

horror beyond degree! Dreadful are the terrors which you here behold; but what are they compared with those agonies which he endures behind the veil of that which is visible to the eye? Oh, what a way of leaving the world! A host of scoffing demons surrounds his dying bed; the curse of the law is the coverlet over him; the atmosphere he breathes glows with fiery indignation; his last draught, the distress and agony of a reprobate; the parting hymn sung to him, Satanic scoff and scorn; his only refuge, his Father's hidden countenance, which no longer deigns him a perceptible glance of affection; his prospect, a death over which Satan has power, and that which closes his eyes—not an angel with a palm branch, but the gloomy king of terrors. Comprehend all this in one view, and what will you say to it? Doubtless, that this is real degradation, misery, distress and pressure, and is death in the most complete and horrible sense of the word.

But how will you be astonished, when I inform you that this man, the poorest of the poor, is the very one whom we went forth to seek. "What!" you exclaim, "not the Testator?" Yes, my readers, incomprehensible as it may seem, it is he and no other. Look at the inscription over his head, Pilate caused it to be written; but, believe me, that God has had his hand in it, however seemingly it may stand in contradiction with the bleeding form to which it has reference. It is no bitter scoff, but actual truth: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

"What!" you exclaim again, "that wretched man a King?" O, my friends, and something still more and greater than that! The lines there do not say enough. We will strike them out, and put in their place "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of kings." But even this title is too vague. Let us place another in its stead: "Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God." Nor does this title satisfy us. We blot it out and write, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the creator and preserver of all things, God blessed forever." This epitaph may remain, for the description is most firmly and irrefutably founded. It was he, it is he, even amid the horrors of such a death; all things are his, heaven and earth, the bliss of paradise and the trees of life by the river of the city of God, and the crown of honor on its pillars. But that which he possessed from the beginning, he possessed only for himself, or at most, only in part for the

holy angels that had remained faithful. Not the least glimmer of his glory could he bestow upon us, sinners, without trenching upon his honor and majesty. Divine justice, which necessarily condemned us, decidedly protested against every impartation of the kind; likewise, his divine holiness, which blesses only those who are free from sin; and divine truth, which never employs empty words, nor utters threats which it does not verify by the deed.

Now, if the rich Lord of heaven was nevertheless desirous of bequeathing some part of his property to us, it was first of all necessary that he should satisfy these exalted opponents of our fallen race, in a holy and divinely appointed way. And to this he agreed, when he undertook to yield, in our stead, that obedience which we owed, and to endure, in his own person, the curse inflicted upon us. And both these he accomplished at the horrible moment in which we now find him; and by his vicarious endurance of our misery, he builds a bridge for us, unhappy mortals, by which we are enabled to reach his own felicity. But because, by his rendering this satisfaction, he acquires the power to receive us sinners into the fellowship of his blessedness, we shall do well to remove the inscriptions we have just attached to his cross, however well founded they may be, and leave the first and original one, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It is the most characteristic in its place; for why did the Lord suffer and die, but because he was not merely the Son of the living God, and regent of the world and those upon it; but also because he became the king and the beatifying Prince of Peace of a spiritual Israel, gathered from among sinners.

We are now acquainted with the great Testator—the man who is bleeding on the cross. And it is because he hangs there that he acquires the power to restore the justly disinherited children of Adam to their lost possessions. But in what does the legacy consist? Its noblest part will be seen in that portion of the narrative we are about to consider. In it a jewel glitters, with which is combined the pledge, that no good thing will be withheld from us. From the summit of the cross cast your eyes down to its foot. Four assistant executioners are seen cowering down together, busily engaged in a peculiar manner. They inherit all that the man possessed whom they have nailed to the cross—his clothing. They are occupied in

parting the wide upper garment, and dividing it among them. But on more closely examining the underclothing, they see in it a singular piece of are, for the dress is without a seam, woven entirely in one piece. This vesture, they think, ought not to be cut; and hence they agreed to cast lots for it. They do so, and he who is so fortunate as to win, becomes the possessor of the whole garment.

Scrutinize narrowly this gambling group beneath the cross; for what they are doing is extremely significant. At first sight we would suppose that this was far from being the case; but the fact that the whole of the four evangelists, including the beloved disciple, mention, on the dictate of the Holy Spirit, this division of the clothing, is a pledge to us of its symbolical importance and divine meaning. Besides this, the executioners, without any idea of it, are fulfilling, by their division of the garments, and their casting the lot for the unseamed vesture, a Scriptural prophecy of almost a thousand years old. We read that "this was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled," and you know that it is the twenty-second Psalm which is here referred to. In that sacred song, which may be regarded as a prophetic effusion of the suffering Lamb of God, the Redeemer utters beforehand by the mouth of David, the thoughts and feelings by which he would subsequently be affected during his crucifixion. It is there said, "Dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me." Then follow the words, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture."

What do you say to this passage? Must not expressions of this kind from the spirit of prophecy surprise and astonish even the most unbelieving? David could not have uttered these words with reference to himself. The description only suits the sufferer, in whose life we now see it actually interwoven. He who bleeds on Calvary is therefore the mysterious individual who announces himself in the Psalm above mentioned as the Redeemer of the world. But while it adds great importance to the trivial act of the division of the clothing, by making known the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah, we shall find that something of a still more momentous nature is included in the passage above quoted.

We must first inquire for what reason the Lord caused these words to be

inserted in the prophetic lamentation of the Psalmist, "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots." He certainly did so, not merely with the intention of recording a circumstance, trifling in itself, from the subsequent fulfillment of which it should be evident that he was indeed the promised Messiah. Consider that they are rather his own feelings and sentiments which are there expressed. They are, in part, complaints and expressions of suffering; but also comprise a heart-cheering view of the incomparable results which would accrue to sinners from his sufferings. In the latter class must be included the words, "They parted my garments, and for my vesture they cast lots." The Lord in them encourages himself by the blessed consequences of his blood-shedding. But in what does he perceive them? Naturally, not in the fact of his earthly garments being divided among sinners. He evidently takes this outward division of his clothing as a symbol full of meaning, and regards it in a sense incomparably higher and more spiritual. And what is that? Thus we might ask, my friend, if there was no mention in the Holy Scriptures of a garment which Christ had acquired for us. But you know that it is frequently alluded to. This spiritual legacy of a robe is there sensibly represented. Such is the object of the transaction on Mount Calvary.

What we read respecting Adam is worthy of our most serious consideration. Before he gave way to sin, he shone in the white and honorable robe of perfect innocence. He was treated as a beloved child in his Father's house. He was permitted to approach him, and cast himself upon his bosom, when and wherever he pleased. Everything was put under his feet, and his happiness flowed in an inexhaustible stream. The holy angels were his comrades, and the peace of God his food, early and late. But scarcely had the unhappy fall occurred than his situation was entirely changed. We now behold him fleeing and even hiding himself from the face of God, and hear him reply to the inquiry, "Adam, where are you?" with the lamentable confession, "I was afraid, and hid myself, because I was naked." What was expressed in this confession but our own state by nature? Adam's mournful nakedness is ours. We also, as the apostle says, are "destitute of the glory we ought to have before God." We are naked. Not a thread of that righteousness which avails in the sight of God is left us. Sin has banished the last gleam of the radiance of our

original beauty. But this fact is dreadful and momentous beyond degree. Does not even sound reason tell us that we dare not appear naked and unadorned before a holy God? Cain felt that he was thus naked in the sight of God, and became a prey to despair. The same feeling prompted Judas Iscariot to destroy himself. This truth smote the conscience of the Philippian jailor, and he was upon the point of throwing himself upon his sword. And what efforts do we see made on dying beds, to lay hold of something with which we may appear clothed before God! In one instance, the grasping at the fig-leaves of a handful of good works, which the man thinks he has performed. In another, what attempts at excuses and palliations! In a third, what a plaguing himself with praying, reading, wringing the hands, or something of the kind! What is the object of all this? The time has arrived when men begin to have a dawning consciousness of their nakedness, and then they cry out for a covering, for they feel assured that it is a dreadful thing to appear naked before the face of the judge of the whole earth.

Certainly, it is a dreadful thing. As true as a holy God lives in heaven, so surely shall we be excluded from his fellowship if we have not a holiness to place in the light of his countenance, which shall reflect, though in a lesser degree, the purity of his own perfections. But where are we to procure such attire? Not from our own looms. It is elsewhere provided for us. Hear what the apostle says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." These words direct us to that which leads to a most blissful discovery.

We return to the soldiers under the cross. They are busied in dividing among themselves the upper garment of the dying Jesus. They are not prohibited from parting this. By so doing, they continue quite in the figure which, under divine direction, they are to represent to us. The upper garment symbolizes the outwardly operating fullness of the Savior's power and life; and in a second signification, the spiritual endowment intended for us. This is divisible, and it also appears divided in the assembly of the faithful. One had more, the other less of this legacy. To one, "the gift of knowledge was allotted, to another, the gift of prophecy by the same Spirit; to a third the power to work miracles; to a fourth, the discerning of spirits," etc. (1 Cor. 12.) A distinct measure of these gifts of the Spirit was not required in order to be saved. But there

was one kind of legacy which was quite indispensable to every one who desires to stand in the judgment. Its emblem, also, you find in the hands of the mercenaries under the cross. Beside the Lord's upper garment, another prize has fallen to them, and it is this which forms the peculiar capital of their inheritance. It is the vesture or body-coat of the man of sorrows, which he used to wear under the mantle; therefore such a dress as the high priest was obliged to put on when he entered into the most holy place on the great day of atonement. That such a priestly garment is found on the body of Jesus, that it is inherited by one of his murderers, and falls to him wholly and undivided, is extremely significant. A child must be conscious that he is here standing before hieroglyphics, which conceal something important and profound. But what is the marrow of this sacred symbol? Who is there among my readers that has not an idea of it?

Beneath the resplendent robe of his wonderful and active life, the Savior wore another, the garment of a perfect obedience, which he yielded, even in distress and death. Nothing was wanting in him. Many eyes—human, angelic, and satanic—have scrutinized it, but all have been filled with wonder at the sight. Even the eyes of God beheld it with delight, and a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was a garment wrought entirely of the golden threads of the purest love to God and man, without spot and without a seam, and woven in one piece. You see it is the robe of righteousness of the Son of God, which is symbolized by the coat without a seam, for which the lot is cast at the foot of the cross.

But you ask in surprise, "Did this also belong to Jesus' legacy to sinners?" Without a doubt. Hear what the Scripture says: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." And again, "As by the offense of one, condemnation came upon all men, so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," or which procures life. (Rom. 5.) Not merely was forgiveness intended for us, but also something further and greater. Paul testifies (Acts, 26:18), that the Lord had assured him that his people should receive "forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified."

Here, therefore, are two things mentioned. Forgiveness would only secure us against deserved punishment, and bestow upon us the negative blessing of being uncondemned. But according to the counsel of a merciful God, we were to be positively exalted, blessed, and beatified; and for this purpose he required a righteousness which commended us not only to the sparing magnanimity, but also to the loving good pleasure of a holy God. Christ acquired this for us also. While fulfilling the law as our Surety, he placed that incomparable obedience before the eyes of his heavenly Father, which, being mercifully imputed to us on the part of God, is, on our part, laid hold of by faith, and after being appropriated by us, cause us to break forth into the song of the prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah, 61:10, 11).

From the inheritance, let us now cast a cursory look upon the heirs. Who is it that inherits the costly attire? Only think, one of the murderers who are sitting beneath the cross, is the fortunate man. This circumstance tells us that, according to the divine intention, no wickedness, however great, excludes unconditionally from the inheritance. It only depends upon this, that the symbolical position of those executioners, and their conduct, with respect to the booty, should be essentially fulfilled in us.

What is their position? They guard the cross, and thus point out to us the place of refuge, to which, as our last resource, the necessities of our hearts, should impel us to flee. First, they know how to value the preciousness of the seamless vestment. Next, they perceive that only in its undivided whole it was of value and a real treasure; and, finally, they are satisfied that they shall obtain possession of the costly garment, entirely gratuitously, by a cast of the dice, and, therefore, without any merit of their own. Do you now understand these hieroglyphics? I do not think that you need a further explanation of them. Become poor sinners, learn to understand the demands of God upon you, and be content to be

justified by grace. The symbol under the cross will then find in you its actual antitype.

How the heir of the seamless garment will have rejoiced at the prize he won! We, my readers, have inherited the robe, which makes us objects of the divine good pleasure, and shall the chords of our harps be silent? Doubtless the fortunate man immediately put on his legacy, and wore it thenceforward. Let us avail ourselves of the hint thus given us, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." It certainly never occurred to that individual, to attach strange lappets to that scientifically woven garment. Let us beware of the absurd idea of enlarging the righteousness which we have in Christ, by any additional doings of our own. On the contrary, let us make the proper distinction between justification and sanctification.

Even the earthly dress of the crucified Jesus will have exercised a manifold influence on the mind of the mercenary, and have at times affected him, made him shudder, and feel ashamed, and doubtless have caused the image of the man from whom he inherited it, never to be effaced from the mirror of his remembrance. Reflect, therefore, with what powerful and salutary influence the substance of that shadow, the righteousness of Christ himself, must be accompanied, as regards the heart and life of those who are able to appropriate it by a living faith.

The soldier might—as regarded his upper garment—have occasionally gone about poorly clad; and yet, if one looked deeper, it would not be denied that he was more richly attired than many a king. Is not the case similar with the children of God, whose external dress is often, especially in the days of trial, anything but splendid? and yet the eye of all heaven rests upon them with pleasure; and the words are applicable to them, "The king's daughter is all glorious within."

Let us congratulate ourselves, therefore, on the incomparable inheritance left us by him who expired on the cross. Let as many of us as have reason to number ourselves among the heirs of Christ, maintain the conviction, lively and fresh within us, that we are already justified in him before God; and that the love of God is not measured out to us according to the degree of our personal holiness. Let the watchword of our faith, "Jehovah Zidkenu," the Lord our righteousness, with which we overcome the

world, be more and more fluent on our lips and let us ever sing, with increasing fervor,

"Jesus, your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

The Inscription

Let us again lift up our eyes to the inscription, which beams from the cross of the Divine Sufferer. We there read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," written in three different tongues—Greek, Latin, and Hebrew—the three theological languages, that all the world may read and understand. Pilate had so ordered it, induced partly by an obscure and reverential presentiment, and partly in order to give the hated Jews a final blow. No sooner had the latter read the inscription, than they angrily hasten to the governor, and say to him in an imperious tone, "It must not be as you have written. Down with that inscription from the cross of the blasphemer. Write that he presumptuously said that he was the King of the Jews." But Pilate briefly and resolutely replied, "What I have written, I have written!" And thus, Pilate, it ought to be. What you did write was not from arbitrary choice, for another guided your hand. You have prophesied as did Balaam of old; and with your inscription, are ignorantly and involuntarily become a witness for the truth.

Will you behold the King of Israel? Come, friend, and follow me to Calvary's bloody hill. See you that man on the cross, dying the death of a malefactor? "What?" say you, "Is this a king?" Do not shake your head, but know that you are wanting in discernment, not he in majesty. Retrace the ancient Levitical service, and behold in the sacred songs and prophetic language of the Old Testament that which shall throw light upon the appalling scene. Light your torch in the Psalms of David, in which you hear a great King complain and say, "They pierced my hands and my feet. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," and yet he remains a King. Listen to the

prophet Isaiah speaking of One who though he was "wounded for our iniquities," yet "the government was upon his shoulder, and of his peaceful kingdom there shall be no end." Read the words of Zechariah, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow!" and hear the forerunner in the wilderness, exclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!" Return with these lights to Calvary, and say if you are still so much astonished at finding the inscription on the cross, which stands between the other two, bearing the words, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews?" A cloud of holy witnesses adoringly surround the cross—venerable figures, tried saints, patriarchs and seers, poets and prophets, kings and priests. The figure of the bleeding King did not mislead them. Reverentially, and far from starting back with surprise, they read the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Do you inquire where is the majesty of this King? Truly it exists, although for the time hidden, like the glittering gold of the ark, beneath the rams' skins that covered it. Be not offended at the gloomy cloud which frowns around him. The eye of faith penetrates through it, and perceives in the balmy background, a rainbow-garland of angels' heads and seraphic faces. If they appear to grieve when the eyes of their King close in death, yet they bear palms in their hands, with which they will accompany him when he re-ascends the throne. And who, in the further distance of the heavenly world, compose the brilliant host that, sunk in adoration, lie on their faces beneath the trees of life? They are the saints of God, who inherited the kingdom before the Lord of Glory descended to the earth. But when they shook the dust of their pilgrimage from off their feet, he said, "Behold, I lay down my life for these lambs," and at these royal words, the gates of paradise opened to admit them. They have long enjoyed the fruits of the merits of their Surety, before he commenced his work. They now behold him paying the promised ransom for them, and supporting the blissful abodes they inhabit with the pillars of justice. And what is left for them at this sight, but to sink adoringly in the dust before the wondrous man, and to confess, that even with their glorified vision they are unable to fathom the depths of such infinite compassion. And look still further in spirit. The multitudes of people out of every age and nation, their eyes attentively directed to the cross, and their faces expressive of sacred peace and silent blessedness—who are they, who, in

interminable circles, surround the fatal hill? It is his Church, his redeemed people, including the best and noblest of mankind in every age. See the censers in their hands. They desire only to hear and know respecting the Lamb that was slain.

Such are the sights which faith beholds that understands how to lift the veil and look within. And on beholding such a representation, the cross before it changes to a throne, the crown of thorns about the brow of the dying man becomes a diadem, and Pilate's inscription is read with reverence and adoration, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!"

Yes, it is he! You may recognize him by the victories he achieves, even on the fatal tree, the first of which is of a gloriously twofold character—over himself and over the infernal tempter. He is assailed by powerful temptations, which rise up in the shape of the scornful revilings of the people, who exclaim, "He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him," a powerful assault of the wicked one, almost more potent than when he urged him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. How much did the taunting advice to come down correspond with the necessities of his suffering human nature! If he had followed it, not only he himself would have been delivered at once from his torment, but the host of blaspheming adversaries would have been driven from the field in an unexampled manner, and convinced of his divinity almost more plainly than was afterward the case by his resurrection from the dead. Alluring thought, at one blow to strike the raging multitude mute, and bend their knees in the dust! But far be such an idea from him! It is a snare, a trap of the artful fowler, a rock under water, to wreck the project of the atonement just before its final accomplishment. Jesus surveys the infernal toils, and says in spirit, "Get you behind me, Satan. I will not come down, but bleed, sacrifice myself and pay the wages of sin." In sublime silence, he rejects the call, and bears the torment; nor did he deviate from his path a single moment. Come, let us interweave an olive-branch in his crown of thorns, and wreathe about with the laurel of victory the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Yes, while hanging there, he is still a royal conqueror. You might think that no one was more overcome than he. But the prospective glass of faith

will show you something different. In the representation which it affords you, you see that the eye of Jesus, instead of closing, scatters destroying lightnings; that his unfettered hands brandish a wondrous sword; that his feet tread freely on a stormy arena. Hot is the battle; furious the onslaught. A conflict of desperation has commenced, and the human race is its object. The hostile parties are the captain of the Lord's host and the infernal powers. How the demons of the pit rage and struggle! The prey is to be taken from them and the captive delivered; the scepter to be wrested from their hands, and the right they had acquired over us by the divine decision again torn from them. And it is the man in the crown of thorns who threatens their dominion, and is trying to overturn it. Nothing in the arsenal of hell is left untried, which may afford any hope of victory. But the Lion of the tribe of Judah laughs at the quivering lance. He bleeds; but his blood is the enemy's overthrow. He falls into the hands of his adversaries; but this is the means of rescuing us out of their hands. He suffers himself to be fettered by the bands of Belial; but his chains beget our liberty. He empties the cup of wrath; but only that he may fill it with blessings for us. He suffers himself to be wounded in the heel; but at the same moment breaks the head of the old Serpent; and after a very different martial rule to the customary one, he conquers the enemy, like Samson, by his fall.

Such are the achievements of the dying Jesus. Even though one may complain, that the fairest of the sons of men should be so abused; another became hoarse with crying, "Come down, and show us who you are!" We, who know how to view things with the eye of faith, neither mourn nor cry out. To us he would not seem more glorious were he to descend in majestic splendor from the cross, amid the music of angelic harps, than he appears to us, yonder, in his bleeding form. We see him, like the archangel, decked with victorious insignia, standing upon a thousand dragons' heads; and while sounding the trumpet of triumph, we exclaim, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

A third victory is gained at the cross, the greatest and most wonderful of all. I call it the victory of the lawgiver over the law. There was no want of wish and will in heaven to save us. They existed abundantly; but the right to undertake the great work was wanting. The holy and inviolable law was

the bolt which fastened the door of the treasury of divine mercy. The law put in its protest against our redemption. Its language was, "No salvation for sinners until their guilt is expiated;" and even eternal majesty felt bound by the protestation. But divine wisdom was able to loose their fetters. The Eternal Son descended upon earth to change the negative of the law into an affirmative. He suffered himself to be "made under the law," and fulfilled it, as our representative, in such a manner, as to enable him to stand forward, and say, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" But this did not remove the barrier from the sluices of divine mercy. The curse had to be endured, to which we had become subject by a breach of the law. He submitted to this, likewise, and drank the cup of wrath. Did a drop remain? "Not one," was the law's decision. And when the voice of mercy was heard from heaven, the law had nothing to object. Divine justice resigned the scepter to its august sister, Love, without infringing its glory in the slightest degree. We admire the victory over the law, without violence, in the way of justice; and adoringly read the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Yes, he is a King! But where is his kingdom? He is founding it while hanging on the cross. The drops of blood, which trickle down, are the price he paid to ransom his people, and the dying groans which issue from his bosom, the joyful peal which announces the birthday of his Zion.

He did not found his kingdom when gathering the people around him, and addressing them from the mount of the beatitudes. Nor when he scattered in the darkness the sparks of divine truth, and when the shadows of death were dispersed by the light of his heavenly torch. Not there, where he cast out the spirits of darkness, and by his miraculous aid, won the eternal gratitude of hundreds of the weary and heavy-laden. Not there, where with the splendor of his deeds, he ravished the world, and was surrounded by their enthusiastic hosannas. Had he left the world after these triumphs, all would have remained upon earth as before, and he himself have been without a kingdom and a people. No Jerusalem would have been reared in the valley of death; no banner of liberty have waved from the turrets of Zion. No encampment of God's people in the wilderness, and no longing after a better country. No! Teaching, preaching, and example could not effect it. The new city had to be

founded on the blood of the covenant; and it was done. The hands that were nailed to the cross overcame the world; and founded, in the midst of the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of light and peace. O wonder beyond compare! What Pilate wrote remains forever true, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

The Jews did not imagine it was he. They ventured to cry, "His blood come upon us and upon our children!" You know that their imprecation was fulfilled in the manner they desired. "Woe!" exclaimed the blood, and cried to heaven for vengeance upon them. Behold the result! A heavy storm gathers over Jerusalem. The torch of war is lighted in the land. A forest of hostile lances begirds the holy city. The temple sinks in flames. The walls fall down. Not one stone remains upon another, and the blood of the children of Abraham flows in torrents. Those who escape the sword must flee into the wide world, far from their beloved hills and the graves of their forefathers, into the barren and inhospitable waste. And Israel remains to this day a subjugated people, and steals about the mementos of its former glory. It is by divine arrangement that this pillar of salt, this burning bush, which miraculously remains unconsumed, continues conspicuous during eighteen hundred years. This people, in their wretchedness, are a lasting memorial, that he, whose blood they had invoked over them, was and is a King, and does not suffer himself to be mocked with impunity. And, in fact, the words, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," are as legibly written in fiery letters of judgment on the foreheads of his people, as upon the cross. But we wait for a time, now no longer distant, in which the Lord will make it evident, in another and more gratifying manner, in these his ancient covenant people, that he is their real and true King. When they shall eventually come with weeping and lamentation, and he shall gather them out of the land of the north, and lead them in a plain path, by the rivers of water, and shall say to them, "I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my first-born;" then the most obstinate unbelief shall no longer rebel, but reverently fold the hands on reading the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Yes, he is our King! He reigns from the cross. From thence to this hour he carries on the government in the city of peace. True, he no longer hangs there, but when he presents himself to the eye of faith, and when, in order

to accomplish great things he manifests himself in vision, he appears, as before, in his bleeding form, and hanging on the tree. It is from thence he takes the spoil from the strong, and produces repentance in the sinful. From thence he humbles the lofty looks, and melts the stony heart in the fire of his love. From thence he comforts the anxious soul, and dries the weeping eyes of the contrite. From thence, he awakens rejoicing in the camp of the true Israelites, and encourages his people to dance before the ark. O how variously does he daily make it manifest that he, as the crucified Jesus, is the true King of Israel! Yes, in his crown of thorns, he governs the world of spirits and of hearts; and the greatest marvels by which he glorifies himself upon earth, he performs with his pierced hands. Hence Calvary continues to be the place where we pay our homage, and where we cease not adoringly to cry, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Thus, in fact, no human hand ever wrote anything more true and well-founded than the inscription which Pilate, under divine direction, wrote and placed on the cross. Yet a little while, and signs from heaven, angelic appearances, falling stars, and graves opening at the trumpet's sound will confirm it. Therefore, while unfolding before my readers his blood-besprinkled banner, I call upon them, as a messenger from God, to swear allegiance to this sacred standard, to worship the monarch in the crown of thorns, and reverently to bow the knee with the multitude, which no man can number, before the inscription on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

My friends, the time is at hand, when we shall no longer read it on the cross, but in the radiant letters on the flowing robe of the returning conqueror. O that then none of us may be forced to say to the rocks, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us!" but each of us meet him with joyful acclamations, and hail him Lord of all!

"Father, Forgive Them"

Our visit to the horrible darkness which reigns on Calvary has this time reference only to the ray of compassion which flashes through it, than

which, one more beatifying never shone upon the sinful earth. This ray displays its effulgence in the intercession of him who hangs bleeding on the cross. In it, the divine sufferer throws down from his cross the first-fruit of his passion into the lap of the human race, whom he came to redeem.

Horrible is the tumult on Calvary. A choir from the pit of hell precedes the chorus of angels. The powers of darkness exhaust themselves in vomiting forth rage and blasphemy; and alas! the very men whose vocation it is to be keepers of the sanctuary, yield themselves up to be the most zealous instruments of hell. Without being aware of it, these men of Belial entirely fail of their object. Their intention is to degrade the man on the cross, and yet they are obliged to glorify him. They are anxious to tear from his head the last remnant of his crown, but they only lift the veil from off his majesty. Listen to the taunts which they pour forth upon the Holy One; but remark, at the same time how these outbreaks, viewed in the light, only contain the most honorable confessions respecting him. "He saved others," say they, "himself he cannot save." Truly, this plain confession on the part of his adversaries is of high importance, since it confirms anew the historical account of the saving and delivering acts of Jesus recorded by the evangelists.

"He trusted in God," they continue. Infer from hence, my readers, how evidently his heavenly and devotional frame must have impressed itself on his entire outward deportment, so that it did not remain concealed even from such worthless characters as these.

"He said, 'I am the Son of God;' let him deliver him now if he will have him!" Can it be otherwise than extremely welcome to us, to hear it confirmed, even by his most furious opponents, that the Lord had declared himself to be the Son of God, and had therefore made no secret of his heavenly descent?

"You that destroy the temple," they exclaim further, "and build it up in three days, save yourself!" Observe how they confirm what he had so decidedly announced concerning his resurrection from the dead. In the same manner, by their taunting words, "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross," they establish the fact, that the Savior had

repeatedly applied this significant title to himself. What do these wicked men therefore effect? In their fury they break a diamond in pieces, by which they only cause it to show its genuineness by its sparkling splinters. In their wrath they pluck to pieces a divine rose, but by so doing only display the brilliance and enamel of every petal.

The Savior hears the envenomed taunts of the crowd below. He knows from whence they proceed, and to whom the blasphemers serve as instruments, without their being aware of it. In their infuriated language, he hears only a ruder echo of those temptations with which the prince of darkness once assailed him in the wilderness. But now, as then, he is conscious of being on the path pointed out to him by his Heavenly Father; and this serves him as an impenetrable shield, with which he quenches all the fiery darts of the adversary. O that we could now cast a look into the Redeemer's soul! But profound silence conceals it from us like the veil in the temple. If, in such moments, when the measure of the opprobrium vented on him overflowed, the glow of a holy indignation had flushed him, or the thunder of the apostle's "Anathema Maranatha" had rolled through his soul—if his heart had turned to him who calls himself an avenger of the evil, with a prayer to reward the wicked according to their deeds—or if, in his own mind, a judicial woe had been pronounced upon these accursed sons of Belial, his holiness would have been fully preserved, and even hell itself must have justified him in forever renouncing the redemption of such a race as the descendants of Adam.

But, be still! See, his lips are moving. He is about to speak. What shall we now hear? Will anything of the kind above mentioned be thundered down from the cross? It might reasonably be expected. Look, he opens his mouth. But can we believe our ears? "Father," says he, "forgive them!" What? Who does he mean? Surely not the servants of Satan who have nailed him to the cross—the heartless brutes, who are even still rending him with their poisoned fangs? Yes, it is even they to whom his intercession refers. It is for them he requests mercy and forgiveness. We bow our heads and adore. What language, "Father, forgive them!" and, in the words, what an act, greater than the most splendid miracles with which he marked his radiant path through the world. Christ was

admirable in his transfiguration on Mount Tabor; but here he shines in superior light.

"Forgive them!" Is it possible! With these words, as sincerely as they sound, he covers the guilty heads of his murderers with the shield of his love, in order to secure them from the storm of the well-deserved wrath of Almighty God. With these words, which must have produced adoring astonishment even in the angels themselves, he takes these miscreants in the arms of his compassion, and bears them up the steps of his Father's throne, in order to commend them to his mercy. For know, my readers, that the words "Forgive them," mean, in Jesus' mouth, not merely, "Do not impute to them the murderous crime they have committed upon me." No, when he utters "Forgive," it comprehends something much more, and embraces the whole register of sins. In his mouth it means, "Plunge their whole sinful life into the depths of the sea, and remember no more their transgressions, but consider these sinners henceforth as dear in your sight, and act toward them as such."

There are individuals upon earth for whom no one feels inclined to pray, because they are too depraved. There are those who even dare not pray for themselves, because their consciences testify, that such worthless creatures as they are, cannot reckon upon being heard. What a prospect is here opened to people of this description! Ah, if no heart beats for them on earth, the heart of the King of kings may still feel for them. If among their friends, not one is to be found to intercede for them, yet, possibly, the Lord of Glory is not ashamed of bearing their names before his Father's throne. O what hope beams on Calvary for a sinful world! And if the great Intercessor appears there for a transgressor, how does his intercession succeed! Though a whole world should protest against it, his prayer saves whom he will. His voice penetrates the heart of the eternal Father with irresistible power. His entreaties are commands. Mountains of sin vanish before his intercession. How highly characteristic and deeply significant is the fact that the Lord, with this prayer, commences the seven expressions he uttered on the cross. The words, "Forgive them!" show us not merely the heaven of loving-kindness which he carries in his bosom, but it also darts like a flash of lightning through the gloom of the entire night of suffering, and deciphers the mysterious position which the

Holy One of Israel here occupies as Surety, Mediator, and High Priest.

"As High Priest?" you exclaim. Certainly, you must feel that he could only venture to offer up such a prayer in that capacity. Apart from this his peculiar divine office; such a petition would have been like a Titan-storm against the divine order; no as a rebellious attempt to overturn the foundations of God's throne, which are justice and judgment. How can the holy God deal with sinners? Can he say anything else than, "Depart from me, you polluted beings?" How can the God of justice act toward transgressors? Must he not if he will not act contrary to his nature, reward every one according to his works? How would it become the God of wisdom blindly to take some one promiscuously from a crowd, and elevate him to his glory? Is it not more becoming, that he should carefully sift and scrutinize? And how could he be a God of order without doing so! Can he, who is the true God, make laws and denounce threatenings against transgressors, and yet pardon those who have actually trodden his law under foot, without breaking his word, and withdrawing his threatenings? Impossible; if he will not render himself liable to a well-founded accusation, he must, in spite of all human entreaty for pardon, inflict curse where it belongs, and wrath upon him to whom it is due.

All this stands everlastingly firm, and yet the prayer for forgiveness raises its wing from the mount of suffering and passes apparently through all those eternal and unimpingeable statutes and limitations. It puts aside even Mount Sinai and Ebal, and heeds not the cherub of the law, who keeps the gate of paradise, and is enjoined to admit only the righteous. Careless of his flaming sword, it soars with seemingly unheard-of boldness above the brazen walls of the manifold menaces of the divine maledictions, which inexorably close against sinners the entrance to the mansions above, and in a most striking contrariety with the indelible inscription over the eternal sanctuary, "Him that sins against me, will I blot out of my book," requests forgiveness and even admittance into the habitations of the blessed children of God, for rebels, blasphemers, and murderers.

"Does the Savior's prayer do so much, and yet continue legitimate?" Yes, my readers, it is legitimate, well-founded, and entitled to be heard. The mercy of interceding love on the cross, is a law which is, at the same time,

subject to all the ordinances of God. Its seeming boldness is only in appearance. It knows what it does, while crying for forgiveness to him with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. It is well aware of the properties of the house of God, while desiring blessing and liberation for those whom the law condemns and sentences to the prisons of darkness. It does not direct its petition to an arbitrariness in God, which does not exist, but appeals to both the divine justice and mercy. Its prayer sets aside no divine ordinance, but leaves them all uninfringed upon. It is so far from desiring that the Almighty should deny himself or his word, that it has, on the contrary, the glory of God as its supreme and final aim.

"But can God continue in the exercise of all his perfections, if he rewards murderers with his favor?" Yes, my readers, he can; and it is just this, which is the greatest mystery of godliness, of which the Gospel opens the seals, but which is accessible only to faith. Jesus, who here prays for his murderers, stands in the very place of those men, as their representative. If they have broken the law, he, the Surety, has fulfilled it in their stead. Are they worthy of death? He is the Lamb that lets itself be made sin for them, that sin might be no longer imputed to them. If they drew down upon them the curse of the law, he is the Mediator of whom it is written, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." If, according to the judgment of God, they are consigned to the powers of darkness, he gives himself up as a voluntary sacrifice to their fiery darts. If the sentence applies to them, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die;" he suffers this sentence to be executed on his own sacred person, in order that it might be said, "If one die for all, then were all dead."

Therefore, satisfaction, atonement, and mediation, are the momentous words which express the ground of justification for the intercession of Jesus. The whole world must now be mute, and hell likewise, when God himself receives into his favor blasphemers and murderers, for whom Jesus appeared in the breach. For complete satisfaction is rendered to all the statutes of the eternal sanctuary, and divine justice can no longer object when eternal love presses sinners with blessing to its bosom. But how comforting and consoling it is to see that divine grace and forgiveness rest upon such foundations!

We now fully comprehend the tone and perfect certainty, firmness, and confidence with which the words, "Father, forgive them!" are uttered. The High Priest pronounces them from the most holy place, and that too at the very moment when he is paying the debt of the guilty. That he really does this, and that the true meaning of his sufferings is to be sought in this, he once for all evinces to a sinful world from his elevation on the cross; and hence, while bleeding on their behalf, he sends up to heaven this unconditional petition for mercy in favor of the vilest sinners, his murderers.

"But how could the Lord commend these hardened rebels to divine mercy?" Observe, my friends, that those whom he had in view, were by no means hardened. For such as have committed the "sin unto death" there is certainly no longer any deliverance or salvation, and according to the apostle's directions, we ought not to pray for such. But the Lord well knows what he is doing. Although he says at first, "Forgive them," which is certainly very general, yet he immediately limits his words, so that Judas, for instance, and doubtless many of the heads of the people, are excluded from the influence of his intercession. The addition of the words, "They know not what they do," defines its bounds. By this clause the Lord selects from the multitude which surrounds him those to whom the majority of them that crucified him probably belonged. They were not like the Pharisees, who accused Jesus of casting out devils by Beelzebub, and had therefore committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, but they were under a delusion, which was certainly far from guiltless, when they consigned Jesus to death.

Now, observe, first, the sublime self-possession which the Lord here again manifests in the words, "They know not what they do." For what other meaning lies concealed beneath them than this, that if they had known it was the Lord of Glory, or even some innocent and just person, they would not have done it? For in the words, "They know not what they do," the idea is included that while offering up the Lord Jesus, they unconsciously pay the ransom for themselves, and thereby render it possible for God to have mercy upon them, without detracting from his justice.

Finally, the words, "They know not what they do," must be apprehended

in the same sense in which I must be understood, if I likewise said of any one whom I had come to deliver out of his distress, but who, ignorant of my intention, basely repulsed me, "He knows not what he is doing." In this case, my meaning would be, "Have patience; he will soon recollect himself when he is aware who I am, and for what purpose I entered his abode, and will then act differently toward me." I thus utter a prediction, and such a one is doubtless included in our Lord's words. They contain a veiled prediction of the future repentance and conversion of those for whom he prays. For even by this petition a powerful impulse to repentance is given them, and a direction to a change of mind. Only look forward a little, and you will already see, first, in the Roman centurion under the cross, and his shield-bearer, the commencement of the fulfillment of that prediction. Mark, then, the crowds who, returning from Calvary to Jerusalem, smote upon their breasts, and, at least in part, gave evidence of sincere repentance. Assuredly among them were some to whom the petition, "Father, forgive them," applied. But if they were not among these, they were decidedly among the three thousand who were pierced to the heart by the apostles' words on the day of Pentecost. For listen to the address of Peter: "This Jesus," says he, "whom you have crucified, has God made both Lord and Christ. Now, when they heard this," the narrative states, "they were pierced in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Yes, it was these who knew not what they did, but now it became evident to them. O how did the remembrance of the words, "Father, forgive them," smite humblingly and overwhelmingly upon their hearts! How did the love which was manifested in those words melt their souls! Alas! alas! they had nailed to the cross their only Deliverer and Savior! Could it be otherwise than that under such reflections their eyes became fountains of tears? But the repentance for which the consolation of forgiveness first made room in their souls, issued in devotedness to the Lord, and in their being faithful to him even unto death. Thus did the petition, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," neither overthrow the statutes of divine justices, nor the method of grace, once for all established by the Lord. Justice retained its splendor, by virtue of the satisfaction of the only-begotten Son, and the plan of salvation was preserved entire in the repentance and conversion of them to whom the petition applied.

Let us then rejoice, my friends, that the most desirable and indispensable of all blessings, the forgiveness of sins, is acquired so fully and legally for us. What do all the treasures in the world avail, if we do not know that our names are written in heaven, and that we have an inheritance there? But reflect, that the forgiveness acquired on the cross, although always an entirely free gift of grace, is forever with-held from those who know what they do, while refusing to give their hearts to Christ; and just as little belongs to those who persist in their ignorance and in their deluded opposition to him. Awake, therefore, from your deadly sleep of security; bid farewell to pharisaic deception, condemn the sin that besets you, and then hasten penitently and believingly to the cross of Christ, and devote yourselves, body, soul, and spirit, unto him who loved you, and gave himself for you; for this is the road that leads unto life.

The Malefactor

Again we direct our eyes upward. The three crucified individuals form the center of our present meditation. The dying men are in so far alike in their situation, as having each of them arrived at the last stage of their earthly pilgrimage, and are hovering on the solemn and awful brink of a momentous eternity. He who hangs in the midst, although exposed to a raging storm, takes in the sails for a peaceful entrance into the haven of repose. We see the other two, on the contrary, almost shipwrecked and threatened with the most dreadful ruin, struggling with the billows. They had opened their hearts to delusion; had pursued temporal enjoyments with the rebellious motto, "Liberty, equality, and pleasure," and were carried along, unrestrainedly, from sin to sin, until arrested at length as murderers, they were crucified as an atonement to public justice. Pleasure is short, repentance long. What other booty did they carry off from their ungodly doings, than the bodily misery in which we see them languishing, the worm in their bosom that never dies, and the fire in the bones which is never quenched? O folly and madness, to devote themselves to the service of the devil, instead of to that of the Most High God, while the most costly rewards of the former are only Belshazzar's feasts and the hands of the executioner! Millions of sinners, in the example given by their dreadful end, have cried more loudly to the world,

than it was possible to do by words, "You, who are halting between two opinions, for God's sake, and that of your own soul's salvation, go not to the left, for hell howls there." Yet immense is the number of those, who, like the herd into which the unclean spirits entered, do not cease to plunge themselves into the gulf of destruction after their deluded forerunners; and the groans of despair, in the eternal deserts, increase from one night-watch to another.

The two malefactors have hung there for a while in silence; but have been unable to turn away their eyes from the wonderful man who welters in his blood by their side, and in whom the vital and bodily appearance of a superhuman sanctity was by no means hidden from them. At length the one on Jesus' left, begins to speak, but alas! very differently from what we might have expected. Joining in the blasphemous speeches, which rise up from the crowd below, he says to the man in the crown of thorns, "If you be the Christ, save yourself and us!"

The meaning of these words is doubtless manifold. The malefactor has evidently received the impression respecting the man at his side, that if he only would, he could both save himself and them; and his speech to him was an attempt, though a desperate one, to lay hold of Christ by his honor, and thereby to induce him to an act of rescue. But the mistrust he placed in the willingness of Jesus to perform such a miracle, far exceeded the hope in him, and hence the words proceeded from him in a tone of vexation and bitter railing against Christ.

But who inspired him with the idea, that the Lord, supposing he had the power, would still not save him? His conscience testified it. The spotless purity of the mysterious Sufferer threw a bright reflection even into the dark mind of the malefactor, and condemned him in his inmost soul, as a moral abortion, by the mere display of its brilliance. But was not this inward judgment a blessing to him? It might have been so. At all events, it decided his fate. Had he made room for the entering in of the truth, and have judged himself, as the revered reflection of the Holy One judged him, he would then have set his foot on the path of salvation, and his wretched soul, however debased, would have been saved. But in his beggarly pride, he sought to maintain his favorable idea of himself; and instead of penitence and humiliation, an infernal hatred was kindled

within him, against one, whose presence impressed upon him the brand-mark of depravity. Hence the words proceeded from him like the bite of the poisonous adder—"If you be the Christ, save yourself and us." Wretched man, how should he, who by a word could have burst the bonds of hell and of death, not have been able to save himself, if higher considerations had not induced him to act otherwise!

"Save yourself and us!" O unparalleled audacity, to degrade the Lord of heaven to a level with himself a son of Belial, and besides this, to claim his help, although his heart was hardened against him! Yet echoes of these taunting words of the malefactor still very frequently reach our ears. How often do we hear people say, while biting their lips, "Say no more about your God; for if he be God, why does he leave us in our wretchedness?" O what horrible pride in a fallen sinful creature! What else do you deserve, you daring rebel against the statutes of his kingdom, than that he should leave you to languish in your distress? First humble yourself in the dust, and submit without reserve to his scepter, and then wait and see if he will not let mercy take the place of justice. But this you refuse to do; and you are conscious of being inwardly condemned for your opposition to him. The painful feeling of his displeasure increases in your heart the rebellion against him, and transforms your repugnance into hatred and bitterness. Still you can not divest yourself of him. On the contrary, every one is compelled, in his peculiar manner, to aid in glorifying him. If he does not honor God with his love, he honors him by his hatred of him. That God is a consuming fire, is felt by the rebel against him, as well as by the seraph on the fiery wings of his fervor.

No answer is returned to the malefactor on the left. There would still have been help for the robber and murderer; but there is no deliverance for the impenitent scoffer and hardened child of unbelief. The Lord is obliged to leave the wretched man to his fate—yes, the Lord, the only Savior in heaven and on earth. Who does not tremble? But God is a God of order, and even his mercy is never arbitrarily bestowed.

Turn your eyes now to the right of the Divine Sufferer. Here a spectacle is preparing, at which our souls may recover from the horror which took possession of them, at the preceding scene. A refreshing contrast is presented by the other malefactor, whom, though equally guilty with the

pitiable companion of his fate, and on the verge of hell, we behold rending and casting away the fetters of Satan, just in time, and then ascending a path, which is not trodden too late, even from the station which precedes the pit of destruction.

We are not expressly informed what it was that principally exercised such a blessed and transforming influence on the heart of this individual, who, as may be inferred from the Gospel narrative, had joined, shortly before, in the raillery against Jesus. It might have been the Lord's words, uttered on the way, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children;" or, "If these things are done in the Green Tree, what will be done in the dry?" And if not, yet infallibly his heart-affecting prayer for his murderers, and, generally speaking, the full splendor of dignity and holiness in which he shone. Suffice it to say, that the change which was wrought in the soul of the poor criminal, was evidently thorough and decisive, and appears, as the commencement, at least, of a complete regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

There he hangs silently on the cross; but every feature in his face, which is turned toward the Divine Sufferer, unfolds and displays to us the world within him. We clearly see how the evil spirits have departed from him, and a solemn train of holy thoughts and emotions passes through his soul. The taunting attack of his companion in tribulation on Jesus' left, loosens his tongue, which had been silent from contrition and reverence. He feels compelled to object against being included in the blasphemous appeal, "If you be the Christ, save us!" He is constrained to renounce all participation in such insulting language. He knows the importance as well as the awfulness of the moment, which places an opening eternity before him, and feels no longer any fellowship with his companion in crime, as regards the man who is crowned with thorns. He has seen enough in the dignified individual, and has heard enough from him to be able to say to himself, "If this is not the promised consolation of Israel—that consolation will never arrive." He perceives in him, not only the bright mirror of his own degradation, but the only and final anchorage for his hopes.

The horror which seizes him at the impious words of his fellow sufferer is indescribable; and while judging him—to which he was entitled by first

condemning himself—he begins to say to him, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?" Ah, he himself trembled at the thought of the Judge of quick and dead! The meaning of his words is as follows: "And you, who like myself, are weltering in your blood, and so near eternity, do you not fear God, who is a consuming fire to sinners, and who, as certainly as he will justify this righteous man, must pronounce his curse upon those who, like you, dare to rail at him. Be not deceived; God does not let himself be mocked."

O how moving and heart-affecting is this call to repentance from one delinquent to another! But hear him further: "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds!" O hear this language of sincere abasement before the majesty of the law! Listen to this self-accusation, in which, as far as regards criminality, he places himself on the same footing with the other malefactor! Certainly, where such language is heard, heaven prepares to hang out the white flag. And let no one suppose that there is anything dishonorable in it. On the contrary, it is the language of manly self-deliverance from the net of delusion—of courageous homage offered to truth—and of a resolute return from the way of darkness to that of light and salvation. One of the most cunning artifices of the prince of this world, by which he is able to bind his victim to his standard, consisted, from ancient times, in endeavoring to represent repentance to mankind as something unworthy, degrading, and effeminate. In our view, on the contrary, nothing is more contemptible than intentionally to avoid the mirror, which shows us things as they are, and to find comfort on the couch of a miserable self-deception.

But let us listen further to the malefactor. "But this man," continues he, "has done nothing amiss." What a fresh and pleasing testimony this is to the innocence of Jesus. O how evident it must have been from the Savior's whole deportment, that, as the apostle says, "He knew no sin." From all the clouds of ignominy and accusation with which hell blasphemingly covered him, the light of his divine spotlessness and beauty shone so victoriously forth, that the blindest shrunk back from it in amazement; and every moment his well-known prediction was almost literally verified, "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry hosanna!"

But let us hear him further. Something really astonishing now succeeds. The work of grace in the heart of the malefactor throws off its last veil. Who would have expected that we should have witnessed anything of the kind on that awful hill! After the malefactor had rebuked his blaspheming fellow-sufferer, and impressed the one thing needful so humbly, kindly, urgently, and seriously upon him, he turns his face again to him, who increasingly became his only hope and the object of his affection, and says to him, as unpresumingly and humbly as devoutly and confidently, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

We are surprised; we can scarcely believe our ears. What a confession, and at such a time and under such circumstances, from the lips of such a man! Here is divine illumination in midnight darkness. Even the enlightenment of an apostle scarcely reaches to this malefactor's height of faith. "Lord," says he, not Rabbi, not teacher, or master; no, in the word "Kyrie," he applies to him the title of Majesty. By this expression he brings out of the appearance of a worm that is trodden upon, the heavenly King of Glory. "However deeply you may be concealed," is his meaning, "in ignominy and misery, I still recognize you. You are more, infinitely more than all the human race. You are not of the earth; you came from above. "Remember me," continues he, with a boundless reliance and confident childlike supplication. O how much is implied in this ejaculation! It is the expression of the most vital conviction of the existence of a future world; for it is not help from the bodily distress in which he languishes; but the malefactor desires something very different and superior. It is, further, a loud testimony to the necessity of a mediation, if sinners are to be saved. "Intercede for me;" he means to say, "speak a kind word for me, a sinner; put in a word of entreaty on my behalf." Yes, it is a frank confession that the man in the crown of thorns is the Mediator, and therefore he flees to him with the confidence that his intercession with the Father, and that only, can save him from eternal death.

To the supplication contained in the words "Remember me," the malefactor adds, "when you come in (not into) your kingdom." What does he mean by this? Does he mean, "Your undertaking has not failed. Die, and from your prison of death you shall again come forth triumphant?

Your kingdom shall come, and your throne exist forever?" Certainly, he means nothing else. He intends to say, "To you belongs the world; the banner of your peaceful kingdom will wave from pole to pole. When you shall have established your throne, then grant that I, a poor criminal, may be received among the lowest of your servants."

What a herald of Christ in the midnight darkness of the crucifixion! What a bright and guiding star for all who seek haven of rest on the stormy sea of life! We feel astonished at the great and penetrating faith of this malefactor. But here convince yourselves anew how rapidly the profoundest mysteries of heaven display themselves to the awakened feeling of the need of salvation. O if you ever become powerfully conscious of your estrangement from God, and do feel that you need nothing so much as mercy, truly the spirit of illumination from above would soon descend upon you, and, elevated above every doubt, you would be aware that in the Gospel and its plan of salvation, there is not only wisdom, connection, and divine reason, but also that it is the only conceivable way of escape for beings who, whatever else they may disbelieve, are unable to deny that they are debtors to the law, and come short of the glory of God. Yes, we should then soon hear from your lips the words "Lord, remember me in your kingdom!" which equally point out to the king upon his throne, the virtuous moralist in his civic crown, to the beggar on the highway, and the outlawed convict in fetters, the watchword by which alone the keepers of heaven's gates will bow the sword before them.

The malefactor has spoken. Now listen to the Lord's reply. It will reveal something very astonishing. The high and lofty One, whom the criminal discovered beneath the thorn-crowned bleeding form by his side now comes actually forth in his glory. Calvary becomes a palace, the cross a throne of the Judge of all worlds. The man in the crown of thorns accepts the prayer which the poor criminal addressed to him, and impresses the confirming seal upon his distinguished faith. There is no rejection, as if he were mistaken in his hopes—no reproof, as if he were an enthusiast and expected too much from him, but rather an encouragement to hope still more boldly, since he was not mistaken in him. With the full conviction of being the only-begotten Son of the Father, which he was, as

well as the true and only Mediator between God and man, the Lord says, turning to the malefactor with a look full of grace and mercy, and loud enough for those who stood around him to hear, "Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with me in paradise."

Here you have the great and majestic words, which, if they were the only testimony which Jesus had given of himself would forever decide the question who he was—the words, which, bursting the bonds of death, and opening a heaven of consolation, have sounded like a peaceful chord of paradise in the ears of millions on their dying beds; and may they also sound in our ears when our feet tread the gloomy valley!—the words, which comprehend the whole result of the sufferings and death of Christ, the Bridegroom of our souls. They hover around us with their blissful harmony, and seek our hearts, in order to convey to them something of heaven. O attend well to these words! They are the most precious boon which Christ has thrown into our lap from his cross.

Let every syllable of them be well weighed by us. "Verily," says our Lord at the commencement, and this is the confirmation of his words. How important is this assertion, uttered by such a mouth, at such a time, when on the threshold of eternity! How suited to dispel all our doubts. Unspeakably elevating is the consciousness of the fullness of confidence and certainty manifested in our Lord's speech to the dying criminal. The fact is firm as a rock, that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—immutably firm; that he bears the keys of hell and of death; that he will conduct the penitent sinner through the night of death into eternal life, and that life a blissful one in paradise; and how greatly does this his own assurance tend to confirm and animate our faith in him!

That which so highly ravishes us in his words, next to his confidence, is the repetition of the poor criminal's request in a superior degree. To his appellation of "Lord!" the thorn-crowned Jesus replies with the words, "I say unto you." And what else does this imply, but "I am so; you are not mistaken in me. You can not think too highly of me." Upon the petition, "Remember me," follows the Lord's words, "You shall be with me"—that is, "I shall not need first to think of you;" for we do not think of those who are present, but of those who are absent. The period indicated by the word "when," the Lord responds to by the assertion, "this day"—not at

some distant period, but this day shall be the happy day of your deliverance and redemption. To the criminal's appeal, "when you come in your kingdom, or appear in your regal glory," the Lord replies: "I am a king already. I will take you with me into paradise. With this bleeding hand will I open to you the gates of the world of blessedness."

The words addressed by the illustrious Sufferer to the malefactor, produce, lastly, such a beneficial effect upon us, because they bear in them an infallible testimony to the perfection and all-sufficiency of the redemption accomplished by him for us.

For on what ground is it that Jesus so confidently promises instead of the curse, salvation to a sinner, on whom, according to the divine statutes, the curse of the law ought to be inflicted? Not upon the ground of a voluntary divine amnesty, which would never coincide with the nature of a perfect God. Not on that of a presupposed weak-minded paternal love of God, before whose eyes the difference between the just and the unjust at length vanished, and which would be compelled to erect its throne upon the ruins of holiness, justice, and truth; he promises paradise solely on the ground of his ever-valid work of mediation and atonement.

The three crosses on Calvary present to us a very important subject for consideration. They afford us an image of the world. Christ in its midst; but to the one he is set for the rising, and for the falling of the other—a savor of life unto life to the one, and of death unto death to the other. The tender mercy of Jesus there celebrates its triumph, and appears in the radiance of glorification. You behold a sinner on his right hand and another on his left; but he is so little ashamed of their society that on the contrary, he then feels in his element and at home, because he can there exhibit his love to man—there heal and save.

You see in the three crosses, further, an actual exposition of the Savior's words, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." For who is it that serves the malefactor on his right, in opposition to his fellow-sufferer on the left, as a bridge on which he may pass from a state of curse to that of grace? Who is it that enlightens him, and in some degree the companion of his fate, not less by his mere appearance, than by that marvelous light, whose rays penetrate into his inmost soul, and expel all the phantoms of

delusion from him? And lastly, who is it that takes from his bosom the consciousness of a state of death, and replaces it with the most blissful and vital hope?—yes, that imparts to his soul, even on this side eternity, a new life of peace, supernatural joy, divine consciousness of adoption, and the most heartfelt longing after heaven? Is it not the thorn-crowned Sufferer there who is the author of it all?

Finally, the scene on Calvary affords us a representation of the boundless power and wonderful efficacy of the merits of our great High Priest. For even as the word "to-day," in our Lord's announcement, represents all future purging and purifying fires as forever extinguished in his blood, as regards his believing people—so the expression, "This day shall you be with me in paradise"—whether by the word be understood heaven itself, or only an outer court of heaven, affords us a stupendous proof that Christ's vicarious satisfaction perfectly suffices for the sinner's justification and beatification. Certainly, we must duly observe that the malefactor was in a state of true and thorough repentance, and that after breaking with sin by penitential grief, and opening his heart to Jesus by a living faith, he had received into himself all the germs of a subsequent sanctification—germs which immediately began to unfold themselves in the compassionate love in which he took to heart the critical state of his companion in crime. But it was not for the sake of these germs of future virtues, which naturally could offer no recompense for a perfect obedience of the law, that the malefactor was justified before the divine tribunal; but he received the divine absolution in the righteousness of his Surety imputed to him, which does not less commend incipient saints to the eyes of the Judge of the living and the dead, than those already perfected.

Anticipate, my friends, the next few moments, and what do you see occur above the summit of Calvary? The three who were crucified bow their heads, and the great separation is accomplished, Alas! he on Jesus' left descends also to the left; and the powers of darkness will have joyfully welcomed him who, even in death, could insult the Lord of Glory, as one of their most faithful and consistent instruments. The criminal to the right, on the contrary, soars heavenward, at the side of the Prince of Peace, and, received into his triumphal chariot, passes, amid the

acclamations of angels, through the gates of paradise, no longer guarded by the cherub's flaming sword. He was the first herald who, by his appearing there, brought the glorified spirits the intelligence that Christ had won the great battle of our deliverance. As the first-fruits of the sufferings of the Divine Surety, as well as of the blissful human harvest which should spring up from the wondrous seed of his blood, he may still be especially embraced by the worshipers of the Lamb, in the realms above, as a particularly dear citizen of the heavenly kingdom. To us he remains both an incomparable monument of the all-sufficiency of the blood of Christ, and a lofty candlestick, on which the free grace of God beams as a flame, and an extremely significant beacon, yes, a light-house established by God for us on our passage through life. O, be assured, my readers, that the spiritual footsteps of the dying malefactor, with the words, "Remember me!" on his lips, point out to us to this day, the only path that leads to Zion. Let us, therefore, follow him, and make his "Remember me!" our own, and then say under the cross of the bleeding Friend of Sinners, as heartily in faith, as poor in spirit, in the sense of the malefactor,

"When to the cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice!
I must remember thee.

"And when these failing lips grow mute,
And mind and memory flee,
When you shall in your kingdom come,
Jesus, remember me!"

The Legacy of Love

Our present meditation brings us again to the cross on Calvary. And where, my readers, do we linger more willingly than beneath its shade? Every day the desires of our hearts resort there for the supply of our soul's necessities. For since we have daily to lament over our negligences and sins, we daily require fresh balm for our wounded consciences. What

would become of us had we not Calvary to flee to? O, you are the Ararat to which I daily escape from the waves of trouble; the Zoar to which I flee from the flames of Sodom; my Nebo's top, from whence I survey the promised land; and my Tabor, where I rejoice and say, "It is good to be here—here will we erect our habitations."

A pleasing scene presents itself to our view beneath the cross. He who was "fairer than the children of men" does not die unlamented. In the midst of rage and fury, love stands near him in his dying moments, and lifts up to him its tearful and affectionate eye. Look at the little mournful group yonder, and behold a lovely little company in the midst of the bands of Belial—a hidden rosebud under wild and tangled bramble-bushes, a splendid wreath of lilies around the deathbed of the Redeemer.

It is thus that the cross is surrounded even to this day. Though the infuriated hosts of hell rage around it, yet it is still encircled by the most estimable of the earth. For if we seek for sacred grief, for love which has emanated from heaven, for patience, which never tires, and gratitude, which gives up everything—where do these beautiful and heavenly flowers flourish except beneath the cross? We know the faithful company there, who form a living commentary on the words of the Song of songs, "Love is strong as death, and immovable as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." What do they care about hazarding their lives! Their life was the man on the cross. What do they trouble themselves about the scorn and contempt of the word! They desire nothing else and nothing better from a world which crowned their King with thorns. Had they been nailed to the cross with him, they would have pushed away the earth from under them as a rotten and worthless plank, and have triumphantly cast their anchor in the clouds. What charms could earth have for them, after his blessed steps ceased to tread upon its thorny and thirsty soil?

Look at the courageous group a little more closely. Of whom does it consist? Strange enough, with one exception, all of them are females. The strong are fled—the weak maintain their ground; the heroes despair—the timid, who did not presume to promise anything, overcome the world. This was because they poured out their hearts before God, saying, "Hold

you us up, and we shall be safe!" and speaking thus, they leaned firmly on the divine arm. God's strength was then mighty in their weakness. How often does something of a similar kind occur among us! If the man's is the splendid deed, the result of combined strength—the woman's is enduring patience. If to the former belongs the heroism which cuts the knot—to the latter (which is the greater of the two) belongs the silent self-sacrificing love which is faithful even unto death.

Among the beloved females beneath the cross, there is one who especially demands our sympathy. It is the blessed one, who bore in her womb the man that bleeds on the cross—the deeply stricken Mary. Though it was grievous for Eve to stand at the grave of her favorite son Abel, and still more so for the patriarch Jacob to behold the bloody garment of his son Joseph, yet what was their grief compared with that of the mother of our Lord at the foot of the cross? O think *where* she is standing, what *is* the cause of her grief, and *who* it is she mourns! Think what a son, and what a kind of death! O who is able to describe the feelings which wring her maternal heart! One thing, however, we may be assured of, that the deeply wounded Mary did not despair. Even through this her night of weeping, the words of her Son, respecting the necessity of the sufferings that awaited him, and the glory that should follow, gleamed like some distant light. And although it was most difficult for her still to cleave firmly to them, and though an impetuous host of distressing doubts raged in Mary's bosom, yet she was not inconsolable, nor did she give up all for lost, as surely as the assertion of the apostle is true, that God will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. No! whenever the gold is in the crucible, the Refiner himself is at hand; and when a child of the Most High suffers, the paternal hand of Jehovah always lies, alleviating and mitigating, between the burden and the burdened shoulder. If *we* thus experience it, my readers, how will Mary have experienced it!

You also see, that although leaning on the disciple whom Jesus loved, she still stands upright under the cross, and only a gentle shower of tears bedews her cheeks, but no cry of agony proceeds from her lips. When the wife of Phineas saw the ark in the hands of the enemy, she fell dead upon the ground in dire dismay. Mary beholds something more appalling than

that event, yet still she lives. She is indeed compelled again to bring forth Christ with great travail. Her earthly son dies, with all the earthly connection in which she had hitherto stood toward him, as well as the earthly ideas of him and his kingdom, so far as she had yielded to them. In opposition to these, she has now to receive Christ by faith, as from his ashes, in a very different capacity—as a new Christ—as one hitherto not known by her—as a Lord and Prince of Peace of an incomparably higher kind and order than human; nor did she attain to this without great pain and conflict.

At Mary's side, and serving as her support, the Apostle John meets our eye. This "divine eagle" also tries the pinions of his penetrating spirit in the darkness and the storm on Calvary, but he is unable to find the way through this thunder-cloud. He sees himself surrounded by problems which he is unable to solve. But where his understanding beholds only an empty desert, he has, nevertheless, an inward presentiment of infinite and hidden riches. He again introduces himself here, as he is so gladly accustomed to do, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." In these words he indicates to us what was his pride, his crown, and his highest boast. At the same time, they point out to us the source from whence he derived all his consolation, all his hope, and all his strength. This source was love—not the love with which he embraced the Lord, but that with which the Lord embraced him. Nor do I know anything more precious or desirable, than the lively, fresh, and well-founded consciousness of the Savior's love and affection. What a peaceful resting-place is this in the wild nocturnal storm! What a powerful staff and support for a wanderer in the wilderness! What sweet consolation in "the pit where there is no water;" and what an overflowing spring of encouragement in life and death! He who, with John, can sign himself the disciple whom Jesus loves, has, in this appellation, a sure guaranty for all that he needs, and for all that his heart can desire. If, in other respects, he must call himself the man that is tossed with tempest, or the wretched worm which the world treads under foot; yet, if he is only justified in subscribing himself "the disciple whom Jesus loves," what more will he have? This consciousness gilds and sweetens everything.

While the little company stand mourning together below, the mighty

Sufferer hangs silent and bleeding on the cross. He is in the sanctuary performing his high-priestly office, while bearing upon his heart the sinful race of Adam. "Oh," might the mourning Mary think, "if he would but once more open his gracious lips to me, and give me one parting word!" But in the sublime situation he is now occupying, will he still be able to attend to what is passing at the foot of the cross? Will he still find time and leisure to think of anything else than how he may arm and defend himself against the fiery darts of the wicked one which fly around him, and how he may complete the great and world-embracing work, on the last stage of which he has just entered! Scarcely should we think it possible. But what occurs? O when did anything happen more generous and affecting than this? Truly, until the end of time his filial tenderness will be spoken of. In the midst of his dying agonies the Divine sufferer all at once directs his eyes to the little faithful group below; and he who is able to read in his eyes, reads a sympathy and a degree of consoling, cheering, and encouraging love, such as the world, until then, had never beheld. No, my friends; however much he may have to think of and attend to, he never loses sight of his children for a moment from the sphere of his superintending care. However great and boundless may be the objects of his supervision and vigilance in his government, yet there will never be a moment when the eye of his love will not rest upon every individual whom the Father has given him. They are his primary care, although in number and outward appearance, in comparison with what he has otherwise to superintend and provide for, they may be as the drops in the wide rolling ocean, and as flowerets in the immense and gloomy forest in which they stand. He discovers the scattered solitary flowers in the wood, in order that he may tend, bedew, and adorn his bosom with them.

The Lord first fixes his eyes on his beloved and severely-tried mother. By means of the words he had spoken to the malefactor, respecting being with him that day in paradise, he had elevated her looks and thoughts above death and the grave. Yet still she would have to remain for a season alone in the world, which had now become so desolate to her, and lo! for this consideration, the Man of Sorrows on the cross still finds room in his heart, amid his anxieties for the world's redemption. He looks, in the kindest manner, at the weeping Mary, opens his mouth, and says—not in

effeminate weakness, but in sublime tranquility, self-possession, and serenity, referring to the disciple on whom his mother was leaning, "Woman, behold your son!" and then to John, "Behold your mother!"

Though the words are few, yet who is able to exhaust the fullness of tender affection which is poured into them? How consoling must it have been to Mary's grieved heart, the almost cheerful manner in which her dying Son made his last bequest. The sound of his voice, and the peaceful look which accompanied his words, were as much as to say, "Mary, your Son is not lost. He is only returning to his Father's happy abode, after the fatigues of life, in order to prepare a place for you." And then the contents of the words themselves—how tenderly did he clothe in them his last farewell to his beloved parent! How delicately did he arrange it, that by the hint given to John, she who had been so severely tried, should not also be a witness of his last and hardest struggle! And how providently does he enter, at the same time, into all, and even the most trifling necessities of his bereaved mother for the residue of her life upon earth! Truly, when was ever the divine command to honor father and mother so deeply and comprehensively fulfilled as it was on Calvary?

It has been considered strange that the Savior, in speaking to Mary, should have made use of the distant word, "Woman," instead of the tender name of mother. In reply to this, it is certainly true that he did so, partly because he would not still more deeply wound her bleeding heart by the sweet title of mother, as well as that he might not excite within himself a storm of human emotions; and likewise lest he should expose his mother to the rudeness of the surrounding crowd. But the chief reason why, instead of the maternal title, he used the more general term "Woman," or lady, lies much deeper, both in this, and the well-known scene at the marriage in Cana. He certainly meant his mother to understand that henceforward his earthly connection with her must give way to a superior one. As though he had said, "You, my mother, will from this time be as one of my daughters, and I your Lord. You believe in me, and shall be blessed. You lay hold of the hem of my garment, and I appear in your stead. You adore me, and I am your High Priest and King. Mother, brother, and sister, henceforward, are all who swear allegiance to my banner. The relationships according to the flesh and the manner of

the world have an end; other and more spiritual and heavenly take their place."

It was this that the Lord intended to suggest to Mary's mind; and hence the word "Woman," which at first sounds strange, instead of the more tender and affectionate term, "Mother." No, it the less became him to call her Mother now, since this term in the Hebrew, includes in it the idea of "Mistress," while he was just preparing, as the Lord of lords, to ascend the throne of eternal majesty. But while endeavoring to elevate Mary's mind above the sphere of merely human conceptions into a higher region, he does not forget either that he is her son, or that she is his dear and severely-tried mother; and reflects, at the same time, that man, in his weakness, has need of man; and besides the heart of God must possess, at least, one heart upon earth, into which he can confidingly pour out his own, and upon whose love and faithfulness he may firmly reckon under all circumstances. For these reasons, the Lord is desirous, in his filial forethought, and as far as is practicable, to fill up for Mary, even in a human respect, the void which his decease would leave in her life, and give her, instead of himself, a son to assist her, even in an earthly manner, in whom she might place entire confidence, and on whose shoulder she could lean in all her distresses, cares, and sorrows. And in this new son, he bequeaths to her his favorite disciple, the faithful and feeling John. Is it not as if he intended to say, "I well know, my Mother, how solitary and dreary must be a widow's path upon earth, when the crown is removed from her head. But lo! here is the disciple that lay in my bosom, and is thus peculiarly prepared to become your support and stay. He is ready to do all I desire of him, and since I have neither silver nor gold, I bequeath you all my claim on this disciple's love, gratitude, and faithfulness. Let him be your son!" It was thus he loved to the end; thus delicately does he provide for all the necessities of those he loves. And as he formerly did, so he does still. He is to this hour the compassionate High Priest. He enters most feelingly into the wants of those who confide in him, so that every one in his station, whether they be widows, orphans, poor and infirm, or to whatever class of the weary and heavy-laden they belong, they may rely, most peculiarly, on his providential care.

After saying to Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" he says to John,

"Behold your mother!" O what a proof does the Savior here give his disciple of the affection and confidence which he reposes in him! He imposes a burden upon him, but he knows that John will regard it as the highest honor and felicity which could be bestowed upon him on earth. Nor is the Savior mistaken in his disciple. John understands his Master's wish, looks at Mary, and his whole soul says to her, "My Mother!"

"From that hour," we are informed, "that disciple took her unto his own home." John possessed therefore a house of his own, doubtless in Jerusalem, which Mary did not. Joseph had already fallen asleep. We may also infer, from the narrative, that Jesus was Mary's only son. The expression, "That disciple took her into his own home," implies, however, according to the original, much more than that he only took care of her in his habitation. He received her into his heart, and bore her thence forward on his hands. It may easily be supposed what love he felt toward her from that time, and with what tenderness and fidelity he accompanied her through life. It afforded him supreme pleasure to possess in her an object, toward which he could in some measure manifest the gratitude and affection he felt toward Him, to whom he owed his salvation. But the whole of the costly harvest of love, which flourished for her Son, in the heart of the disciple, under the dew of the Holy Spirit, was transferred to Mary. And because John's love was in reality no other than a sacred spark from Jesus' own bosom, Mary was beloved by John, as before, with the love of her divine Son.

"Woman, behold your Son!" "John, behold your mother!" O attend carefully to these words. They contain nothing less than the record of the institution of a new family fellowship upon earth. In this fellowship Christ is the head, and all his believing people form unitedly one great, closely-connected family. Begotten of the same seed, endued with the same spirit, they are all called to one inheritance, and eventually, though now scattered abroad through the world, one city with shining walls will embrace them. They soon know each other by their similarity of sentiment, bias, speech, and joyful hope, and love each other with one love—that love which overflowed into them from the heart of Christ their head. As long as they linger here below, their habitation is under the cross, and their daily bread the word of God; their breath, prayer, and the

peace of God the atmosphere in which they freely and blissfully move. The inmost and most essential family feature of this spiritual fraternity is, that self in them is crucified, and Christ is the center of all their doing and suffering.

Let him who would envy John the pleasing task of being a support to the mother of Jesus know, that the way to the same honor lies open to him. Let him reflect on a previous expression of our Lord's, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? and stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother," Matt. 12:48-50.

If you are really desirous of the privilege enjoyed by John, you now see that it may be your. Be, from love to the Lord, a faithful help to his children; feed the hungry, give drink to him that is thirsty, and especially visit pious widows in their loneliness, and you will perform a service, which is well-pleasing to him. Become feet to the lame, among believers, eyes to the blind, the counselor and father of the orphan, and you will be taking his place upon earth, as did his disciple of old. John certainly saw himself more closely connected with this life by the new duty imposed upon him; but you see that this life can give new charms for you also, in a similar manner. Only apply to the heavenly Prince of Peace to open your eyes that you may recognize his quiet and holy household; and even as he will then say to the latter, who constitute his spiritual Church, while suing for their love to you, "Woman, behold your Son!" so he will also say to you, with reference to some troop of weary and heavy laden beloved ones, "Behold your mother!"

Yes, my friends, if a reformation is to take place on earth, and the world to experience a golden age, Christianity alone can produce it. For tell me, what is wanting to make the world a kingdom of heaven, if that tender, profound, and self-denying love which we see Jesus practice and recommend, were paramount in every human heart? But the whole of religion consists in this, that Christ be formed in every individual. Think what it would be if every one exhibited a living mirror of "the fairest of the sons of men," and loved God and the brethren like him! O really, the loftiest and most glorious idea of human society would then be realized.

Be convinced, therefore, that you are invited and allured by Jesus, not merely to be happy in heaven, but that the earth may again be transformed into a paradise; for you see in John's case, that he who casts himself by living faith on Jesus' bosom, soon imbibes from thence his love.

We part from our pleasing narrative; but I must previously mention an event which happened some years ago in Paris. A society had been formed there, the sittings of which the most celebrated infidels of the time used weekly to attend, in order, as they expressed it, to "discover the absurdities of the Bible," and to make them the object of their ridicule. But one evening, when the members were busy at their work, and for their devilish purpose had read some portions of the Gospel, the well-known philosopher, Diderot, who had hitherto been the last and the least voluble of the blasphemers, suddenly began to say with a gravity which was not customary with him, "However it may be with this book, gentlemen, I freely confess, on behalf of the truth, that I know no one, neither in France, nor in the whole world, who is able to speak and write with more tact and talent than the fishermen and publicans who have written these narratives. I venture to assert, that none of us is capable of writing, even approximately, a tale, which is so simple, and at the same time so sublime, so lively and affecting, and of such powerful influence on the mind, and possessing such unweakened and pervading effect after the lapse of centuries, as each individual account of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, in the book before us."

He ceased, and all at once, instead of the laughter which shortly before had rung through the hall, a general and profound silence ensued. The truth of the speech was felt, and perhaps even something more. The company silently broke up, and it was not long before the entire society of scoffers was dissolved. And tell me, my readers, if you have not felt at the little scene we have been contemplating, something similar to what the infidel Frenchman felt. Yes, there is nothing in the world which bears in its front the stamp of such lively historical truth as the Gospel; and whatever there may be of beautiful upon earth, he who has eyes to see, must confess, that the most beautiful, venerable, and holy is, and will ever be, the Gospel history.

Let us then ever bear in mind the pleasing exhibition of Jesus' love instituting love on the cross, which we have now been contemplating; and may it enable us to form those supernatural bonds of union and fellowship, which will survive both time and death. Let this exhibition continually remind us of the first and most glorious lesson of our lives, that of loving the Lord Jesus in his people, and urge us to sing on our way to our heavenly home,

"Come, brethren, onward move,
And travel hand in hand;
Rejoicing in each other's love,
While in this desert land.

"More child-like let us grow,
Nor fall out by the way;
And angels, even while here below,
Well-pleased shall with us stay."

"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani!"

Once, when a voice spoke from heaven to the people who were assembled around Jesus, the evangelist relates, that "some said it thundered; others, that an angel spoke to him." No one exactly knew what to make of the wondrous sound, although all were affected, amazed, and thrilled by a secret awe. Such are our feelings on the present occasion, on hearing the echo of the cry, which sounds down from the cross; and I confess that my soul trembles at the idea of approaching the unfathomable depth of suffering, from whence the cry of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" proceeded. How much rather would I lie prostrate on my face in silence before this awful incident, than write or speak upon it! You know what happened to Luther, when he plunged himself in profound meditation on this most enigmatical and affecting part of the whole of our Savior's sufferings. He continued for a long time without food, and sat wide awake, but as motionless as a corpse, in the same position, on his chair. And when at length he rose up from the depth of his cogitation; as from the shaft of a mysterious mine, he broke into a cry of amazement, and exclaimed, "God

forsaken of God! Who can understand it?" Yes, who is there that is able? We find ourselves surrounded by an impenetrable darkness. But if the understanding has here reached the boundary of all human comprehension, yet faith finds a path amid these mysterious shades. A holy light precedes it, and that light is derived from the Savior's Mediatorship. Enlightened by it, let us now contemplate, more closely, the awful cry of the dying Redeemer.

It is about twelve o'clock at noon that we again meet on Mount Calvary. The Savior has hung bleeding on the tree for nearly three hours. No change has meanwhile taken place in his vicinity, except that, in the little faithful group, we miss the disciple John and the mother of Jesus, the cause of which we know. A momentary silence has ensued in the crowd surrounding the place of execution. We may suppose that even on them the sublime behavior of the Divine Sufferer under his torture has not failed in producing feelings of emotion and shame. They look up to the cross with silent seriousness. The moaning of the two malefactors in their agony strikes their ears, and the trickling of the blood of the dying men is heard as it falls to the ground. From time to time, also, the grief and half-stifled sobs of the little faithful group is heard, whom we now, in spirit, join, asking with anxious hearts, if the Father of heaven will continue forever silent concerning his Son, and not at length make it known by some sign, which shall be obvious to all the world, that he, who was apparently rejected both by earth and heaven, was no transgressor, but in reality the Holy One of Israel, and his, the Father's elect and well-beloved Son.

Lo, a sign appears! But what kind of one? Who could have anticipated anything of the sort? Our surprise increases to horror, our amazement to dismay. The sun, just arrived at the meridian, withdraws its beams, as if the earth were no longer worthy of its light, and begins visibly, in a clear sky, to grow dark. First, twilight commences, as at the decline of day; and this is followed by the obscurity of evening. Gloomy night at length spreads itself like a funeral pall, not only over the land of Judea, but over the whole of the enlightened part of the earth. The animal creation are terrified. The herds of the field crowd bellowing together. The birds of the air flutter, alarmed, to their retreats, and the masses of the people who surround the place of execution, hurry back with loud outcries, to Jerusalem, wringing their hands and beating their breasts. Trembling and lamentation extend into palaces and cottages, as if the world were menaced with destruction. The primitive fathers, as for instance, Origen and Eusebius, were acquainted with heathen records, some of which were from distant countries, such as that of Phlegon, a freedman of the Emperor Adrian, which mentions an eclipse of the sun at the same time

with the crucifixion of Christ, and that one so entire, terrific, and wonderful had never before been seen in the world. An ancient tradition also states that Diogenes witnessed, in Egypt, the solar darkness which preceded the death of Jesus, and exclaimed, "Either the Deity himself suffers at this moment, or sympathizes with one that does."

We, my readers, also stand amazed at this terrific phenomenon, in which even the blindest cannot mistake the finger of the Almighty. But what does this gigantic hieroglyphic on the pillars of the world denote? Some have supposed it to convey a symbolical manifestation of the wrath of God against the murderers of Jesus. But such an interpretation is not in accordance with the event that is taking place on Calvary, and in which God, by the giving up of his only-begotten Son, evinces, not merely his judicial severity and avenging justice, but especially his compassion for the murderers. The inference has also been drawn from the darkness that nature must have suffered in the death of Christ. But there seems little ground even for this explanation, since Christ, by his vicarious death, became, in an especial manner, the prop, support, and renovator of nature.

It has also been supposed that the nocturnal darkness typified the fact that with Christ, the light of the world was extinguished. But it was just in Christ's vicarious death that the light of consolation and of real life rose upon the world. A sympathy also of the irrational creation with the pangs of its Lord and Master, has been spoken of; but there is no room here for such poetic speculations. The sun did not obscure itself, but it was the Almighty who clothed it in that mourning-dress.

The import of the sudden darkness lies incomparably deeper than the above-mentioned attempts at explaining it. Even the mournful cry of the sufferer does not leave us for a moment to doubt that the darkness stood in immediate relation to his sacred person, and the situation in which he was at the time. It is true, indeed, that the miraculous event, according to the purpose of God, was intended to intimate to the world the wondrous nature of the fact about to be chronicled in its history, that the Eternal Son, the source of all life, became himself a prey to death. But the chief object of the appalling phenomenon was to shadow forth, by a stupendous figure, the mysterious position and inward state at the time,

of him who bled on the cross. The Lord withdrew himself from the eyes of men behind the black curtain of appalling night, as behind the thick veil of the temple. He hung there full three hours on the cross, his thorn crowned head thoughtfully drooping on his bosom, involved in that darkness. He is in the Most Holy Place. He stands at the altar of the Lord. He performs his sacrificial functions. He is the true Aaron, and at the same time the Lamb; but the sacrificial fire that burns around him, I have no need to mention.

That which, during this time, passed between him and his Father, lies, for the present, sealed as with seven seals, hidden in the depths of eternity. We only know so much, that behind that veil, he was engaged in the most arduous conflict, gained the most brilliant victory, and adorned his representative obedience with its final crown. We know that the grave of our sins was then dug; the handwriting that was against us taken out of the way; the curse which impended over us blotted out; and the wall which separated us from our God removed. Call the sight of the Redeemer weltering in his blood, and in total darkness, heart-rending if you will; we know not a more delightful scene than that in heaven or on earth. The man on the cross is to us the fairest star in the horizon of the world. We behold it, and feel delivered from every evil. When Moses came forth from the darkness in which God dwelt, his face shone in such a manner, that the astonished Israelites could not bear the sight. The radiance which we wear upon our brow from the darkness of Calvary, as far as we enter believingly into it, is milder and more pleasant; for it is the radiance of a peace of which the world is ignorant, and the reflection of an inward and triumphant joy of which even the angels might envy us.

But I hear you say, "Explain to us the meaning of the awful darkness; decipher the terrific and ambiguous hieroglyphic, and unfold to us the state it indicates." Listen, then. That phenomenon signifies the withdrawing of another sun than the earthly one—the obscuring of an inward world. It shadows the going down of a day of comfort and joy. It points to a night of the soul, in which the last bright star is about to disappear. Imagine to yourselves, if possible, a man free from sin, holy; no, of divine nature, who calls the Almighty his light, God's nearness his paradise, and God's love his bliss. Imagine him deprived of all this; no

longer refreshed with any experience of the gracious presence of his heavenly Father, and although exclaiming, "Whom have I in heaven but you?" banished into dreadful and horrifying visions of hell, and surrounded by nothing but images of sin and death. Imagine such a one, and then say if his state is not strikingly depicted by the midnight darkness which overspreads the earth.

The third hour of this appalling and universal gloom is drawing to a close. The sun again begins to cast off his obscuring veil. The Sufferer then breaks his long and anxious silence, and, like some cry of distress from the shaft of a mine, but at the same time, like the trumpet-sound of victory, the incomprehensible and heart-affecting exclamation breaks forth, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" Under the influence of reverential awe, the evangelists give us this cry in the same language in which it was uttered by the Divine Sufferer. It is as if they were apprehensive lest a rendering of it into Greek might detract somewhat from its import. Like us, my readers, have all believers for eighteen hundred years stood amazed and astonished before these words, and have sought in vain to fathom their depth. You are aware that the words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" form the commencement of the twenty-second Psalm, in which David, impelled and guided by the Holy Spirit, describes, while connecting with it his own sufferings, the lot of a Righteous One sojourning in a sinful world. His description, however, expands in the sequel so much, that the Psalmist's personal state and circumstances lose themselves in it; and a child must perceive that more stupendous and important events than those in the life of David mingle in the expressions made use of by him. The portrait of a guiltless sufferer gradually increases to a sublimity, which has found its perfect antitype in the life of the holy Jesus. In the picture, features appear, of which we meet with only slight traces in David's history, and which, therefore, call upon us to seek their literal fulfillment elsewhere. For the sufferer in the Psalms is not only represented as the offscouring of the whole world, not only do those who see him say to him, "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing that he delighted in him"—not only must he agonizingly exclaim, "I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my tongue cleaves to my jaws, and you have brought me into the dust of death"—but he must also see what David

never experienced, that his hands and feet were pierced, and that his enemies parted his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture. Besides this, his passion ends in such a manner as no other man's sufferings; for a glorious crown of victory at length adorns the head of this tried and faithful One, yes, he receives the testimony that his sufferings shall result in nothing short of the salvation of the world, and the restoration, enlightening, and beatifying of the Gentiles. Who is so blind as not to perceive that this just man, who is so severely tried, and who comes forth so triumphantly from the conflict, as depicted by the Spirit in this twenty-second Psalm, is no other than the promised Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth? This is beyond a doubt, even if the New Testament had not expressly given that Psalm such an application. Even one of the champions of modern infidelity, prophesying like Balaam, has called the twenty-second Psalm "the program of the crucifixion of Christ;" and another, against his will, is carried away to use these words, "One might almost think a Christian had written this Psalm."

We will not entirely reject the idea that our Lord, in his distress of soul, bore this Psalm in mind. But if he uttered his exclamation with a conscious reference to it, he certainly did not do so simply in order that the words might be fulfilled; but only because that prophetic Psalm was now being fulfilled in him. That mournful cry, as it proceeded from his lips, was the genuine expression of the most perfect personal reality and truth. "But was Christ really forsaken of God while on the cross?" Not a moment, my dear readers. How could he be forsaken of God, who was essentially one with him, and when just at the moment of his unconditional obedient self-sacrifice on the cross, he was the object of his supreme and paternal good pleasure? But in the depths of suffering into which he had then sunk, and through which his cry of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" darts like a flash of lightning—such distress overpowered him, such horrible and death-like terror appalled him, and such infernal temptations roared around him, that a feeling came over him, as if he were exiled from the fellowship of God, and entirely given up to the infernal powers. Not only did all the horrors which were produced in the world from the dreadful womb of sin expand themselves before him, but he also entered, with his holy soul, in a manner incomprehensible to us,

into the fellowship of our consciousness of guilt, and emptied the whole of the horrible cup of the wages of sin—that is, of the death involved in the curse, which was threatened in paradise.

And no one stood by him. No greeting of affection descended toward him from heaven. No vision of angels refreshed him in his great agony. The Father had really withdrawn himself from his inward consciousness. In the sphere of his feelings, the latter stood opposed to him. If the trials in Gethsemane brought the Lord Jesus to the extreme boundary of obedience—those of the cross brought him to the utmost extent of faith. Not a step, no, nor a line more was between him and despair. According to Psalm 69:15, the horrible idea entered his soul as with a vulture's claws, that these floods of suffering might swallow him up, and the pit shut her mouth upon him. It was then that the cry of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" was wrung from his agitated bosom.

But be very careful, in explaining this expression, that you make no mistake. It is not a charging God with having forsaken him, but rather a powerful defense against infernal incitement to such an accusation. By the repetition of the words, "My God," he makes it evident that solely by means of his naked faith he had struggled through all opposing feelings; and that God was still his God. Does he not, in these words, still cling with filial fondness to his heavenly Father, and say—although the words, "My God," instead of "My Father," leave us to infer a superiority of inward reverence in the presence of the Eternal Majesty—"Between you and me there can never be any separation!"

Perhaps some one may say, "But we hear him inquire why God had forsaken him?" That is true; but consider that the words do not, in the first place, ask the reason of his passion in general. Of this he was clearly conscious every moment on the cross. The question rather refers exclusively to the personal bearing of his heavenly Father toward him, especially during the three hours of darkness; and the inquiry is a filial one, synonymous with "Why are you so far from me, and hide your face from me?" But at the very moment in which he is threatened with the horrible idea that the hell which blazed around him might close over him, and when the nameless misery of being eternally rejected entered, as far as it was possible, into his consciousness, he fled from this horrible

mental phantom, and from the fiery darts of the wicked one, holding the shield of faith against them, into the arms of God; and hence the following results as the real meaning of his mournful cry, "My God, why do you forsake me, and withdraw your aid from me? Have I acted contrary to your commands? Am I not still your child, your only-begotten Son; in whom is all your delight? And you are still my God; for how should you be able to forsake me? You can not; you will help me out of this distress. You will cause your face again to shine." Thus, complaint—not accusation—a cry for help, and a victorious child-like confidence are the three elements which mingle in the exclamation, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!"

But let this suffice respecting a subject which, inaccessible to human comprehension, discloses, even to believing presentiment, only a small part of its sublime signification. But so much must be clear to every one, that without the doctrine of mediation, Christ's mournful cry on the cross would be altogether inexplicable. But, viewed in connection with it, the words become the solemn announcement of our eternal redemption. May God in mercy grant that as such, they may find a mighty and increasing echo within us!

Thus, as far as it was possible—and with reference to the mysterious connection into which Christ as the second Adam entered with our race, we must not imagine the limits of this possibility too narrow—the Lord tasted the bitterest drop in the accursed cup—the being forsaken of God. The words, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" were certainly the warrior's cry, with which he overpowered and victoriously overcame, by faith, the inward feeling of abandonment. But, nevertheless, it was a manifest proof that Christ had really to endure an arduous struggle with this horrible feeling.

If we now inquire what fruits have resulted to us from this conflict, the fact itself is encouraging and consolatory for us, that in our Lord's inquiry why he was forsaken, the consciousness of his perfect righteousness before God is so clearly manifested. For in default of it, how could he have ventured the bold question to the thrice holy God, why he had forsaken him? But the most essential benefit which we derive from his conflict is a very different one. How did those mistake, who, beneath the

cross, said to one another, in wretched misunderstanding of his words, "This man calls for Elijah!" Primarily, this remark was intended for anything but mockery. On the contrary, the feeling again broke in upon the murderers that the exalted one who was bleeding on the cross might be the Messiah. But as they knew from the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi that Elijah, as the forerunner, was to precede the great one who was to come, the idea occurred to them that possibly the Divine Savior was invoking the aid of that powerful herald of God from the invisible world. But what a misunderstanding of the great Redeemer lay at the bottom of this idea of his crucifiers! It was not of himself that he thought; but of the sinners whom he was representing, when he exclaimed, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" and his primary intention in it was to reconquer the heart of the living God for them. For if God forsook him, he had also forsaken them whom he represented. If God rejected the Surety's work as insufficient, the redemption of the whole world was frustrated. It was chiefly this consideration which forced from our Lord the cry of "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" and hence his question contains this meaning in it also—"No, you do not forsake me, you accept my work, and I, therefore, cleave firmly to you as my God, and consequently, also, as the God of those whose cause I have undertaken."

But his heavenly Father did not suffer the cry of his Son to remain without his "Amen." He uttered it symbolically, by immediately dispelling the darkness, and restoring to the sun its full mid-day splendor. The being thus forsaken, essentially belonged to the cup which our great High Priest was obliged to empty for us. Hence there can be no idea that those who are united to Christ by the bonds of a living faith, can be really forsaken of God. Even as for us, no somber cloud any longer darkens heaven, and as we at all times behold the face of God unveiled, and every moment may enjoy free access to his throne of grace, so God will never more depart from us, whatever else may forsake us. Though we may be abandoned by the world's favor, the friendship of men, earthly prosperity, and bodily strength, though we may even be bereft, as may possibly be the case, of the feeling of God's nearness, and the freshness of the inward life of faith; yet God himself always continues near and favorably inclined to us in Christ. However strangely he may sometimes act toward us, into whatever furnace of affliction he may plunge us, however completely he

may withdraw himself from our consciousness, yet in every situation the blissful privilege belongs to us, not only courageously to approach him, and say, "Why do you forsake me, your child, for whom your Son has atoned?" but also to say to him with still bolder confidence, "You will not, can not, and dare not forsake me, because the merits of your only-begotten Son forever bind you to me."

At this very time, the corpse of a pious female, who was one of the most costly pearls which, from this great city, will eventually adorn the Redeemer's crown, is being carried to its final resting-place. Who knew her, except her children and a little group of like-minded friends, whom the Lord had conducted to her? Who, except these, ever heard her name? She lay two whole years in the concealment of a gloomy attic, sick of a grievous and painful disease, as if on thorns, but she was thought to be lying on a bed of roses, so full was she of heavenly peace and cheerful resignation. The cause of which was, that Christ had become her life. The more her body wasted, the more was her spirit visibly strengthened in God. The more her outward man decayed, the more gloriously did her inner man unfold and transfigure itself. If, occasionally, the flood of suffering penetrated into her soul, we never heard her sigh, much less despond. If her faith grew dark, her eyes were immediately directed to Calvary, and beneath the echo of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" the cloud on her brow was rapidly dispelled. "He cannot forsake me," said she, with a smile, "after forsaking him for me, who paid my ransom." And once, when in the days of her last agony, compassion forced from me the words, "O that it might please the Lord in some measure to alleviate the cross of suffering!" she replied, waving her hand, and with solemn and serious emphasis, "O be silent! not one drop less! each of them is carefully measured out by his wisdom and love." She left the world adorned with the heavenly chaplet of the firmest faith, the sincerest humility, the most persevering resignation and patience, and the most self-denying love, a triumphant conqueror over death and the grave. She now sings the great "Hallelujah" with the host of those glorified spirits who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. God has wiped away the tears from her eyes, and placed in her hand the palm of a never-fading triumph. As her last will, she left behind her the earnest request that

nothing might be said at her grave, except what had reference to the grace of Christ and the power of his blood. Nor will we boast of anything else over her tomb than the mercy of God in Christ, and add the prayerful wish that our last end may be like hers!

I have inserted this incident in order to give my readers a fresh proof that God has still his people among us, and that he still sues for souls in the midst of us, as well as to afford them an instance how the mystery of the cross in general, and that of God's abandonment of the Mediator in particular, should be taken advantage of. May we be enabled to appropriate, in this manner, the fruits of the cross of Christ, and may the words of the hymn be increasingly realized in our happy experience—

"O, the sweet wonders of that cross
On which my Savior loved and died!
Its noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

"I Thirst!"

That portion of the history of our Savior's passion, which will form the subject of our present meditation, does not apparently belong to the more important and edifying parts of it. But let us not be deceived by the mere appearance, for if we dig sufficiently deep, we shall here find also the water of life abundantly springing forth from the inexhaustible well of salvation, which was opened for us on Calvary.

It is about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon The awful cry of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" has just been uttered, which, while it was doubtless a cry of distress, was, at the same time, a shout of victory and triumph. The sun again shines forth from its gloomy covering, and heaven again looks kindly down upon the earth. But you would be under a mistake in supposing this to be a sign, that the agonizing darkness which reigned in the Redeemer's soul, was now over. It continues even until the moment of his decease, although essentially diminished by the clearness of faith, which he had regained; and even the words, "I thirst!"

reach our ears from the midst of that darkness. To doubt this would show little acquaintance with the sixty-ninth Psalm, the mournful expressions in which, receive their final fulfillment in this last stage of our Lord's crucifixion.

It is true that Jesus knew, according to the express declaration of the evangelist, that his passion was drawing to its close. He clearly saw that the cup of suffering was emptied, with the exception of the last drops; but these last drops still remained, and required also to be drank, and, believe me, they did not yield in bitterness to those already tasted. Ah, see, he already drinks them! The woes of that death which was threatened in paradise, seize him. He enters into that state of which the spirit of prophecy represents him in the above-mentioned Psalm, as complaining and saying, "I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried, mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. Draw near unto my soul and redeem it. Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none." And these complaints conclude with the remarkable and prophetic words, "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." This trait, which also points out no resting-place in the Savior's path of suffering, had to be realized in the progress of his passion; and as a proof that this was really the case, or, as the Gospel expresses it, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," our Lord exclaims from the cross, "I thirst!" Yes, these words tell of complaint, distress, and agony. This, the Psalm above mentioned, which portrays to us a succession of trials, places beyond a doubt.

But of what nature was the distress expressed by the cry? First, it was certainly of a physical kind. How wounded and exhausted was the Savior, even when he reached Mount Calvary! and he had already hung nearly six hours on the cross. The blood-vessels of his sacred body are almost dried up. A dreadful fever rages through his frame. His juices have disappeared. His tongue cleaves to his jaws. His lips glow, and a drop of water seems a great refreshment to him. There is scarcely a greater torment than that of an insatiable thirst. Travelers who have experienced it in the burning steppes of the East, give us descriptions of it, which fill us with horror. They assure us, that when thus situated, if they had

possessed all the gold in the world, they would gladly have resigned it for a few drops, even of the muddiest water of our brooks. If they discovered a glimmering spot at a distance, which seemed to them a pond or lagoon, they rushed toward it like madmen. But if it turned out to be only a burning sandy surface, on which the sun's rays played, their disappointment plunged them into a state of despair, which caused them to break out into loud howlings. Only think, the Savior of the world was no stranger to this torment also! Even to this depth of destitution and wretchedness did he, who was so unspeakably rich, divest himself. And all this for us, "that we through his poverty might be made rich!" Who is able to comprehend and worthily to praise such amazing love?

But the cry from the cross, "I thirst," refers to something more horrible still than bodily torment. Does it not remind you of the awful representation from the invisible world, which the Lord once portrayed to our view in one of his parables? Does not the remembrance of the rich man present itself to you, who, while on earth, clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; but after inexorable death had swept him away, wrung his hands despairingly, being in pain and torment; and agonized by a nameless inward thirst, he called upon father Abraham to send Lazarus, that he might dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his parched tongue, but whose request was refused without mercy, however suppliantly it knocked at heaven's gates from the habitations of eternal night?

"No;" I hear you reply, "we did not think of this parable here. How should the rich man in torment remind us of the holy and righteous sufferer? We should deem it impious to compare the thirst of the guiltless Jesus with that of this child of hell. By such a comparison we think we should be acting worse than the Jews in numbering him with the transgressors." So you say; but know, my friends, that only those can speak thus, who do not believe what the Scriptures state of the vicarious enduring of the curse by Jesus Christ. But he to whom the light of the Holy Spirit has risen upon the words, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," would be indeed astonished if the Mediator did not actually experience the lot of the man in the parable—that is, if he had not tasted, as far as was possible, all the torments of the damned. And he

actually did so! The bitter scorn and ridicule which reached his ear from below, and was also expressed in the words, "Let us see if Elijah will come and help him," was only a faint and human representation of the more horrible assaults, which he had to endure behind the veil of that which was external. There, unseen, he was surrounded by the bands of Belial. There the powers of darkness aimed at him their most dangerous missiles. There Satan sifted him like wheat, and from this appalling host of adversaries, from this horrible desert, from this "pit in which there was no water," and in which he could only believe that God was his God, without feeling him to be so, rose, like the prayer of the lost man to send Lazarus, the cry, "I thirst!" To spare us, sinners, the thirst of an infinite absence of comfort, he submitted to such torment in his mediatorial capacity! O what a well of consolation has he opened for us by his thirst! If we sinners now exclaim, "Be not terrible unto me, you who are my confidence in distress," the flowing streams of peace bear the divine amen! to our prayers for the sake of the Redeemer's thirst.

"I thirst!" For what did he thirst? I think the answer now is plain. It was not only for earthly water that he languished, but for something greater, higher, and more essential. He longed for the termination of his redeeming toil, and the completion of his great work of mediation. When this object was attained, he would again be restored to the full beatifying fellowship of his heavenly Father, and would again see, whereas he now only believed. He would not then have laboriously to struggle for the consciousness that God was kindly and paternally inclined toward him, but would again taste it, for he would then rest, as formerly, in his Father's bosom, and instead of the horrible images of sin, the curse, and death, the radiance of a spotless purity and holiness would beam upon him anew from every side. Peace and joy would then return. The viperous hissing of the powers of darkness around him would be silenced. He would hear only the hallelujahs of angels, and the blessed above. Every discord would be dissolved in blissful harmony, and the atmosphere in which he breathed, would again be love, entirely love. Yes, he thirsted after the full restoration of his Father's countenance, and after his Father's renewed and plain declaration, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," as well as after the paternal confirmation of his work of redemption, as being spotlessly perfect. That he thirsted chiefly

for this, is no arbitrary supposition, but is derived from those passages of the sixty-ninth Psalm, which belong here, and which represent him as saying in his agony, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. My prayer is unto you, O Lord! hear me in the truth of your salvation. Turn unto me according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in trouble. Hear me speedily; draw near unto my soul, and redeem it." Hence his thirst is an expression of desire toward his heavenly Father.

But do not think that in this complaint he had only himself and what belonged to his peace in view. It was not for his own sake that he hung upon the cross. He longed to be again received into fellowship with God, because his reception into it would be a pledge of theirs, whom he bore vicariously upon his heart. As the second Adam, he experienced their fate in what he endured, and by that means acquired a legal claim to prepare their future inheritance. After taking their place, as their representative, he could not be justified, exalted, and crowned without their participating in it. But how did he long for the moment when he could appear before his Father, and say, "Here am I, and those whom you have given me! I have redeemed them, have bought them with my blood, and now present them before you unreproveable. Henceforth they are your and mine, and worthy to enter into your courts." It is to this desire of his heart, and to this especially, that he gave utterance in the symbolical words, "I thirst!" O with what rich garlands of love has Jesus adorned the accursed tree!

But we do not fail to perceive that the words, "I thirst," not only expressed the Savior's longing after God his heavenly Father, but likewise a request to mankind, whom he saw represented on Calvary by those who crucified him. Even from them he solicited a charitable act. He requested of them a drink of cooling water for his parched tongue. Do not overlook this circumstance. However trivial the trait may seem, there is something great concealed under it. Who, even if he had been the noblest of his race, would in Jesus' situation, have uttered those words to his scoffing foes, and have besought of them a manifestation of kindness and charity? These men were deserving of proud contempt; but as a proof that he was so differently minded from his brethren after the flesh, and that nothing dwelt in his heart of all that is termed wounded pride, revenge, or angry

feeling—he solicits from his adversaries an act of compassion and kindness, and says to them, suppliantly, "I thirst." What else did he intend to say by this, than, "See, I do not break with you. I continue faithfully inclined toward you, and hold the bond firmly which connects me with you." Let him look here, who does not yet know what it is to heap coals of fire on his enemy's head. How does the holiness of your Redeemer again manifest itself! How does the pure golden grain of his divine nature here display itself afresh! Yes, light is his garment. But it was necessary that he who was willing to be our Surety and Mediator should be so constituted. A speck on the white robe of his righteousness would have sufficed to have deprived him of the ability for the accomplishment of his great work.

It might be supposed that the delicate trait of heartfelt approximation and confiding condescension, as evidenced in the words, "I thirst," must have filled those who crucified the Savior, with a confusion which would have scarcely permitted them to lift up their eyes any more. And it certainly seems as if it had not entirely failed of its conciliating impression, by producing in them milder sentiments. We see them immediately prepare to fulfill his request. One of them runs and fetches a branch of hyssop, and after they had dipped a sponge in vinegar, and put it on the reed, they held it up to his mouth that he might suck it. But even this miserable refreshment is mingled with the gall of renewed mockery. "Let alone," say they, "let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down!" But if I mistake not, there is more seriousness than jest in this speech, and that they really intended by it to disguise the better and gentler feelings of compassion—no, even a certain inclining toward the dying man, which they felt arise within them at that moment. If we wish to gain our opponents, we cannot do so more rapidly or surely than by requesting them to do us a kindness, and thus oblige ourselves to thank them. This will immediately soften them. But in order to this, a degree of humility and charity is requisite, which every one does not possess. But this charity and humility dwelt in the Savior in unlimited fullness; and in order to place himself in a position to owe the world his thanks, he gives the latter, by saying, "I thirst," the opportunity of presenting him with the last earthly solace of his life.

What an affecting and heart-winning trait is this! O that it may win our hearts also, if they are not already gained for Jesus! For that for which he chiefly thirsts is, that he may gain us over to himself. The principal object of his desire and longing is, that transgressors may be freed from sin; those who are under the curse, absolved; those that are bound, liberated; and the prisoners set free. But that this great end of human redemption may be accomplished, he still thirsts for our love, the resignation of ourselves to him, and for our childlike confidence in his saving name. We therefore know how and with what we can still refresh the Lord of Glory. The first solace which he, with desire, awaits from us, is our tears of penitence and repentance. O let us bear them to him! Or shall we never fall weeping into each other's arms saying, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he has torn and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up?" Shall the blood which flowed on the cross, never succeed in softening the hard ground of our hearts, nor the love which died for us, inflame our frigid souls with a reciprocal affection? O the abundance of awakening voices and attracting powers, which urge themselves upon us from the cross! Will we ever resist them, as if we considered it an honor to make it evident that the hardness of our hearts was altogether invincible? May God prevent it, and bestow upon us the humility of the tax-collector, and the ardent desire of the dying malefactor.

There may be some of my readers whose eyes, from which a penitential tear never flowed, will soon close in death. O that they would melt before despair hardens them forever! There may be those who, from childhood up, have witnessed what many prophets and kings have desired to see and have not seen, and yet are far from recognizing the one thing that is needful. O that they would weep at length over their blindness, and their base and appalling ingratitude! There may be those, also, whose eyes require no light to reveal to them their misdeeds, and yet are nevertheless like sealed fountains which yield no water. O that you could weep as Peter wept, and like David, who watered his couch with his tears! Such tears are the drink-offering for which the Savior still thirsts. God grant that we may approach his throne with them! As soon as this takes place, the actions change, the relations are reversed. It is then he who gives us to drink, and refreshes us; and we imbibe and enjoy. And blessed is he who experiences in himself the truth of his words, "Whoever drinks of the water that I

shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Who would not say with the Samaritan woman, with reference to such a draught, "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst no more!"

"It is Finished!"

These are the greatest and most momentous words that were ever spoken upon earth, since the beginning of the world. Who does not find in them a cry of victory? It is a shout of triumph, which announces to the kingdom of darkness its complete overthrow and to the kingdom of heaven upon earth its eternal establishment. How wonderful! At the very moment when, for the Hero of Judah, all seems lost, his words declare that all is won and accomplished! Our Lord's exclamation is like the sound of a heavenly jubilee-trumpet, and announces to the race of Adam, which was under the curse, the commencement of a free and sabbatic year, which will ever more extensively display its blessing, but never come to an end. Listen, and it will appear to you as if in the words, "It is finished!" you heard fetters burst, and prison-walls fall down. At these words, barriers as high as heaven are overthrown, and gates which had been closed for thousands of years, again move on their hinges. But what was it that was finished at the moment when that cry was uttered? The evangelist introduces his narrative with the words, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were accomplished." Only think—"All things!" What more can we want? But wherein did they consist? We hasten to lift the veil, and view in detail what was realized and brought about, and may the full peace be imparted to us which the words, "It is finished!" announce to the world!

"Jesus cried with a loud voice, It is finished!" It would seem as if he had wished to drink only to make this victorious cry sound forth with full force, like the voice of a herald or the sound of a trumpet. The Lord has now reached the termination of his labors. He has performed the stupendous task which he undertook in the council of peace, before the world was, when he said, "I delight to do your will, O my God!" Death, to which he is on the point of submitting, formed the summit, but also the

concluding act of his mediatorial work. Only take into your hands the divine program of his vicarious earthly course, as compiled in types and prophecies in the archives of the Old Testament, and be convinced how it has been most minutely carried out. The mysterious delineation of the Messiah, as it passes before us in increasing brightness and completeness, in the writings of Moses and the prophets, is fully realized in its smallest and minutest traits in the person of Jesus. If you ask for the wondrous infant of Bethlehem described by Micah, "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;" or for "the Child born, and the Son given, with the government upon his shoulder," whom Isaiah brings before us; or for the meek and lowly King mentioned by Zechariah, who makes his entrance into Jerusalem on the foal of an donkey—it meets you bodily in Jesus Christ. Do you seek for the seed of the woman, who, with his wounded heel, bruises the serpent's head; or the second Aaron, who should actually bring about a reconciliation between God and a sinful world—look up to the cross, and there you will see all combined in One.

Do you look about you for the antitype of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, or of the paschal lamb and its delivering blood in Egypt; or for the exalted Sufferer, who appears in the appalling descriptions given us in Psalms 22 and 69, which record a malefactor's awful doom, even to the mournful cry of "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"—all is combined in the bleeding Savior who hangs yonder, and exclaims, "It is finished!" Then take a retrospective look into the writings of the ancient prophets, and what meets your view? The ancient types have lost their significance. They have put on flesh and blood in Jesus Christ. Their importance to us is henceforth limited to the testimony they bear that the divinely-promised Messiah is indeed come, and that no other is to be looked for. Every condition of the work of human redemption had been fulfilled at the moment when Christ uttered the words, "It is finished!" with the exception of one, which was included and taken for granted in them, because it inevitably awaited him, and actually took place immediately afterward—thus bringing the whole to a perfect conclusion.

That which still remained unaccomplished clearly proves that Jesus did not hang on the cross on his own account, but as our representative. It was our death. The laws of nature forbade that a green and thoroughly

healthy tree, which was rooted in eternity, should bleed and sink beneath the blows of "the last enemy." It was contrary to the divine government that One, who had not, with Adam, tasted the forbidden fruit, should nevertheless fall under the sentence pronounced upon the latter, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die!" It was also entirely opposed to the immutable and fundamental statutes of the sanctuary, that a tribute should be demanded of a righteous person, which is there expressly indicated as the wages of sin. It was at variance with the express promise of the Most High—"This do, and you shall live"—that One, who did not leave unfulfilled one iota of the divine commands, should not live, but die. He himself repeatedly declared that the universal law of mortality had, abstractedly considered, no claim upon his person. He asserted most pointedly, that no one, not even his Father in heaven, took away his life, but that he laid it voluntarily down. Truly, the death of Jesus would have shaken the throne of the Almighty to its foundations, have broken through the ordinances of his house, and violated all the statutes of the divine government, if it were not permitted us to carry the idea of it beyond the bounds of such a death as all experience.

These considerations compel us—irrespective of any revelation which the Scriptures afford—to regard the death of Christ as something extraordinary and unique in its kind. And certainly, it is a fact which stands solitary in history, and with which none besides can compare. He who, according to divine right, was exempt from death, freely submitted to it in our stead, as the last bitter drop of the accursed cup. Whether you believe this or not, the Scriptures most expressly affirm it in many and powerful words. They tell us, that "Christ tasted death by the grace of God," and therefore not as the result of a natural necessity. They say, "In that he died, he died unto sin." And when they assert that, "If One died for all, then were all dead," it points out the vicarious nature of his death so plainly, that I know not how it could be more clearly expressed. If, by his death, he paid the wages of sin for us, his death naturally could not resemble Elijah's ascent to heaven, nor the cheerful striking-sail of old Simeon, nor the exulting triumph of a Stephen, nor the peaceful going home of a John, nor such a falling asleep as is granted at present to thousands of believers under the smile of heaven, and with the joy of redemption upon their lips. No! an eternal statute required that he

should yield, as far as possible, to the stroke of the king of terrors, and taste the death to which the first Adam was sentenced. Under its horrors he bowed his head. Observe the continued silence on high concerning him—the appalling restraint upon all the heavenly powers—the three hours' darkness in which he was involved—and the jeers and blasphemies which assail him from below. Truly, in all this you perceive no cheering picture of the state in which he descends into the gloomy valley of death. No! he does not die on the downy couch of a pre-assumed blessedness, as many of the poorest sinners now die, at his expense. Nevertheless he dies in the crown of triumph. At the moment when his heart ceased to beat, the words, "It is finished!" revealed the entire fullness of their meaning. He had now reached the final completion of his work of redemption. The exclamation, "It is finished!" resounded in heaven, and awoke hallelujahs to the Lamb which shall never more be mute. They reverberated through the abodes of darkness, like the thunders of God, announcing the termination of the dominion of their prince. But a more blissful sound on earth does not strike the ear of the penitent sinner to this hour than the words, "It is finished!" It is as the sound of the great jubilee-trumpet, and the proclamation of an eternal salvation.

Yes, my readers, we are delivered. There is no longer any cause for anxiety, except in the case of those who refuse to acknowledge their sinfulness, and, lost in pharisaic self-sufficiency, turn their backs on the Man of Sorrows on the cross. But if we are otherwise minded, and, honoring truth, have judged and condemned ourselves in the presence of God, then come! No more circuitous paths—no fruitless efforts to help yourselves—no vain recourse to the empty cisterns of this world, whatever proud names they may bear! The voice of peace is heard on Calvary. O that we were solemnly conscious how much was done for us there! Great was our guilt; we were condemned to death, and the curse lay upon us; but all is done away in the words, "It is finished!" If he has paid the ransom, how can a righteous God in heaven demand payment a second time? Know you not the assertion of the apostle, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!" Let us give our whole hearts to him, and neither the multitude nor the heinousness of our sins need appall us. His closed eyes, his death-like visage, his pierced hands and feet, oblige us, even for the glorifying of his name, to oppose not only

the infernal accuser and the judge in our own breasts, but even Moses, the administrator of eternal justice, with the apostle's watchword, "Who is he who condemns, since Christ has died?"

What invaluable fruit, therefore, do we reap from the tree of the cross! That which the Savior accomplished by his death, was not merely the work of satisfaction to divine justice, by which he removed the curse from our heads, but likewise his representative obedience, which is henceforth imputed to his believing people, as the righteousness which avails in the sight of God. Along with the sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed!" is also the "Mene, Tekel," erased from our walls, and in its stead we read the mighty words, "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." And that we are so is confirmed to us by the fact that God now lovingly inclines toward us, breathes his Spirit into us, leads us in bonds of mercy and kindness, and as soon as we have finished our course, opens the gates of his heavenly mansions to us. But that condemned sinners are regarded as holy before God, without any infringement on his justice, holiness, and truth, is intimated by that which the suffering Savior accomplished on the cross. Even the twenty-second Psalm asserts that this would be the consequence of his death, since, in the last verse it is said, "They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he has done this." How just and well founded is, therefore, the victorious cry, "It is finished!" with which the Lord, after performing his work, inclined his head to rest!

After these elucidations, you will easily understand the enigmatical words in Heb. 10:14, "With one offering he has forever perfected them that are sanctified." Yes, by the one act of the offering up of himself, he has so laid the foundation for all who believe in him, of their justification, sanctification, and redemption, that they may now unhesitatingly rejoice in the first as an accomplished fact; that they bear in them the second, indeed, only as a germ, but such a one as strives, by an inward necessity, for a perfect future development; and that they have the third as surely and certainly in prospect, as Christ their representative has already taken possession, in their names, of the glorious and heavenly inheritance. As respects the capability, groundwork, and rudiments, there is, therefore, in

every believer, the ideal man—the man of the future glorified world, already created and presented to God. A creative act of a spiritual kind was accomplished on the cross; and when that which was there created, shall have attained to its perfect development, and have laid aside all its earthly veils and coverings the full truth of the triumphal shout, "It is finished "will become apparent, and the entire extent of its signification be revealed to us.

For know that the eye of the crucified Savior, on uttering these sublime words, rested not merely on individual sinners, for whose return to their paradisaic state he prepared the bloodstained path, but also on the whole world at large. It was then that he satisfied the desire of all nations, as expressed for thousands of years, in mysterious usages and religious rites, legends, songs, and imagery, and could now most justly call the whole world his own. He had dissolved the ban that lay upon it—had snatched it from the curse which justice had impended over it, and had rent from the powers of darkness the desolate earth, which, by the divine decision, had fallen to them on account of sin, had conquered it for himself, and consecrated it to be the scene of his future kingdom. There is, consequently, nothing more groundless than the fear that the earth may again become in perpetuity a fief of the prince of darkness, or a wilderness and desert of barbarism and sin. The blood of Christ claims its transformation into an abode of righteousness—its renovation to a paradise—its renewed amalgamation with heaven; and the Eternal Father who has solemnly sworn to his Son, saying, "Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession," will not refuse to listen to the claims of the blood of his only-begotten Son. Whatever confusion and desolation may yet come upon our world, its future is secure. On the cross, the ground of its inevitable transformation and glorification was laid, and the Holy Spirit was commissioned not to rest, until at the cost of Immanuel, the great work of that new creation shall have been completed. The model he has to realize has long been handed to him. Do you wish to see the heavenly program, which is to serve him as the standard of his working and operation? the wish can be granted you. The prophet Isaiah displays it before you in the sixty-fifth chapter of his prophecy, where you may read as follows, from the seventeenth verse: "Behold, I create new heavens and

a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord."

When the glorious representations which are here given us become life and reality, we shall then be truly conscious in what a stupendous and comprehensive sense the dying Redeemer uttered the words, "It is finished!" At that moment, the entire fullness of deliverance and glorification there depicted, had been won by him, and the new world, in all the preliminary conditions of its realization, was formed.

Let us avail ourselves, then, of the treasures of consolation and hope which lie concealed for us in the words, "It is finished!" Beating our breasts, let us more closely encircle the cross, and derive from the death of the Redeemer, along with the blissful consciousness that our sins are forgiven us, desire, courage, and strength, to live henceforth only to Him who gave such an invaluable ransom for us. If we now wish to see what He has made of us, poor children of Adam, by the offering up of himself, let us cast a look at the Church triumphant above. The just made perfect there were once people like ourselves. Among them are the malefactor, the tax-collector, Magdalen, Zacchaeus, and a host of other poor sinners. Who recognizes them in their glorified state, their shining garments and

unfading crowns of life before the throne of God? But if you would know how they attained to this glory, listen to what is said in the book of Revelations: "These are those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." See, my friends, this is the whole of the mystery. In those saints the words, "It is finished!" have, as it were, assumed a form. They display to us the entire greatness of the expression. They form its living and visible commentary. Let us therefore follow in their steps. No other banner but the cross accompanies us to the city of God. Let us join the band of travelers who follow this oriflamme, and let the full-toned echo, which resounds from the depth of our hearts, to the cry, "It is finished!" be heard both now, and especially in our last hour, "Who is he who condemns, since Christ has died?"

"Father, into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit!"

We return to Calvary. Let devout and peaceful recollections possess our minds. We are entering a sanctuary. Is there, generally speaking, anything on earth more solemn and affecting than dying moments, in which time and eternity meet each other, and in the silence of which we seem to hear the striking of the hours of another world? What ought we then to feel at a deathbed, such as that we are now to contemplate, and at the moment in which the Redeemer bows his head and expires? Lift up your eyes. O what a dying bed has been prepared yonder for the Father's beloved Son! No one wipes the perspiration from his brow. No one cheers him with the words of life. No one pronounces the final benediction over him. Whoever left the world more forsaken and involved in deeper shades than he! Yet do not mistake him. It is not a conflict in which we see him engaged, but a sacrificial act. He does not yield to death like us, but devotes himself to it after having previously invested it with the power over his life.

What is death? For thousands of years, as you know, has the gloomy and universally dreaded being, known under that name, been in the world, and carried on in it his dreadful work of destruction. It is not a thing that exists, but is the fate and destiny of our race. The young creation, as it

came forth from the hand of the Almighty, knew not this monster. There all was life and harmony, undisturbed by any such discord as death. The gloomy phantom was first known in the world only by the divine threatening connected with eating of the forbidden fruit. In consequence of the fall, it entered upon the stage of reality, in order, thenceforward, as the king of terrors, to subject everything that breathed to his awful scepter. Our first parents were the first who beheld it display its power and majesty on their beloved Abel. O what a terrible object was that which they were called to witness! There lay the blooming youth in the dust. The light of his eyes was extinguished; his lips no longer uttered words of kindness and affection; his limbs, pale as the lily, and stiff as the cold marble. However loudly they called his name, he opened his eyes no more. However much they conjured him with tears to let them hear his voice once more, he was silent, and the floods of tears which they shed over him no longer caused his pulse to beat. And before they were aware, corruption, with leaden weight, and a thousand horrors, took possession of the corpse, and the poor parents, in spite of all their affection, were obliged to turn away their faces from it with horror, and hasten to inter him, who was dear to them as the apple of their eye, beneath the sod as food for worms. They then knew, though only in part, what was meant by death. From that moment, death continued its dreadful sway over the earth, dropped its gall into every cup of joy, surrounded every loving bond with the mourning drapery of the certain prospect, that sooner or later the hour of separation and dissolution would arrive, and overspread all nature with a black funeral pall, even where it bloomed the loveliest. And as he has acted for thousands of years, he does to this day. But he who first became fully acquainted with the monster, and was conscious of the horrors that were hidden beneath its exterior, and learned that the separation of the body from the soul, which it effects, as well as the dissolution of the former in the kingdom of corruption, was only the mildest of its doings, since as God's judicial messenger it has also orders to deliver up the sinner to hell, will fully coincide with the son of Sirach, and say, "O death, how bitter are you!" But certainly he will rejoice only the more loudly when he hears, that there is one who can testify of himself, saying, "I have the keys of hell and of death!" And does such a being exist? you inquire. Yes, my readers, you will now behold his bleeding face.

The payment of the wages of sin is due only from sinners. The Holy One of Israel had nothing in common with death. What is it, then, that we witness on Calvary? Look up! After having uttered the great and triumphant shout, "It is finished!" he again moves his lips to speak. What will follow? A mournful farewell? A plaintive exclamation of, "I must depart hence?" A painfully faltering out of the words, "My senses forsake me. I succumb, and am going the way of all flesh?" O not so! Listen! With a loud voice, and the strength and emphasis of one who does not die from weakness, nor dying pays a forced tribute to a mournful necessity; but as one who is Lord over death, and voluntarily yields himself up to it, he exclaims—and the noise of rending rocks, falling hills, and bursting sepulchers accompany his cry—"Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit!" and after these words, like one whose labor is finished, he bows, self-acting, his bleeding head upon his bosom, and resigns his Spirit, or, as John expresses it, "gives up the spirit." But before we treat of the mighty results which proceed from his death, let us for a moment immerse ourselves in the consideration of the parting word of the Divine Sufferer.

"Father!" he begins. He is, therefore, again conscious of his Father, although at first only by faith. The first word we hear from his lips on earth was his father's name, and it is also the last. All his thoughts and deeds, desires and efforts, ended toward his Father and the glorifying of his name. To accomplish his Father's will was his meat and drink; the love of his Father his delight and bliss; and union with him the summit of all his hopes and desires. With the heraldic and conquering cry, "It is finished!" he turned once more to the world. It was his farewell to earth—a farewell such as beseemed the Conqueror of Death, the Prince of Life, the Governor of all things. He then withdrew himself entirely into connection with his God, and turned his face to him alone.

"Father!" This sound was the utterance of regained and strong filial confidence, but not the exclamation of one who had fully attained to rest in his Father's bosom. We must still regard the words, "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit," as the war-cry of a warrior, engaged in battle. Hell, which raged around him, did not give up its cause as lost, but continued to assault him in every way, and to distress him with terrific

imagery; and the act of death cost him, who was the Life, no small effort. We must, therefore, imagine to ourselves the Savior's dying exclamation as that of one severely oppressed, who is struggling to place his soul in a secure asylum, and flees from a horrid pressure into the hands of the Almighty; and that this taking refuge occurs with the peace and assurance of complete victory. The idea does not even remotely present itself to him, that death could be anything more than a transfer of the Spirit into a different sphere of existence. He is exalted, high as heaven, above the miserable human inquiry, "To be or not to be?" He knows that he falls asleep only to awake on the bosom of God; and in this consciousness, in which he already sees the arms of his Father lovingly extended to receive him, he exclaims, "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit!" He takes these words from Psalm 31, except that he prefaces them with the word "Father," which gives the appropriate form to his position and dignity, and leaves out the words of the Psalmist which immediately follow, "For you have redeemed me," as not belonging to him who, as the Redeemer of the world, hung upon the cross. But still how significant it is, that he left the world with a passage of Scripture on his lips! He was completely imbued with the word of God, and even dying, gives us a hint respecting what ought to be the nourishment of our inner man.

His last cry is uttered. He then inclines his head, after his well and fully-accomplished work, and the most unheard-of event takes place—the Son of the living God becomes a corpse! We stand affected, astonished, and sink in adoration; and what is left for us but to pour out our hearts in the words of the poet:

"Our spirits join to adore the Lamb.
O that our feeble tongues could move
In strains immortal as his name,
And melting as his dying love!

"In vain our mortal voices strive
To speak compassion so divine;
Nor can seraphic strains arrive
At such amazing love as your."

Where was the Lord Jesus after his departure from the body? Where else

than where his desires and longing carried him—in the hands of his Father. Heaven celebrated his triumph; the music of angelic harps saluted his ears; the just made perfect before the throne shouted their adoring and rejoicing welcome; and the new song began, "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and have made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign on the earth."—Rev. 5:9, 10.

But it is undeniable that mysterious passages of Scripture intimate that the Prince of Peace, after having laid aside his earthly body, had by no means concluded his mission. For the Apostle Peter says in his first Epistle, 3:19, 20, that Christ went in the Spirit—that is, divested of his bodily personality—"and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the patience of God waited, in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." And supported by this passage especially, the apostle's creed asserts a descent into hell, immediately after the death of Christ. But the explanation of this passage requires great caution. That to which Peter refers, belongs by no means to any further abasement of the Lord Jesus, much less to his work of atonement. The satisfaction rendered by the Surety was finally completed at the moment of his death. Now, if Christ entered the habitations of those departed spirits of the antediluvian world, it was in order to announce his victory to them, as the words in the original expressly intimate. That it was also in order to preach repentance and offer faith to them, and then to conduct those who believed, as living trophies with him into heaven, we are induced to think, when combining it with those other words of the same apostle, chap. 4:6, "For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit." In every case we must be content with not having reached the conclusion of the exposition of these passages; and hence a veil of mystery continues to rest upon the sojourn of Christ, during the interval between the moment of his death and that of his reunion with the body, as well as upon the correct and full meaning of the words, "He descended into hell."

But the reason of Christ's death stands, on the contrary, fully unveiled

before us. Even a superficial consideration suffices to give us, at least, an idea of the cause of it. It must, first of all, appear extremely striking that an individual dies who could testify respecting himself, that he was the Resurrection and the Life; who, at the grave of Lazarus, at the coffin of the young man of Nain, and at the deathbed of the daughter of Jairus, manifested that he was Lord over death, and who had never committed a single sin by which, in accordance with the threatening in paradise, he had forfeited his life. Still more does it surprise us, that he becomes a prey to death, who, because according to his own assertion, no one took away his life from him, only requiring to will it, in order to escape such a catastrophe, and that this man expires under circumstances which would lead one to suppose that he was a malefactor and a rebel, rejected both by God and the world, rather than a righteous man, and even a universal benefactor of mankind.

That he died voluntarily, is evident to every one at first sight. But for what end did he die this voluntary death? Was it to give us the example of a heroic departure from the world? By no means. How do the words he spoke correspond with such an object? "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" Was it in order to show us that dying is an easy thing? Stephen has certainly given us an instance of this in his exit from the world, but not the man whom we hear moaning in the dark valley, and exclaiming, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It is usual, from these words, to point out the intention of his death, but without rightly knowing what they mean; for Jesus dies, neither in a conflict against Israel's foes, nor in an attempt to deliver from a burning city or a devastating inundation.

Many, again, suppose that he died to confirm his doctrine. But which doctrine did he seal on the cross? Was it this, that God is with the righteous? or this, that "the angel of the Lord encamps about them that fear him, and delivers them?" or this, that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is?" I know not what fresh support these truths have found in the circumstances of his death; sooner should we think we found proof in them to the contrary. Besides, no one doubted of these truths, so as to require a renewed practical confirmation of them. If Christ confirmed anything by his death, it was his assertion on oath, with which

he answered the high priest's question, "Are you the Son of the living God?" On account of this affirmation, they nailed him to the cross. But that true to his inmost conviction, he continued firmly to abide by it, he testified by his sanguinary death.

The fact that he died as such, certainly makes the mystery of his death complete; but the seals of this mystery are opened, and its depths revealed. Men enlightened from above, stand ready to afford us every wished-for elucidation. They draw near to us at the cross, from the times of both the old and new covenant, and their statements illumine, like the candlestick in the temple, the darkness of Calvary. One of the divine heralds heads the phalanx with testifying that Christ "restored what he took not away." Another exclaims, "He was wounded for our transgressions, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." A third, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" A fourth, "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." And again "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" and again, "Christ has reconciled us by the body of his flesh, through death;" and again, "With one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified." And with the testimonies of these messengers of God, are combined these of the Lord himself. For instance, "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many;" and again, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." And more especially, the words of the institution of the sacrament of his body and blood, broken and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

But it may be said, "We hear these words, but are not they which should explain to us this mystery themselves hieroglyphics which require deciphering?" They are so; and in order to understand them it requires a previous consecration, which, however, is not imparted by anointing or laying on of hands in temples of human erection, but in the privacy of the closet, amid grief and tears. Rouse yourselves, therefore, from your delusions: leave the magic circle of deception into which you are banned, and enter into the light of truth; and after having become acquainted with the Eternal, in his nature, as the thrice holy Lord God Almighty, in its whole extent, and having received an impression of the majesty of his

law, investigate the nature of sin, reflect in what manner it is odious in the sight of God, then weigh yourselves in the balances in which God will at length weigh you, and, with your estrangement from God, become conscious of your need of reconciliation and redemption, and in a short time, the words you have just read, will burn like flaming torches before you, and the sanguinary and enigmatical exhibition on the cross, will become clear as the day before the eyes of your spirits. You will then behold in the Man of Sorrows, the Mediator between God and you, and rejoicingly embrace in his death, the sacrifice that outweighed all your guilt, and justified you forever in the sight of God.

"Father, into your hands, I commit my Spirit!" O what did he not commit to his Father's hands when uttering these words! "And being made perfect," writes the apostle, Heb. 5:9, "he became the author of salvation to all them that obey him." It was, therefore, necessary that he himself should be perfected, as righteous, by fulfilling the whole law; as holy, by victoriously overcoming every temptation; as Surety, by the payment of all our debts; and as Mediator and Reconciler, by emptying the whole of the cup of curse allotted to us. In all these respects he was perfected the moment he expired, and thus he deposited in his Father's hands, along with his spiritual personality, the basis of the new world, yes, his redeemed Church itself, as purified in his blood, arrayed in his righteousness, a pleasing and acceptable offering in the sight of God.

Now, if we are obedient to the Son of his love, we know that there is a city of refuge for us in every supposable case. Into whatever distress we may fall, we need not be anxious as to its termination. We read in Heb. 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." We say, no longer fearful, but wholly blissful to those who, after the example of their dying Lord, can believingly resign their spirits into his hands. If the world persecutes, or Satan tempts us, if death alarms us, or anything else excites apprehension, we courageously exclaim, while relying on the merits of Immanuel, "Because I have made the Lord my refuge, even the Most High my habitation, there shall no evil befall me." And we are sure that this high and lofty asylum is every moment open to receive and shelter us.

O the incomparable privileges which are granted us in Christ! Let us

make good use of them, and cover the feet of Him, who acquired them for us, with reverential kisses. Let us peacefully go on our way, in the rainbow light which beams upon us from Calvary, and tune the strings of our hearts to gratitude and devoted love.

The Signs that Followed

Scarcely has the Lord of life and glory bowed his head and expired on Calvary, than the awful scene is changed. Heaven no longer withholds its recognition of the Man of Sorrows. The cry of the dying Mediator, "It is finished!" receives the most brilliant confirmation; and in lieu of the hostile tumult, which had hitherto raged around him, a sublime celebration of his incomparable triumph ensues. The manner in which this celebration is commenced in heaven and solemnized on earth, will form the subject of our present meditation.

Follow me first into the temple at Jerusalem. It is three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour, therefore, when the Israelites assembled in its sacred courts for the evening sacrifice. The priests begin their customary duties, when at the very moment in which Christ on Calvary exclaims, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit!" who can describe the astonishment of the sons of Aaron! The thickly-woven heavy veil, without being touched by any human hand, is rent in twain, in the midst, from the top to the bottom, and the mercy-seat with the ark of the covenant and the golden cherubim, that sacred depositary which the high priest alone was permitted to approach, not without blood, and only once a year, stands suddenly naked and unveiled to the view of every one.

It was the Almighty, at whose nod this event occurred. And what did it imply? First, a renewed intimation that the Levitical service, though divinely ordered, and prophetically significant, contained only types of a coming salvation, which, now that the latter was accomplished, were rendered void, even as the blossom is expelled by the fruit.

Secondly, a symbolical and obvious representation of the blissful effects, which should attend the bloody death to which the Lord of Glory had just

devoted himself on Calvary. The most holy place in the temple was the shadow and type of the throne-room of heaven, from which we had been ejected and excluded by a divine decree. The veil which separated us from it, was our sinful flesh. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?" had been the question hitherto; and the answer was, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity." But who could boast of being thus blameless in the sight of God? There was none righteous, no not one. "Who among us," was the inquiry, "can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" And the reply was, he who does righteousness. But what remained for any one, except the mournful ejaculation of the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips!" Righteousness had departed, sin reigned. Suddenly, the sign in the temple announces that our position, as regards the habitation of the Most High, had undergone a great and thorough change. And such it actually experienced. That which hindered our access to the sanctuary of God, was done away. That which elevated itself as a wall of separation between us and him, fell down. No danger any longer threatened him who wished to enter into the heavenly abodes, over whose gates the inscription flames, "The Lord is far from the wicked." There is no longer any risk in casting ourselves into the hands of him, before whom even the angels are not pure. Embrace the cross, and then courageously say to Moses, "Tear up your roll of curses against me, I no longer owe you anything!" Believe, and then meet the infernal accuser with the exclamation, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan, yes, the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you!" Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you may boldly and with childlike confidence, enter the Father's holy habitation, which henceforward stands open to you day and night. Wash your robes in the blood of the Lamb, and then cast yourself, with childlike confidence, on the Father's heart, and pour everything that harasses and oppresses you into his bosom. O lay hold of the blissful idea, which, in God's intention, and by his immediate arrangement, the rent in the veil of the temple portrays to you! Your Savior, by his death, threw open every door and gate in heaven.

But would you still inquire, whether we are really justified in giving that rent in the veil of the sanctuary such an encouraging meaning; know that

we are fully authorized to do so. Read what the apostle says in Heb. 10:19-23, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." You see, therefore, that access to the holy place is opened to us, and that the way to our Father's house is prepared for us. "By whom?" By Jesus Christ. "In what manner?" By means of a rent in the veil. This veil was the flesh of the great High Priest. The veil was rent when he offered up his human nature on the cross for us, after taking, by imputation, our sins upon himself. By this act of mediation, he answered and fulfilled everything requisite for our justification in the sight of God, and, therefore, also for our admission before the throne of God. Hence, at the moment when he expired, that took place substantially, which the same moment occurred typically in the temple.

We leave the edifice at Jerusalem, which has now lost its importance, and return to Calvary, where a second miracle meets us. "The earth quakes, the rocks rend." What does this imply? Something great and glorious. The death of the Mediator has decided the future of the old world. It is, with all its concerns, devoted to destruction, and awaits a great and comprehensive change. Hear what is said in Heb. 12:21, 26—"Whose voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." The present creation is not what it was originally. Sin entered into it and overspread it with the funeral pall of mortality, and the mourning dress of endless destruction. Innumerable relations in nature as well as in human society, contradict the divine plan of the Creator, and have disturbed the harmony which God introduced into the world. These discords were the consequences of the fall. But after sin had been again put away through the satisfaction made by the Redeemer, its consequences must also naturally find their grave. The blood of the Lamb demands the restoration of the original state of created things. And believe me, the quaking of the earth to its

very foundations, the tottering of the hills and mountains, the rending of the rocks, which attended the Lord's death, all these are nothing else but an amen of Almighty God to the demand of the blood of his Son, clothed in the symbolical phenomena of nature. "The fashion of this world passes away," says the apostle, 1 Cor. 7:31, and the pleasing vision of John, recorded in Rev. 21:1-3—"I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God," must be fulfilled.

The third wonder ought to affect our hearts in the most powerful manner. Not only do rocks in the neighborhood of Calvary rend, but ancient sepulchers of saints, long fallen asleep, are opened, and the corpses they conceal, invigorated by new life, begin to stir and move, in order, after the resurrection of the Illustrious Sleeper, likewise to go forth from their chambers, and to appear unto many in the holy city.

What an event! It is certainly somewhat veiled in mysterious obscurity, and gives rise to a variety of questions. Was the awakening of these dead bodies complete at once, or was it accomplished by degrees? And if the former were the case, where did the reanimated forms remain until the resurrection of Christ? Did they continue in their sepulchers during that period? This is scarcely credible. And when they afterward arose, in what body did they appear? In that spiritual one spoken of in 1 Cor. 15? If in the latter, how can Christ be called "the first-fruits of them that slept?" You see, my readers, that the question is surrounded with difficulties. But it seems to me that the circumstance last mentioned of Christ being called the first-fruits of the resurrection, compels us to believe that at his death, the graves only opened as a preceding intimation of what would afterward occur; and as the first dawn of approaching life, prophetically flashing over the slumbering remains; while the reunion of the departed spirits with their bodies only took place three days after, on the great Easter morning. But the fact itself is beyond a doubt, and would stand fast, even without being confirmed by many of the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, to whom the evangelists appeal for its historical truth.

But that which God intended by this miracle is sufficiently evident. The powerful effects of Christ's vicarious death reach down even to the domains of the dead. By the offering up of his own life, he became the Prince of Life. Even in the appalling regions of corruption, he overthrew the throne of him, who, according to the Scriptures, "had the power of death," and acquired the authority, not only to conduct the souls he had redeemed to the mansions of eternal peace, but also to wrest their bodies from the bonds of the curse, and in due time to present his people to his Father, entirely renewed to their original paradisaic form, in bodily as well as spiritual glorification. This truth the Almighty intended primarily to confirm by the miracle of the previous opening of the graves, which was connected with the death of Christ, and then by the actual resurrection of the bodies of the saints on the third day.

Who were these first trophies of the glorious conqueror of the king of terrors? Was Abraham among them, to whom it was promised that he should see, in a very peculiar manner, the day of the Lord? Was Moses, of whom the Apostle Jude relates, that Satan strove with the heavenly powers about his body? The narrative leaves us without a reply, and is also silent as to the appearance presented by the risen saints, who were made visible to many in the holy city; and when, where, and in what manner they were afterward taken up to heaven. The mission of those who were thus called from the dust of the grave, was limited to one thing, namely, to represent the death of Jesus as an event which operated with creative power, both in the past, the present, and the future, and not less in the depth than in the height, and to give actual proof of the exceedingly abundant and well-grounded cause we have to rejoice beneath the cross of Christ, and to say with the apostle, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15:55-57.

Thus the atoning death of Christ was solemnized in a majestic manner by divine signs and wonders, which commenced immediately beneath the cross. We are not indeed aware of any festive pomp, nor does the music of harps and cymbals meet our ear. But in the deepest center of the

intellectual world, the bells ring, the garlands wave, and every feeling, which rises in the hearts of those who celebrate it at the cross, is like instrumental and vocal music. Who are these silent assistants at the solemnity? He who first attracts our attention is the Roman centurion, the commander of the band of soldiers who watch the cross. Mute, and apparently lost in thought, he stands and looks up to the cross of the Divine Sufferer. He has witnessed the whole course of the crucifixion. He beheld the admirable behavior of the Mysterious Man. He listened to the words which proceeded from his bleeding lips, and at the moment when the Just One expired, he felt the earth tremble beneath his feet; and he saw also with his own eyes, how the hills around tottered, and the rocks were rent asunder. The emotions, which had until then affected his soul, compressed themselves into one powerful and appalling impression, and he gives vent to his feelings in the loud and unambiguous exclamation, in which he praised the true God, the God of Israel, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man, this was the Son of God!"

We must not be too anxious to know what the centurion meant by the latter expression. He was certainly no dogmatician, nor a Jew instructed in the catechism, but only a poor, blind heathen. But according to all that he had seen of the Man of Nazareth, he doubted not that he must be more than a man, and according to the presentiment which had taken possession of his soul, he regarded him as, in fact, no other than the Son of God, foretold in the Jewish Scriptures. Nor did it require a very finely polished mental mirror to express the reflection of the divine dignity of Jesus. Even a crude, but honest heathen soldier's heart was a sufficient mirror for it, But see! Not only the centurion, but also several of his troop are overpowered by feelings similar to his own; and astonished and thrilled with a sacred reverence, join in his confession, or murmur something of the kind. What a pleasing and significant occurrence! A number of blind heathen, among them probably even those who had been the instruments of Jesus' crucifixion, at a moment, when, with his cause, he seemed irretrievably lost, give him, in spite of a world of opponents, the glory of the candid confession, that he is the Son of the living God, and surprise us, like a radiant constellation in the darkness of the night, with a truly heart-cheering anticipation of that which should in future come to pass.

O my dear readers, you have seen and heard not merely that which those heathens saw and heard, but something infinitely greater and more important. You are witnesses of the fact, that Christ's death on the cross not only rent the rocks and made the hills to tremble, but lifted the whole order of the old world from its joints and hinges, and pushed it into an entirely new path. You saw from that death, a resurrection-beam dart, not merely over a few bodies of sleeping saints, but the fiery stream of a new and divine life pour itself over the whole graveyard of the earth. You are not only aware of the rending of the veil in the temple, at the moment when the great Sufferer expired, but also of the rending of a prophetic covering which had existed for four thousand years, in order that what was concealed under it, as idea and image, might be realized in the world, even in its minutest features. You not only heard the dying Savior majestically gladden a single malefactor with the promise, "This day shall you be with me in paradise;" but are aware, that to this hour, no one under heaven glows, either with pure love to God, or attains to thorough peace amid the darkness and storms of this life, until he has lifted up the eye of faith to that thorn-crowned head, which benignantly beholds the human race for the last eighteen centuries, and continues unobscured, in spite of hell, for the consolation of every penitent sinner; and that the field, be it family, or state, or church, over which the cross does not cast its wonder-working shadow, produces only the hemlock and the bramble of perdition, but never "yields the scent of a field which the Lord has blessed." All these things have been brought before you, and you are daily conversant with them; and can you delay to detach yourselves, resolutely, from an unbelieving world, and to make the confession of those heathen soldiers your own; and while thus paying homage to the Son of God, mingle in their peaceful solemnization of his death?

The Roman mercenaries are not however the only individuals on Calvary who pay their tribute of reverence to the deceased Savior. It is done more profoundly and fervently by the group of weeping women who followed the Master from Galilee and ministered unto him. Even in death they cannot leave him. They still cling to him with their love and hope, like ivy to the fallen tree. Duly mark the sacred fire which burns in the center of their hearts. It is the fire of the purest enthusiasm for true moral greatness. This enthusiasm cannot weep hopelessly, much less rest on a

mere deception. The kingdom of that which is venerable, noble, and beautiful, must have reality, duration, and existence. Christ is the king of this kingdom, and must forever continue to be so. You beloved souls, do not despair of this kingdom, even though the whole world should declare it to be an idle dream. It alone is reality, and will have the victory under all circumstances. Let us therefore all join ourselves to it. Let us all address the crucified Redeemer, and say, "We side with you, you beauteous Morning Star!" Let us give our word and our hands, that we will walk in his paths, through whatever straits and difficulties they may lead us. Extend toward us your hand, therefore, you who are estranged from all that is low and vain, and teach us to elevate our nature by following in your steps!

Let these be the ejaculations which rise from our breasts beneath the cross. But know that the celebration of his death does not terminate in such moral enthusiasm for the Lord and his kingdom. The women had found in Jesus more than a model of humanity and a guiding star in the path of virtue. They felt their need, above all things, of a Surety, who should mediate their reconciliation with God, in order that in the strength of this consciousness, and with the assistance of a reconciled God, the beginning of a new life might be made. And they believed that they had really found the object of their ardent desires in their great Master. But did they give up their belief at his death? It was doubtless deeply shaken by the sanguinary exit of their Divine Friend out of this life; but the signs they had just witnessed, swelled, like a favorable gale, the sails of their hope anew, and seemed to them nothing less than a voice of their heavenly Father, saying to them, "Endure and wait, for he is nevertheless the man whom you held him to be." And however weak might be the glimmering of their confidence, yet they celebrated their reconciliation through the blood of the Lamb, although more in hope than in a clear consciousness of its being the case. O let us enter into fellowship with them! The only real, true, and full celebration of the death of Christ is that which is based upon the song of the blessed above. "The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive praise, and honor, and glory!"

Let such be also our celebration of it. We read in the Gospel that many, who had likewise been witnesses of the divine wonders at the cross,

returned to Jerusalem, in great amazement, beating their breasts. The state of these people points out to you the preparation for a real "Good Friday." O that there may not be one of my readers, who through divine mercy, is not placed in this preparatory state! Be aware what enormous guilt, apart from your other sins you incur, by so long refusing due homage and submission to a Lord and King so powerfully accredited as Jesus upon the cross. O that you would take it deeply to heart, and now begin to humble yourselves before God! You would then soon be able, with beaming countenance to sing,

"O for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak!

"Yes, we will praise you, dearest Lord
Our souls are all on flame,
Hosanna round the spacious earth,
To your adored name!"

The Wound of the Lance

On our return to the scene of suffering on Calvary, we find a great change has taken place. Profound silence reigns on the three crosses. Death, the speechless monster, has spread his sable wings over the sufferers. The gazing crowd which surrounded the place of execution, has dispersed—in part, deeply affected and conscience-smitten. Even the little company of faithful women, almost ready to succumb with grief and sorrow, appear to have returned to the city. We therefore find only the Roman guard, and besides them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who, after he had safely lodged Mary in his peaceful cottage, could not resist the urgent impulse to seek again the place where he, that was all to him, hung on the cross. Who could we have wished as a witness to the last event on Calvary sooner than this sober-minded and sanctified disciple? He relates to us, in all simplicity, what he there beheld; but his deeply-affected heart lies wholly open before us, with all its thoughts and feelings, in his brief and

unadorned narrative.

The priests and scribes, accustomed to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel, do not think of the heinous blood-guiltiness they had incurred, but only of the prevailing custom in Israel, to take down from the gibbets, where they had been exposed to public view, as a warning to others, the bodies of malefactors, and inter them before night. This custom was founded on an express divine command. We read in Deut. 21:22, 23, "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall in anyway bury him that day; (for he who is hanged is accursed of God) that your land be not defiled, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance." This is a strange and peculiar ordinance, which we should scarcely have been able to account for, had not the Spirit of the Lord himself presented us with the key to it. The fact that God points out those that are hung as especially burdened with his curse, compelled the more thoughtful in Israel to infer that there was something typical in it; because a wicked man, though not thus put to death, could not really be less accursed than one whose dead body was thus publicly exhibited. Thus the divine command to inter the body, and the promise connected with it, "So shall you bury with it the curse that rests upon the land," unfolded the consoling prospect that a removal and blotting out of guilt was actually possible. But since it followed, of course, that it could not be affected by the mere interment of executed malefactors, the idea must have occurred to them that in the divine counsels, the removal of the curse would, at a future period, be actually accomplished by the death and burial of some prominent mysterious personage. Now, when believing Israelites hit upon such thoughts, their ideas were in accordance with God's intention, who, in the ordinance respecting malefactors that had been put to death, had no other object in view than a prophetic symbolizing of the future redemption by Christ. The latter is clearly evident from Gal. 3:13, 14, where the apostle says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree) that"—instead of the curse—"the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." Here Christ is undeniably set forth as the antitype of those who were hanged in Israel. On the cross he bore the curse for us, and in

doing this, died the public death of a criminal. But after he had commended his Spirit, as a voluntary offering into the hands of his Father, the curse that lay upon the earth and its inhabitants, was actually interred with his body, since all that believe on him are freed from the curse, and become heirs of an incorruptible and heavenly blessing.

Hence, how deeply significant does the scene on Calvary appear, which we are now contemplating! The people that are acting there do not indeed know what they are doing. But this does not prevent them from being led, by an invisible clue, in the hand of divine Providence. Without reflecting further, they call to mind the letter of the Mosaic law, and believe they ought to hasten with the taking down the bodies from the cross, in order to their interment, both because the day began to decline, and because it is the preparation for the great Sabbath—that of the feast of the passover, and hence peculiarly holy. They, therefore, proceed in a body to Pilate, and request him to cause the legs of the three criminals to be broken, as was customary, then to be taken down, and afterward interred.

The governor does not hesitate to grant their request, and sends, at the same time, another guard to the place of execution to break the legs of the malefactors, and to convince themselves of their being really dead. It was considered an act of mercy to those that were crucified, to hasten their death by breaking their limbs with an iron bar, and then giving them a final *coup de grace* on the bosom. The beginning was made with the two malefactors, but when the turn came to the Lord Jesus, every sign of his being already dead was so apparent, that the breaking of his legs was thought needless, especially as one of the spearmen pierced his side with his lance, which alone would have sufficed to have caused his death, had the Divine Sufferer been still alive.

In the abstract, this occurrence appears of extremely trifling importance; but the Evangelist John, who so expressly states it, regarded it with other eyes. In the twofold fact of the Savior's limbs not being broken, and of his side being pierced by the lance, he recognizes a divine interposition, by which two ancient prophecies were fulfilled. "These things were done," says he, "that the Scriptures should be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken." This was said in reference to the paschal lamb (Exod. 12:46), to which the evangelist here expressly attributes the significance of the type

of the Lamb of God, offered up for the sins of the world. As a shadow of him that was to come, the paschal lamb was to be a male, and in order especially to intimate the holiness of him who was prefigured, it was required to be without blemish. But that not a bone of him was to be broken, was intended to point out, that Christ would offer himself as an atonement to God, whole and undivided; and those who desired to become partakers of his salvation, must appropriate him to themselves entirely. The Lord also, in that appointment, aimed at the establishment of an additional sign, which, when the Messiah should appear, would contribute clearly to make him known to every one. And John seems to say to us in his narrative, "Behold here the predicted sign!" The fact, that the sacred vessel of his body remained unmutilated, impresses the confirming seal upon the illustrious deceased, as the true atoning Paschal Lamb. He is the righteous One, of whom it is said in Psalm 34:20, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."

In the wound with the spear, the evangelist sees the fulfillment of another passage of Scripture. "Again," continues he, "another Scripture says, They shall look on him whom they pierced." The word of the Lord by the prophet Zechariah, chap. 12:10, presents itself to his mind, where it is said, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." This passage was an inexplicable riddle to the Jews, on which account, in the Greek version of the Septuagint, the original word, without any ground for so doing, instead of "pierced," has been rendered "degrade" or "despised." But the only true meaning of these prophetic words has, since then, been made evident to thousands, and will become so to thousands more—yes, even to the whole world, either in the day of grace or of judgment. Either they who have hitherto denied Christ the homage due to him, shall be laid hold of and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and with weeping eyes and supplicating hearts, shall look up to him, in the painful consciousness of having aided, by their sins, in crucifying the Lord of Glory; or they shall experience what the apostle announces beforehand, in the book of Revelation, "Behold he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen."

Thus you see how the profound evangelist discovers, in all that occurs on Calvary, even in the most unimportant circumstance, a striking divine hieroglyphic, which has solely reference to the acknowledgment and glorification of Christ as the true and promised Messiah and Redeemer of the world. But who does not perceive, that in all these various events, the hand of a living God overrules, and causes them to occur in such a manner, that one passage of prophecy after another is fulfilled by them to the letter? How highly the evangelist estimates them as a means of strengthening our faith, he proves, very impressively, by the words, "And he who saw it, bare record, and his record is true, and he knows that he says true, that you might believe." It is not, however, the taking down from the cross, the wound of the spear, and the preservation of the sacred body of Christ from mutilation, that John has solely in view in the words above quoted; but it is, more especially, the effusion of the water and the blood from the Savior's wounded side, in which he recognizes nothing less than a profound and divine symbol of the saving power of the heavenly Prince of Peace.

The narrative states, that "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came there out blood and water." It has been supposed that John laid so much stress upon this circumstance, because he believed it might serve to refute certain erroneous spirits of his day, who assigned to Christ an imaginary and not a real body. It is certainly possible that, in giving his account of the matter, he was partly induced by such a motive. But it is the miraculous nature of the event that chiefly excited his interest in it. In dead bodies the blood always coagulates, while from the wound above mentioned, on the contrary, it flowed clearly and abundantly, unmixed with the water which burst forth from the pierced pericardium of his heart, and ran down from the cross. It was as if the great High Priest intended to say, even in his death, "Behold, I shed my blood voluntarily, and offer it up in entire fullness for your sins." But that which most deeply affected the soul of the beloved disciple was the divine symbol he perceived beneath the wondrous event. In the water and the blood he sees represented the most essential blessings of salvation for which the world is indebted to Christ. We know that in his first epistle he points out the fact of his coming with water and blood, as well as with the Holy Spirit, as the most peculiar characteristic of the Redeemer of the

world; and who does not perceive, in these words, that the wondrous event on Calvary must have been present to his mind?

But what do these three elements imply? And, first of all, the water—does it imply baptism? Doubtless it has a remote reference even to that ordinance. But water chiefly symbolizes to the evangelist, in accordance with the figurative language throughout the Holy Scriptures, the moral purifying power of the word of Christ—yes, the atmosphere of his kingdom. Wherever the Gospel penetrates, it changes the moral aspect of nations, apart from regeneration and conversion, in the more limited and specific sense of these words. Decorum and mental culture expel barbarism. Discipline and order take the place of a licentious service of sin. Animal carnality finds at least its bound, in the rising apprehension of a superior ideology of human life. The consciences of the children of men become more sensitive and refined; and modesty, as the keeper of good manners, erects among them its throne. Even as justice establishes its claims in legislation and civil institutions, so does also love. Men become conscious of the obligation for mutual assistance and kind offices. Attention to the poor and the sick erects its hospitals, and opens to the destitute its places of refuge. There is nothing which is not cemented, ennobled, and transfigured, as soon as affected by the gentle breath of the Christian religion. Compare even the most degraded of the nations of Christendom with any of the heathen, and even with the Mohammedan, and say, if in comparison with these, they may not, in a general sense of the word, be termed regenerated? It is in these effects that the water-power of Christ and his Gospel manifests itself. It was these results, especially, which the Almighty had in view when he promised by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. 36:25, saying, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." The apostle doubtless refers to the same effects in Heb. 10:22, when he speaks of "having our bodies washed with pure water." And, in the same manner, John the Baptist, when he said, "I baptize you with water," while referring, at the same time, to another baptism—that "with the Spirit and with fire," which he alone could accomplish who should come after him.

Suffice it to say that by means of his word, and the planting of his Church,

a moral purification, ennobling and transforming the human race, emanates from Christ, and to these results, the water which flowed from Jesus' opened side, symbolically points.

But water alone would not have saved us. We are deeply involved in guilt in the sight of God; and though we might cease, from this time, to accumulate fresh guilty yet our former offenses would not, on that account, be undone and blotted out. Besides, notwithstanding all the cleansing and ennobling of our lives by the Word—when measured according to the model of the divine requirements—we remain poor sinners as before, and exposed to the curse. We therefore need, besides a moral reformation, and more urgently than that, a deliverance from the sentence of condemnation which impended over us, and a being replaced in a state of grace. For this necessity—the most urgent of all—that which is requisite is supplied by the blood we see streaming, along with the water, from the wounded side of Jesus. It points out the ransom paid for our guilt, once for all before God; as well as the atoning sacrifice, by means of which the reconciliation of divine justice with God's love to sinners is brought about, and our acceptance without any infringement of the former rendered possible. The blood flowed separately from the water; justification must not be mingled with, much less exchanged for, personal amendment. That which again recommends us to the love of God is solely the merits of Christ, and by no means the piece-work of our own virtue. Certainly, union by faith and life with Christ is requisite on our parts, but in Christ's righteousness, and in that alone, do we receive the absolution from deserved punishment; even as, for its sake alone, we are reinstated in the privileges of divine adoption. Conversion makes us capable of blessedness; but the blood of the Lamb alone renders us worthy of it.

But we know that water and blood by no means exhaust the exhibition of the saving efficacy of Christ's merits. There are three, says the apostle, that testify for him and of him on earth—the water (the moral power of the Word), the blood (the atoning and peace-bringing effect of his vicarious sufferings), and the Holy Spirit, who not merely amends, but renews; not only prunes away the twigs from the tree of sin, but roots it up, and plants in its place the scion of an essentially new being and life.

He who passes through the world adorned with the threefold seals of such powerful credentials, cannot be otherwise than from above, and must be the Redeemer and Messiah ordained of God. John regards it as scarcely possible that any one can mistake this, and vehemently urges us to swear fealty to him along with himself, while most impressively and affectingly exclaiming, "He who saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knows that he says true, that you might believe."

Let us, then, also believe, dear readers, that we may likewise experience the Lord of Glory as Him who comes with water, blood, and the Holy Spirit—that is, cleansing, reconciling, and regenerating. Let us give ourselves wholly and without reserve to Him, after he has thus given himself up to death for us, and say with the poet,

"Let the water and the blood,
From your wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse us from its guilt and power."

The Interment

After all the heart-affecting and appalling scenes we have been witnessing, how beneficial to our spirits is the solemn stillness that now reigns on Calvary! It is the preparation for the Sabbath, and to us it seems just as if we heard the gentle sound of the Sabbath-bells reaching us from a distance. The Gospel narrative which details to us the circumstances attending our Lord's being taken down from the cross—his being laid in the grave—and the watch which was set over it—produce in us a tranquil and peaceful feeling. It is our last meditation on the history of our Savior's passion. May the peace of God, which passes understanding, be the precious fruit that we shall derive from it!

The crowd have vacated the summit of Calvary. The Roman guard, however, remains. Whether John was also there, we are not informed. Profound silence reigns around. The bodies of the two malefactors are taken down from their crosses, and their graves are being dug. The

crucified Redeemer, with his head crowned with thorns, and reclining upon his bosom, still hangs solitarily between heaven and earth. You inquire what will next occur to his lifeless corpse? We need not be anxious, my readers. His heavenly Father has already made every arrangement. The grave-diggers are ordered, and the vault prepared. Who is to inter him? According to the law, it was the duty of the executioners to bury him on the place of execution. But God ordered it otherwise. After the great High Priest's atoning sacrifice had been offered up, he was not to be subjected to any further ignominy. This would have been contrary to the order of the divine statutes. If he had brought his cause to a successful and triumphant termination, honor and glory alone were henceforth his due. Such was also the judgment of Almighty God. A funeral was to be given to his Son, in the circumstances attending which, even the blindest might perceive the overruling hand of Eternal Love. Two honorable men—honorable not only in the eyes of men, but also before God—are entrusted with the interment of Immanuel's corpse; and a company of tried female disciples, to whom it will be a consolation to be permitted to bathe the sacred body with their grateful tears, are to be joined with them.

Let us not anticipate the narrative. We leave Mount Calvary for a few moments, and take our stand in the city of Jerusalem. Who is it that is walking so hastily up the street that leads to the palace of the Roman governor? The man seems to be the bearer of some important commission. His countenance expresses it, and his haste betrays it. Who is he? Jerusalem knows him, and numbers him among her principal and most estimable citizens. It is Joseph, surnamed of Arimathea, his birthplace, which lay on the mountains of Ephraim—a man honored with the universal confidence of his tribe, and at the same time a member of the highest Jewish court of justice—the Sanhedrin. As such, he had been personally present at the whole of the proceedings against Jesus; and in the course of them had acquired a vital conviction, not only of the perfect innocence of the accused, but also of something more. He "had not consented to the counsel and deed" of his associates, but yet he had not had the courage to enter a strong and decided protest against it. The sentence pronounced upon the Just One had excited his abhorrence; but a lamentable fear of man had prevented him from doing more than

withholding his consent. Christ was led away to execution, and Joseph, in spirit, with him, so far as he was severely judged and condemned by his own conscience. The bloody execution took place. We know not whether Joseph beheld it from a distance, or learned its details from another. Be it as it may, before he was aware, and while under the influence of a powerful presentiment that the affair would terminate differently, the startling announcement reached his ear, that the Man of Nazareth had just given up the spirit on the cross. What was still wanting of an appalling nature in this intelligence, was fully made up by the terrific phenomenon of the earthquake, which occurred at the same moment. We then see him sitting solitarily in his chamber at Jerusalem, and hear him say in broken sentences, "He is therefore dead! They have slain him whom they ought to have bound to the earth by a thousand ties of love. Woe to the murderers! They have extinguished, in his own blood, the fairest star that ever shone from heaven upon the world. They knew not what they did, but I knew. Why did I not appear in his behalf? Why did I not confess myself to be his disciple? Without him, the world is a waste and life worthless to me. But human favor was my idol, and of more value to me than the honor which comes from God. For the most trifling price I have denied the Lord of Glory. He is now dead, and his ear will no longer hear the confession of my repentance, nor is his mouth able to speak a word of forgiveness to me. But is he really dead, and will death be able to retain him? The Man of Nazareth was either the promised Messiah, or the predictions of the prophets have failed, and will never be fulfilled. And yet I never bowed the knee to him, and suffered him to be slain without solemnly protesting against it!" Such was the language which we may suppose Joseph uttered to himself in his solitude, while, with a grieved heart, he covered his face with his mantle. But suddenly rising up, he exclaims, "You whom I ought to have honored in life, let my homage in death be acceptable to you! So saying, he leaves his chamber and his dwelling, and mingles with the crowd which throngs the streets.

What is Joseph's object? He is proceeding directly to the governor to ask his permission to take down the Savior from the cross, and honorably inter him in his own family sepulcher. He arrives at the Roman palace, and after having been announced, he appears in the presence of Pilate, and says with firmness and in plain terms, "I am come to beg of you one

thing—that you would give me the body of Jesus that I may prepare an honorable grave for him as he deserves."

Pilate is not a little astonished at such a request from the lips of a Jewish senator; but, evidently to conceal the feelings which are excited within him, he expresses his astonishment, first of all that the Nazarene should be already dead. To assure himself of this, he immediately sends for the commander of the guard; and on his appearing, inquires most carefully respecting the three men that had been crucified. But in spite of the quiet official mien which he seeks to put on, it does not escape us, that he sympathizes with the deeply affected senator, although in a smaller degree. Nor can he call to mind the image of the murdered Nazarene without feeling pervaded by emotions of decided veneration. Even in the surprise with which he hears the news that Jesus is already dead, I think I see reflected something of the powerful presentiments, which his soul was unable to resist, at the thought of Him who was crucified. Besides, his conscience accuses him respecting his conduct toward One whom he knew to be guiltless; and that he should experience, now that he was dead, an honorable funeral, such as Joseph intended, corresponded so entirely with his own wishes and feelings, that he readily gives his permission, as if his own heart were relieved by so doing.

Joseph heartily thanks the governor, and hastens from him as joyfully as if he had gained a great treasure, in order, first of all, to purchase the finest linen he can procure, and at the same time the most costly ointment and spices. And if the whole world should wish to know for whom they were intended, he would have testified aloud that they were for his Lord and King. And though the Sanhedrin should warn, or go so far as to threaten him with a removal from office, or even something worse, let them do so. Joseph will then still more loudly exclaim, that it is for his King, his Lord, and his Prince of Peace, that he is making these funeral preparations. The narrative states, that "he went in boldly to Pilate;" but to him it did not seem too bold. He would gladly have sacrificed anything for Jesus, if by so doing he could have made amends for what he had neglected to do while he was living.

We leave him, and return to the place of execution. O see, who has meanwhile arrived there! We recognize the man, who is standing, mute

and motionless, like a statue, beneath the cross, and is looking up with devout and tearful eyes to the deceased sufferer. Joseph finds in him a companion in spirit; for he has to repent of the same thing, and burns with desire, like him, to make amends for his fault. And who is this contemplative stranger? We are as well acquainted with him as with Joseph. It is Nicodemus, Joseph's colleague in office, that Pharisee who came to Jesus, desirous of learning and anxious for salvation, but by night; because in him also, the fear of the Jews at least equaled his love for the truth. He, likewise, has thrown aside the disgraceful fetters which bound him. Truly we see marvelous things occurring in the vicinity of the cross. If we were to say to one ignorant of the facts, "Observe two individuals, belonging to the first ranks in society, who, when Jesus still walked abroad in the majesty of his supernatural acts, did not venture to make known their favorable impressions respecting him, for fear of being condemned by public opinion—now that the termination of his course seems to have stamped him as a pitiable enthusiast—honor him as their King before all the people, and with uplifted hands swear fealty beneath the tattered banner of his ruined kingdom"—would he be able to believe it? Sooner would he credit anything else; and yet such is the case. Now that, with one single exception, all his disciples, and even his most confidential ones have forsaken him—now that Jesus no longer rebukes the winds and the sea, but swims in his blood, being himself overcome just now when nothing but defeat is apparent in him—at the moment when his cause seems to suffer the most decided shipwreck—both of them lay aside the mask, and come forth from their retreats, freely and openly, with the frank confession, that they join the cause of the crucified Jesus, and thereby tacitly condemn his execution as a judicial murder, and accuse, in particular, the whole Sanhedrin of the crying sin of having imbrued their hands in the innocent blood of the Holy One of Israel. And who is it that has thus suddenly opened their eyes? It is the Spirit of the living God. The germ of faith which, all at once, manifests itself so gloriously and so fully developed, had long lain in their hearts, though bound, and as if under the sod. From out of the thunder-cloud that brooded over Calvary, abundant grace has proceeded, and hence it is that we see it so freely and powerfully manifested.

After Nicodemus had meditated awhile with unspeakable emotion at the

sight of the cross, Joseph also reaches the summit of Calvary; and how cordially does he greet his associate in mind and spirit! Then, after conversing a short time confidentially together, and making the soldiers acquainted with the permission they have received from the governor, they begin their mournful and yet blissful labors. Ladders are fetched, and planted against the cross of the Prince of Peace, and they reverentially ascend to the corpse, feeling at the same time, as if they were mounting the steps of some sacred temple. Lovely scene! a scene full of profound meaning, and, while viewing it, we join in the words of the poet, and sing—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross we spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend.

"Here we'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
Precious drops, our souls bedewing,
Make and seal our peace with God."

The two friends have just reached their departed Master's wounded feet. There they devoutly bow their heads, and cover them with kisses and tears, for he is worthy of it. They then ascend higher to his lacerated head. It is not tender sympathy, but something more, with which they behold his blood-stained countenance. They do not fail to perceive what lofty majesty sits enthroned on that pallid brow, and that over the closed eyelids, something hovers like the dawn of resurrection. Their minds are deeply affected by the anticipation of what may still come to pass respecting him; and they then begin, tenderly and gently, to draw out the nails from his hands and feet. The precious corpse reclines upon their shoulders, and after they have wrapped it in linen, they gently let it down from the cross to the ground.

Let us imitate their example, dear readers. Jesus teaching at Nazareth, or preaching on the mount of the beatitudes, or even transfigured on Mount Tabor, will not suffice us. Christ crucified must be the object of our affections. Therefore ascend to him on the spiritual ladder of sorrow for

sin, longing for mercy, and belief in the efficacy of his sufferings and death. Detach him from the accursed tree, and deposit him in your hearts, as your only consolation in life and death. That it is the real saving love to Jesus which burns within us, and not a mere caricature of it, may be best ascertained by its being first enkindled by the sight of him, bleeding and dying on the cross, and then embracing him as the ever-living One. He, on the contrary, who turns away from the dead Christ, and imagines that the living Christ, going about doing good, teaching, and setting an example, suffices him, miscalculates, and on the day of his coming, notwithstanding his greeting of "Rabbi! Rabbi!" will hear from his lips the awful words, "I know not whence you are, I never knew you!"

Let us return to our two friends. We see them descending the hill with their precious burden. The funeral is without pomp, but rendered distinguished by the tenderness and courageous conduct of the two who carry the corpse. No mournful peal, indeed, accompanies the quiet procession, but in the future it is so much the more abundantly celebrated. From how many thousand towers in the present day, do the solemn bells resound over the cross and grave of Jesus, on the annual return of the day which is sacred to the memory of his death and burial? No mournful dirge precedes it, no funeral torches flame. But what more costly flambeaux can there be than those of inextinguishable love and reverence, the offspring of heaven? And, only listen; there is also no want of a burial-service. An inspired prophet has chanted it nearly a thousand years before, the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53:9, "His grave was destined to be with the wicked, but he found his resting-place with the rich; because he had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth."

We have reached the place, and enter a quiet plot of ground, partly inclosed by rocks. It is Joseph's garden. The sun is just casting its last rays upon it, and the twilight of evening its first cool shades. In this peaceful seclusion, the Holy One is to find his last earthly resting-place. He who had not where to lay his head, possessed no grave of his own, and, therefore, required that one should be lent him for his transient repose. But how happy Joseph thought himself to have the honor of being permitted to prepare him a sepulcher; and how pleasing is the prospect to him of eventually, when his last hour shall arrive, entering, in death, into

the closest fellowship with him, whom in life he had, alas! so basely deserted!

When the two friends reach the rocky grotto with their beloved burden, they perceive that there is no want of a train of mourners. The faithful women, Mary Magdalene, Mary Joses, and many other courageous female friends had followed them at some distance; for they also were anxious to see the place where the object of their entire hope and love was to be deposited. Joseph and Nicodemus heartily welcome them, and gladly accept of their services to aid them in the interment. The sacred body is then gently laid on the ground, and, while the women, almost more with their tears than with the water they have brought, wash the bloody spots from his head and bosom, the men fill the white linen, in which the body is to be wrapped, with myrrh, aloes, and other of the most costly spices, of which they had brought a large quantity with them; Nicodemus even a hundred pounds weight Then, after having wrapped the body in the customary linen bandages, they once more look in silence at the pallid yet regal face of the dead, and spread the napkin over it, which was probably done by the hands of Mary Magdalene.

The entire business of interment is, however, not yet ended; but the nearness of the Sabbath requires them to delay the actual embalming until the close of that festival, and, for the time, leave the corpse simply with those preliminary labors of love. If Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was also among the burial train, she would remember that no further work of that kind with the Master's corpse was necessary, since, according to his own express assurance, he had already received from her hands in Bethany, the anointing for the day of his burial.

The friends now again lift up the beloved corpse, and bear it, gently and, solemnly, into the new, clean sepulcher in the rock, where they softly lay it down to rest, as though it were only asleep, in a large and high-arched niche. Once more they look at it deeply affected, then forcibly tear themselves away, leave the vault, roll a great stone before its door, and because the Sabbath lights are already seen glimmering from a distance, return to their dwellings in profound sorrow, but not without hopeful anticipations.

We leave them, and linger a few moments longer at the sepulcher, from whence a vital atmosphere proceeds, and the peace of God is breathed upon us. There he rests, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. How grateful is the feeling to us, after all the ignominy and suffering he has endured, to see him, at least once again honorably reposing, and that too upon a couch, which love, fidelity, and tenderness have prepared for him! Who does not perceive, that even in the circumstances of his interment, the overruling hand of God has interwoven for our consolation, a gentle testimony, that his only-begotten Son had well accomplished the great task which he was commissioned to perform? How clearly the taking down from the cross, and the interment of the Redeemer before the setting in of night and the Sabbath, shows the fulfillment of the ancient ordinance of Israel respecting those who were hanged on a tree! And how distinctly are we convinced, to a demonstration, that the curse is now removed from a sinful world, and that the eye of God again looks graciously and well-pleased, down upon the earth!

There he slumbers. Well for us, dear readers, that he was willing to pass through even this dark passage on our behalf! Nothing hindered him from taking up his life again on the cross, and returning from thence immediately to his Father. But had he done so, our bodies would have been left in the grave, and you know how much more we are accustomed to fear the grave, than even death itself. There, where corruption reigns, it seems as if the curse of sin still hung over us, and as if no redemption had been accomplished. In order to dispel this terror, and to convince us, by means of his own precedent, that even with the interment of our bodies in the gloomy cell, there is no longer anything to fear, but that a passage into life is opened for us out of this dark dungeon, he paternally took into consideration all our necessities, and suffered himself to be laid in the grave before our eyes. He did not indeed see corruption, because he was only imputatively and not substantially a sinner. "You will not suffer your Holy One to see corruption," said David in Psalm 16:10, impelled by the spirit of prophecy. Our flesh, on the contrary, which is poisoned by sin, must necessarily pass through the process of the germinating seed-corn, and be dissolved into its original element before its glorification. But the difference between our lot and that of our Divine Head is not an essential one. The chief thing continues to be this, that we know that even our

bodies are not lost in the grave, but that they rest there in hope. This is confirmed and guaranteed to us by Christ. The way we have see him go, we shall also take. That which his obedience merited for him as the Son of Man, it merited and acquired for us, because Christ yielded it in our stead.

If, therefore, the second Adam's rest in the grave was only a peaceful sabbatic repose, ours cannot be anything more. If, on the third day, he was called forth from the prison, in which the king of terrors had confined him, and was crowned with glory and honor; the same thing, in due time, awaits our bodies, if we have entered into union with him by faith and love. If, henceforth, we say that Christ by his burial has consecrated and shed light upon the darkness of our graves, we give utterance to something incomparably more than a mere poetic mode of speaking. When we look down into our sepulchers, as into a silent, solemn resting-place, we do not dream, but see that which is real and true. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 15:13, feels so assured that our bodies will be raised again, as to affirm, that if this were not the case, Christ himself would not have risen. Who therefore will deny that grave-yards may not justly be termed, "Resurrection-fields!" Yes! those who are bought with the blood of the Lamb, rest even in their graves under the Almighty's wing, and over their moldering remains, a divinely sealed hope casts a radiant and transfiguring light.

The Prince of Peace reposes in his sepulcher. A venerable man approaches it in silent devotion, it is Paul of Tarsus, and writes upon the tombstone a mighty inscription. You may read it in Rom. 6, where it is testified, that we are not only dead with him but buried with him. But even as we are planted together in the likeness of his death, so shall we be also in the likeness of his resurrection. What is the meaning of this inscription? It asserts nothing less than this, that Christ has endured the curse of sin on the cross for us. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." But even though regenerate, we still bear the remains of the old sinful nature in and upon us. This is our grief and cross, and impels us to utter the anxious inquiry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" May God enable us to say, with him who

uttered it, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The first night which succeeded the great and momentous day, is past. The body of the deceased Redeemer slumbers solitarily in the prison of the tomb. The morning at length dawns, and movements are heard about the sepulcher. They are no longer the beloved forms of his friends that we see hastening so early through the garden. The latter, accustomed to obey every commandment, remain quietly in their habitations during the great Sabbath. It is enemies whom we see so active and busy at the first dawning of the morning. The previous evening, an anxious solicitude had seized their hearts. Their excited evil consciences saw visions. The remembrance of so many sayings of the Nazarene occurred to them, in which he had most clearly announced a resurrection, by which his heavenly Father, after his crucifixion, would glorify him before the whole world. The hypocrites pretended, indeed, that they were far from supposing that such fanatical fancies of One who had now been so completely put to shame, would ever be realized; but they think otherwise in their hearts. Even in death the crucified Jesus asserts his regal influence on their minds, and in his grave terrifies them by his majesty. Careless about the Sabbath or the passover festival, the high priests and Pharisees go, in solemn procession, to the governor's palace, in order to induce him to take measures for securing the grave of the crucified Jesus. They are admitted into the presence of Pilate, who is not a little surprised at such an early visit from the notables of Israel.

"Sir," say they, "we remember that that deceiver (shame upon them to speak in such a manner of the Holy One of Israel, contrary to their better light and knowledge) said, while he was yet alive, After three days, I will rise again. (Thus they confirm it, that he had really asserted this.) Command therefore that the sepulcher be watched until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead, so the last error shall be worse than the first."

Observe how cunningly these wicked men try to conceal their real thoughts and feelings. One would suppose that they were only afraid of a possible deception. But if they were merely anxious to repel the poor disciples, would any such measures as they demanded have been

requisite? Would not a handful of minions, such as were always at the beck of the Pharisees, have sufficed to protect the tomb against those defenseless men? But the mighty acts which they had seen the murdered man perform, cause them to think everything possible; and the terrific events, which had accompanied his death, were not calculated to dispel or alleviate their anxiety. They scent the air of Easter morning, and are, in fact, afraid of a resurrection of the buried corpse. But if the latter were to ensue, of what avail would be a guard, or the lime and plaster with which they intended to fix the stone? So we might well inquire, and doubt whether any serious apprehensions of Jesus' restoration to life could have actuated his enemies. But fear is foolish, and sin is blind, and gropes in the dark, however wise it may think itself: Pilate, who probably felt very peculiar emotion thrill through him, while listening to what the rulers of Israel had to say, very willingly granted their request, and, pointing to a band of armed soldiers, which he saw parading before the palace, says, "You have there a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can."

Not a little pleased at having attained their object, the deputation, together with the Roman guard, repair to Joseph's garden. After having convinced themselves by inspection that the body still lay in its place, the heavy stone, which they had rolled away from the mouth of the sepulcher is replaced, and the work of fixing and sealing commences. This is a remarkable scene—a singular campaign. Such preparations are made, as if nothing less were intended than to expel a hostile force from Joseph's garden. It is related of a German emperor of a former age, that, borne about in his open war-chariot completely armed, he put a whole hostile army to the rout, even when dying. In the quiet garden there is even more than this. It is true that, in the present instance, the adversaries act as if they were the victors, but inwardly they are the vanquished. The slumbering Hero of Judah took from them the armor of careless confidence, and filled their souls with a cloud of terrific and oppressive forebodings. What do they mean by their extensive preparations? They are fighting for the cause of death against life; and would gladly establish and maintain the throne of the former, and keep down and immure the latter. Let them do their utmost. An all-overruling God controls their designs, and permits them to assist death, by still more strongly forging his fetters, in order that the bursting of them may appear so much the

more glorious. And thus they are suffered to deprive life of all scope, and to wall up every outlet, that when it bursts through every barrier, it may the more evidently prove itself to be divine.

We depart from the sepulcher of our Lord—not in grief and sorrow, but full of joyful expectation of what is shortly to take place. We already behold in spirit, the first glimmer of the dawning resurrection-morn upon the rocky tomb. Only twenty-four hours more until the trumpet of God shall sound, and Joseph's garden present a different spectacle. Then every seal will be broken, not from the Redeemer's tomb only, but also, from the mystery of the whole of his passion. An "Amen!" from on high, the most glorious and stupendous that ever resounded under heaven, will then announce to the world that reconciliation has been made, and that the Prince of Life, crowned with glory and honor, as the conqueror of all the terrific powers which were opposed to us, offers the first Easter salutation of peace to the favored race of man, from the ruins of his shattered tomb. Let us then tune our harps, and hold our festive garlands in readiness, while awaiting the mighty moment that shall put an eternal end to all the sadness and anxiety of the human heart!

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