

The
Christian
Remembrancer



Short Reflections
upon the
Faith, Life, & Conduct
of a Real Christian

by

Ambrose Serle

The
CHRISTIAN
REMEMBRANCER

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Or

SHORT REFLECTIONS UPON THE
FAITH, LIFE, AND CONDUCT
OF A REAL CHRISTIAN



“Of these things put them in remembrance.”
(2 Timothy 2: 14)

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Ambrose Serle

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Publisher's Note

This book is taken from editions published by Sleight and Robinson in New York, USA in 1830 and by William Collins in Glasgow in 1829. In general the text has been taken from the former version, but there are three chapters (Part 2, chapters on 'Talents' and 'Self-Sufficiency' and Part 3, chapter on 'The Disposal of Property') which are missing in this edition and have been added from the other.

The Gospel Standard Trust issues this book with the hope that it might be spiritually profitable. Although we only issue books we feel set forth a Scriptural standard, there will be differences in opinion and interpretation, and the most gracious of men still have to say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." We trust our readers will prayerfully "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good", whilst bearing in meekness with any imperfections.

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Publisher's Introduction



Ambrose Serle – who is he? That is the question many will ask, and well they might. Biographical details about Ambrose Serle are somewhat scant and there is no known portrait. Many of his books were originally published anonymously, and perhaps that is the way he preferred to be known. Today, Serle will be known to a few through the extracts from his writings which appear from time to time in spiritual magazines such as *The Gospel Standard* or from his hymns where they are still sung (just one appears in *Gadsby's Selection of Hymns*: “If to thee I breathe my prayer” (964)).



A BRIEF SKETCH OF SERLE'S LIFE

Serle was born on 30th August, 1742, in Reading. Of his early life we know nothing. He was brought up in the Church of England and obviously favoured the Evangelical wing of the church. In 1764, he started a life-long friendship with Rev. William Romaine, whose ministry he sat under and greatly appreciated. Romaine

was later to write a preface to one of Serle's publications. Serle also developed friendships with John Thornton, John Newton, Augustus Toplady and Legh Richmond. Augustus Toplady's estimation of Serle led him to write in a letter to him: "The person does not breathe, whom I love and respect more than you." While writing to John Ryland, Toplady said: "Mr Serle is one of the most learned, most devout, and most valuable men I know." John Newton wrote of him: "He is a first-rate man, not only for solid experimental religion, but for natural and acquired abilities and general information." A number of letters between Serle and his friends are extant, including a series of forty seven letters in the *Collected Works of William Romaine*.

Although one modern historian has written of Serle preaching, universal evidence suggests Serle never ascended the pulpit steps. Instead, he was one of those rare laymen who, like John Rusk, was endued by the Holy Spirit with the pen of a ready writer, and grace in his heart.

It is generally believed that Serle entered the Navy in early life. He was certainly made under-secretary to William Legge, second earl of Dartmouth, on the latter's appointment as secretary of state for the colonies in 1772. Legge was described by William Cowper as being the one "who wears a coronet and prays." Serle served all his working life in the civil service, as a diplomat and clerk of reports.

Serle married in 1774, to Martha Woodrooffe. The Serles had at least five children, one of whom, Jane, was Mrs Romaine’s goddaughter. Sadly Jane died when she was just 12 years of age. Mrs Serle outlived her husband, dying on 9th April, 1817, aged 74 years.

Serle went to America in 1774. These were tumultuous times in the history of Britain’s colonialism, with the American Wars of Independence raging between 1775 and 1783. He was appointed secretary to General Howe (Commander in chief of the British Army) in 1776, and accompanied Howe and the British Army in America between 1776 and 1778. Serle became an outspoken critic of the Americans, writing pamphlets against them, one being entitled: *Americans against Liberty: or an Essay on the Nature and Principles of True Freedom, Shewing that the Designs and Conduct of the Americans Tend only to Tyranny and Slavery* (published 1775). He was strongly of the opinion that in the American Revolution the entire safety of Britain and its empire was at stake. His correspondence home from America is today still viewed by historians as a most important source of information on the situation in America at this time.

Returning from America in 1780, Serle settled in Heckfield, Hampshire. He continued his work in the civil service, being appointed commissioner of the transport service and overseer of the care of prisoners of war. He was reappointed to these posts as late as 1809. It is thought that he continued his work with the Royal

Navy too, with a report of him attaining the rank of Captain in 1795. A number of his letters written to Lord Horatio Nelson are held in the collections of the British Library. We know he used his position in the Admiralty to help Thomas Haweis (Chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon) to send two missionaries to the South Seas aboard *The Providence*, captained by William Bligh.

In later life it is recorded that Serle attended the ministry at the Chapel of Lock Hospital, London. Lock Chapel had become a centre of Evangelical preaching through the ministry of Martin Madan. Edward Charles De Coetlogon and Thomas Scott (the famous Bible Commentator and author of *The Force of Truth*) both served there as chaplains during Serle's time of attendance there, while William Wilberforce, the leader of the movement for the abolition of slavery, was one of the well-known members of the congregation.

Serle left little concerning his own soul's experience. In one way his writings speak for themselves - their author was evidently a gracious, well exercised and deeply taught man. One window we do have on his experience was written in September, 1811. Serle wrote:

I am now entering upon the seventieth year of my age; and here I may raise an Ebenezer of gratitude and praise. Thus has the Lord sustained me many years more than once I supposed that I could have lived upon earth. How much of mercy and goodness have I enjoyed all my days! Once I was nothing. Thy favour brought me into being. Yet, being born a sinner, thy

patience endured for many years, till thy Holy Spirit renewed me in the spirit of my mind, and rendered me, O Lord, capable of receiving thy truth in its light and love, and of tasting how good and gracious thou art, of which I have had a thousand proofs and pledges. From how many dangers and sins have I been delivered, from my youth up until now! How many mercies, temporal and spiritual, have I enjoyed through thy bountiful providence and exuberant grace! When I have been departing from thee, thy goodness has prevented me, and turned my heart and feet in the right way. It was thy grace which bestowed faith upon me, and kept that faith alive from day to day. If thou hadst withdrawn thy powerful hand, I should have been like the backsliding heifer, and have fallen by degrees into all the corruptions of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil. None would have been worse than myself. I should soon have been both a practical and a theoretical atheist, and have lived according to my fallen nature, without God in the world. To what dreadful extremities might I have run! But thy mercy prevented the horrid career. Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thee be all the praise, that I am a sinner redeemed, restored, and made willing to love, to serve, to follow, and to enjoy thy holy truth, and to walk in all thy blessed ways! O! may I still be fighting the good fight of faith to the end, and never draw back, till I receive the crown, which, I trust, thou hast prepared for me at thine appearing, or when I am called to appear before thee! My times, I bless him, are all in his hands; and I rejoice, that they are lodged there for my true welfare and safety. The world and its vanities, with my

weakness and infirmities, are all passing away, and will soon come to an end; and now is the day coming on, which shall introduce me into a glorious world, and a blissful eternity. It is my Lord's appointment, and therefore must be well. He has loved me with an everlasting love, for the purpose of drawing me, and at this very period of time, to himself and to his glory. All is well, because he has done it. I am, and I desire to be, perfectly satisfied. My flesh shall rest in hope; and my soul shall soar above all corruption and sorrow. O! blessed be my God, and my Father, for bringing me to this issue! To him be ascribed all glory, through my dear and gracious Redeemer!

A month or two before he died he wrote:

Mine age and my disorder put me continually in mind that I have no long continuance here. How shall I face death, usually styled the king of terrors? How shall I appear in the presence of God? I have surely no other foundation of hope but in the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. I have no help but in the Spirit of Truth, by whom I have access to this grace wherein I stand. I have no plea but this one, which the Lord will not reject—God be merciful to me a sinner!

What is it to die! I know not how my present disorder may terminate; but God, my heavenly Father, knows: I desire to be all submission to his holy will, wisdom, and truth, which is engaged to make everything work together for my good. It is however a serious thing to die—a very serious thing to lie in the

grave, and to be crumbled into forsaken and unknown dust. It is a serious thing to fly in spirit into regions we know not where, and to become all mind dissolved from matter. There is but one stay or hope, and it will be well tried; but one anchor to the soul, which is sure and steadfast, which is the promise of God's word respecting Jesus Christ, and his finished salvation. The Spirit of Grace also must apply this, and keep it in force, or the soul will sink in gloom or be swallowed up in despair. Lord, my God, be with me in my departing hours; make all my bed in my sickness; sustain my drooping spirit; and when my flesh and heart fail be thou the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever! Amen!

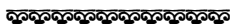
Just a few days before his death his mind occupied the same themes:

I know not when, where, or by what disease I shall die. This I leave, with entire submission, to the will and disposal of my heavenly Father, who hath engaged himself to do the best for me; who hath promised to make all my bed in my sickness, and who hath conquered death for me, through my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is, however, no slight affair to be dissolved from the body, and for the spirit to fly into an unknown world. It requires no ordinary degree of faith and patience to meet it well, and as becomes a Christian. May I never presume upon my own strength, wisdom, or righteousness, but depart hence, as he hath enabled me to live, upon the mercy, help, and righteousness of my Lord and Saviour, who hath engaged himself to me by a thousand ties, not one of

which, I trust, shall ever be broken. Lord, help me to believe, and help thou my natural unbelief! Stand by and support me, by thy Holy Spirit, in my dying hour. Let not Satan prevail over the weakness of my mortal frame, but strengthen me with especial might by thy Spirit, in the inner man, that, while the outward man verges to decay, I may meet what is terrible to nature with holy calmness, and with such composure of soul, as may glorify thee, and encourage my Christian friends to rejoice in thy goodness towards me, and to be encouraged themselves! O let me depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen, and my soul hath tasted, thy precious salvation! Be with and uphold me, and then all shall be well, and I shall have nothing to do or say, but, Blessed be God! who giveth me the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen! Hallelu-JAH for evermore! Amen!

I write this with a trembling hand; but blessed be God! with an undismayed heart, through the love of Christ vouchsafed to me. Blessing, glory, honour, power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen! Hallelu-JAH! July 14th, 1812.

Serle died on 1st August, 1812, and was buried in the churchyard at Broadwater, near Worthing. A wealthy man, he left an estate worth in excess of £20,000. However, for Serle his treasure was not of this earth, but was that which he entered into at his death.



SERLE’S WRITINGS

Serle wrote a number of spiritual books, perhaps best known is *Horae Solitariae* (1776) which consists of essays on the names given to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Together the essays set forth the doctrine of the divinity and personality of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Serle also authored a similar book on the Church of Christ examining the titles given to the Church in Scripture, entitled *The Church of God* (1793). Serle returned to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his small volume *Charis, or Reflections on the Holy Spirit* (1803).

In a short tract, entitled *An Address to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity* (1771), Serle wrote a minor body of divinity. He later distilled the same truths into a book for children, entitled *The Christian Parent* (1789), containing short pieces on the cardinal doctrines of the Christian religion designed for the instruction of youth. It was not the first book Serle produced for young people, having published in 1766 a book on how to write, entitled *The Art of Writing* (this was the first book Serle ever wrote and it was printed by George Keith, John Gill’s son-in-law).

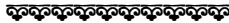
Serle’s excellence as an experimental author, probing the life of God in the soul of man, is best seen in the volume now before the reader, *The Christian Remembrancer* (1781) but also found in his volume *The*

Christian Husbandry, or Companion in the Field and Garden (1780). The latter was very highly recommended by William Romaine.

Besides these larger works, Serle also penned a number of pamphlets and tracts. These included *A New Dialogue of the Dead* (1791: a dialogue between Paul and the dying thief on who was the greatest sinner before conversion), *An Appeal to the Heart* (1830), *Christmas Box for the Heart*, *The Way to be Happy in a Miserable World* (before 1791), *The Happy Negro* (1820), *The Praying Soldier*, *The Profligate Reclaimed*, *Five Minutes Consideration on Time and Eternity* (1800) and *Apology for the Church of Rome* (1779: an ironical piece exposing the errors of the Roman church).

After his death, his friends published *Secret Thoughts of a Christian Lately Departed* (1813). While as late as 1861 a little book of letters appeared under his name, entitled *Letters Addressed to a Lady*.

Summing up the contents of these books, one old writer stated: "Nowhere does the conviction of the vital importance of Calvinism as of the essence of the gospel appear more strongly than in Serle's books." Serle himself wrote to Toplady: "Everything is within the reach of free grace, but nothing is within the reach of free will."



SERLE'S *CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER*

Perhaps of all Serle's writings, none has been as frequently republished as his *Christian Remembrancer*. Despite this, the book today is sadly forgotten and has been long out of print. Copies are hard to come by, and we can perhaps conclude it was one of those books which was worn out by those who possessed it.

You may ask, "What makes Serle's *Remembrancer* so special?" The answer lies in its warm examination of the matters pertaining unto the soul experience and daily life of the Lord's people. It is quite literally a small handbook of doctrine, experience and practice. It was designed to remind the Lord's people of the calling to which they were called and the vital matter of walking worthy of that calling. Thomas Chalmers, leader of the Free Church of Scotland, wrote in an introductory essay to a reprint of the *Remembrancer* in 1829:

We estimate highly the following valuable treatise in which the great and essential truths of Christianity are exhibited in a luminous and practical manner. But it is not merely those more essential truths of the gospel, which form the foundation of a sinner's hope, that he brings to our remembrance; the operative nature of these truths, as inwardly experienced by the believer, in the formation of the spiritual life—the sanctifying influence of Christian truth over the affections and character of the believer—the whole preceptive code of

social and relative duties to which, as members of society, Christianity requires our obedience—in fine the whole Christian system of doctrines and duties is presented in a plain and practical manner, well fitted to assist the understanding in attaining a correct and intimate acquaintance with the truths of Christianity; while the brief, but distinct and impressive form in which they are presented, is no less fitted to assist the memory in its recollection of them.

William Romaine, who was an ardent admirer of the *Remembrancer*, called it his *Vade Mecum* (Latin: a referential book—a handbook or manual. A useful object, constantly carried on one’s person). He wrote to a friend concerning it:

Mr Serle’s *Christian Remembrancer* is a most proper book for a journey—it is so well divided: chapters so short, and yet very experimental, that I could wish it to be your companion. I do not find that I can read it often enough. May you have the same key to open it, and the same spirit to apply it.

Thomas Chalmers emphasised the importance of this book by recourse to the words of the Apostle Paul: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15: 1-2) Chalmers wrote:

It is not enough that we have received the gospel, we must stand in it. And it is not enough that we barely believe it, for we are told, on the highest authority, that unless we keep it in memory, we have believed in vain ... It ought to be remembered, that if we are not mindful of these truths, we positively do not believe them. If we have not the memory, it is a clear evidence that we have not the faith. It is impossible but the mind must be always recurring to matters in which it has a great personal interest, if it only have a sense of their reality. We should try ourselves by this test, and be assured, that if we are not going on unto perfection, through the constant and practical influence of the great doctrines of Christianity upon our heart, we need yet to learn “what be the first principles of the oracles of God.”

We believe we can say of the *Remembrancer* what Charles Hodge, the American divine, wrote about Serle’s *Horae Solitariae*: “It tends, in every page, to exalt the Redeemer, and to invite the soul to commune with him... It contains much doctrine and much experience; so intermingled, that the doctrine is never dry, nor the experience ever unsound.” We might add, that in this book, just as doctrine is never dry, nor experience unsound, so neither is practice ever legal.

David Doudney, editor of *The Gospel Magazine*, wrote in a review of the *Remembrancer*:

It is one of those few books which are brought to bear upon the heart, so to speak. It seems to leave other

men out of the question, and almost imperceptibly brings its reader soberly and silently to ask himself the question, “What do I know of these important matters?” Such books can hardly fail to be profitable. Inasmuch as they were penned under the direct leading of the Spirit, so they go forth with his sanction and must, by the same Spirit, make their powerful appeals to the heart and conscience.

Such a book, that searches out the soul, exalts the Saviour, proclaims the doctrines of grace, and encourages the soul to look alone to Jesus, is one that will find a place in the fulfilment of the Saviour’s prayer: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)

As the publisher, we warmly commend this little volume to your attention. We believe this book reminds poor souls of their condition by nature and their only hope in the gospel. It sets before them the vocation unto which they are called, and the need to walk worthy of that calling. Above all else, it directs us to sole dependence on the blessed Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in all matters pertaining to our most holy faith.

TO
THE CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCE OF
JOHN THORNTON, ESQUIRE,

Who, adorning the doctrine of God his SAVIOUR, in an almost unexampled degree, by deeds of piety and benevolence, various, liberal, and extensive, but without ostentation: and who, imparting the means of spiritual instruction, as well as temporal relief, to multitudes of the ignorant and the poor, in every quarter of the world, by a fortune, though affluent, yet unequal to the vast desire of spreading good which possessed his mind; owned, amidst all, that himself was a sinner, indigent and helpless; and, resting no hope on what appeared, to every eye but his own, a long and astonishing course of excellent usefulness, cheerfully acknowledged, to his latest hour, that, by the Grace of God, he was whatever he was, of faith, or holiness, or stability; thus ascribing his whole title to salvation, with all the things that accompany it, in practice, prospect, and experience, to the favour and mercy of JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT, in and through THE GREAT REDEEMER; *this treatise*, for a real though mean memorial, of mutual and disinterested friendship, never to perish, is very affectionately inscribed by

THE AUTHOR

— The Christian Remembrancer —

Author's Preface

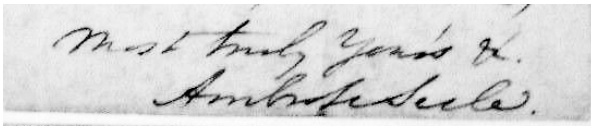


This little treatise is divided into three parts; the first of which relates chiefly to the word and work of God in the redemption of souls by Jesus Christ: the second, to the inward and practical experience of this redemption in the heart of the believer; and the third, to his outward conversation and conduct with others. The addresses to God, at the end of each part, may be read alone, or all together, in their order, as one prayer.

On this wide and great subject, the reflections, which might have been greatly multiplied, are brought into as narrow a compass as possible, being intended rather for hints to carry on the mind to farther meditations, than for full or exact meditations themselves.

As the author humbly believes, that he has had no other view in these reflections, which have employed some of his solitary hours, than the glory of a gracious God, and the edification of believers, he only requests, as one of the greatest favours he needs, that the pious reader will remember him, in return, before the throne of grace; that these things, of which he hath endeavoured to put others in remembrance, may never be forgotten by

himself, but be felt, experienced, and enjoyed, more and more. The acquisition of many prayers on this account from his Christian brethren is of such value and importance in his mind, as would make him a far higher compensation indeed, than he has a right to expect, for these humble labours, which need the mercy and favour of God, and the kindness and candour of every good man.

A photograph of a handwritten signature on a piece of paper. The signature is written in cursive and reads "Most truly yours &c." on the first line and "Ambrose Serle." on the second line.

Ambrose Serle's Signature

PART 1



— The Christian Remembrancer —

The Word and Work of God in Man's Redemption by Jesus Christ



ON ENTRANCE INTO SPIRITUAL LIFE

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? How shall I, a sinner, approach the eyes of that Majesty, which cannot look upon sin without abhorrence? My iniquities are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart sinketh within me on their remembrance. My affections are naturally all inclined to the world and worldly things. My judgment is depraved; my will is perverse; my understanding is darkened; my knowledge vain; and I see nothing in me or about me but what by guilt is altogether defiled. I have sore proof of that scripture, that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually, and that from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness

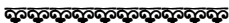
in my nature; but only the wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores of sin.

How then can I please God? How shall such a worm, such a lump of perverse ungodliness, obtain his favour? Shall I seek to deserve it by my own good thoughts? Alas! I am not sufficient of myself to think even one. Shall I by excellency of words approach my offended Maker? He regardeth not words, but the spirit and the heart; and my spirit and heart are wholly defiled. Shall I then by good works attempt to render him propitious? O my God, where shall I find them! How can I begin to act, before I have begun to think, what is right? How can the exercises of the body be pure and free, when the soul is unholy and enslaved by sin? And if, from this day, I could cease from evil, and do perfectly what is just and right, which the experience of all men tells me is impossible, yet, what will become of the long black catalogue of iniquities, both in heart and life, which are already written against me? How shall I wipe off the sins of my nature and my life, respecting the times that are past?

O Lord, thou hast revealed thyself as a holy God, and a just. Thou hast declared that thou wilt not spare the guilty. And I have offended thy righteous law in every hour and every action of my life. How then can I be saved? How is it possible for me to escape the wrath to come? My anxieties, like my sins, might justly overwhelm me; and I ought to tremble at the righteous judgment which I know I deserve. There are but a few

days at the most for me to live upon the earth; and I am not sure of one. O how shall I flee from the wrath to come? How shall I avoid eternal burnings, in which no man can dwell but with misery, and of which no man can think strictly but with horror? Lord, can such a sinner as I escape? Canst thou have mercy upon me?

Such are the breathings of the heart when it first begins to awake, and live, and feel that there is an evil and a curse in sin, and that sin, with all its evil, lieth at the door.



THE METHOD OF MERCY

Such a flowing from the heart, as that just mentioned, gladdens all heaven. It is the motion of the divine Spirit upon the troubled deep, and will ere long produce both life and peace.

Soul, dost thou feel the power of thy own corruption? Are these thy meek, yet bitter cries? O hear, and may thy God enable thee to believe, the glad tidings of his own salvation!

Thou art a sinner, it is true; and thy mercy it is to see, in due measure, how great a sinner thou art. It is the first line in the large book of humiliation, which thou must be reading all thy life long. But Christ died for sinners such as thee; for all sinners that come unto

God by him; for the vilest of sinners that see the vileness of sin, and bemoan it, as thou dost. He saved Mary Magdalene the harlot, Matthew the publican, Paul the persecutor, Peter, the swearer, liar, and denier of his Master, the malefactor on the cross, who had been a thief and a murderer, and ten thousand more like these; and he hath just the same power, means, and mercy to save thy soul, even thine.

He saves graciously, that is, freely; because no wisdom nor worth of man have contrived, or could have obtained his greatness of salvation. It was planned in grace, and performed by grace. It is all of grace, and bounty, and love, from beginning to end.

For this purpose he came into the world and took our nature upon him. He took it in its meanest and humblest form; and was content to be born in a stable, to be brought up by a labouring man, to labour with him too, to suffer the worst evils of human life, and the sorest pains of human death, that so he might be an oblation or sacrifice in the stead of his people, and render an atonement to the justice of God for them. These sufferings and this atonement are the debt due to the law and holiness of God, without which, consistent with his attributes, he could not spare the sinner, but by which he can be both just, and yet the justifier of him who taketh refuge in Jesus. Yea, this dear Saviour having paid the penalty due to his transgressions, God is now faithful and just to forgive him his sins, or rather more faithful and just to forgive them than he could be

in laying on the punishment again, which Christ endured in that behalf.

Christ also lived upon earth to fulfil all righteousness; and he fulfilled it completely for his redeemed. He makes himself over to them; and all he hath is theirs, through faith in him. Thus they have a right to call him, what he is, the Lord our righteousness. God is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, and beholds every poor sinner who trusts in Christ, and lives in him, as unblameable and unreprouable in his own most piercing sight, yea, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This righteousness is that garment of salvation, which covers them wholly, and fits them perfectly for the kingdom of heaven.

Contrite soul, believest thou this? Is this good news, the very gospel or good news, of God? Search and see. Read and pray over thy bible, and thou wilt find, that it is the very voice and will of thy Lord.

O that the fallow, the hard, and barren ground of thy heart may be so broken up by his power, as to welcome this joyful news, like the thirsty soil receiving the showers from the skies!



THE SOUL'S DIFFICULTY IN EMBRACING MERCY

These are glad tidings indeed (the soul may say) to one weary and heavy laden with sin as I am, could they be apprehended rightly, and maintained constantly, in the strivings of sin and the doubtings of nature. I am therefore earnest to know these two things: 1. How shall I embrace this mercy of Christ proposed in the gospel? And, 2. How shall I keep up the spirit and intentions of it in my heart and life, so as to endure to the end and be saved?

I know not how it is with others, but I find myself very unable, nay, most unable when I have the greatest occasion, to lay hold upon this mighty mercy of God, and to rest upon it, and to make it my own, and to use it for my consolation and support. I long for this with the full purpose of my heart; and my groans and tears in secret are well known unto God. But I have also an evil heart of unbelief, which suggests a thousand doubts and fears, sometimes of God's willingness to save me particularly, who am so very vile and faithless; and sometimes of my own reality of desire towards him, which is often dreadfully mixed with the desire of other things, and overwhelmed with cares and sorrows, difficulties and temptations. O what great troubles and adversities hath God shown me! How shall I be delivered from the body of this death? How shall I lay

hold on eternal life? How shall I know, that I have fast hold; or be assured, that none shall be able to pluck me from it? O Lord, to be assured of this thy favour is, both in life and death, of more worth to me than a thousand times ten thousand worlds. For I might have these, and be wretched; but, with thee, I can have nothing but life and peace for evermore.



THE NATURE AND EXERCISE OF FAITH

Faith is the gift and the operation of God. It comes by the Holy Spirit's power, moving and strengthening the sublimest faculties of the soul, and is really a regeneration, a rebegetting, a revival of life from the dead. Thus the believer is said to be born of the Spirit, because it is the Spirit's office in the covenant of grace to regenerate, and because it is the promise concerning the Spirit to all, even as many as God shall call. And thus also the Christian is said to be born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

When this principle of divine life and light is given to the soul, it enables the soul to feel its own loss and misery, and to see its own sin and darkness. A man can have no true sight of the nature of sin but by this grace. He is, therefore, in some sense, a believer before he

knows himself to be one. Faith acts in him, before he can be sensible of the reflex act of faith. He first lives; and then he feels his misery; and then he cries for mercy. He cries for mercy, and then is enlightened to see the way of mercy in the word of mercy. He is next enlightened to behold the free welcome and rich bounty of this mercy to all returning sinners. He is enabled to contemplate upon himself, and to view the fitness of God's mercy for him, and his fitness, as a convinced sinner, for it. He is then strengthened to embrace it, like a poor creature who must perish without it, but who shall never perish with it. And at length God's grace seals itself upon the soul, by giving a true taste of joy and peace in believing, insomuch that the broken drooping heart revives, and is able to say, "I do humbly venture to believe that Christ died for me, and will save me for evermore."

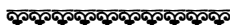
Now, through all the course of this gracious work, which, according to the will of God, is slower in some than in others, there is often much doubting and disputing in the man's own conscience. It is a sore struggle, at times, to quell the clamours of unbelief, and the suggestions of Satan; and at last, perhaps, the soul embraces the reality of God's love in Christ, with a trembling kind of hopeless hope, and doubting believing. These things often puzzle the understanding, and perplex the whole will and affections. A true believer is like Rebecca labouring with twins, a faithless Esau and a trusting Jacob; and so, like her, he cries out,

If it be so, why am I thus? Whereas, if it were not so, if he were not of God, it would not be thus. Nature alone could not struggle; nor can what is dead strive against the stream. The bent of nature is against grace. So again, if he were all grace and no sin, he would feel no trouble; for the opposition of grace is to nature and to the sin which is in it. And it is a good sign, though not a pleasant feeling, that there is this conflict; it demonstrates the life of God to be within.

In this way, the Christian embraces the gospel. He is enabled in hope against hope to believe it, as the grand charter of his salvation. And this very act of believing is the evidence within, concurring with the evidence of the written word without, that his name is enrolled in the charter, and that he is consequently entitled to all its blessings.

Take heart, therefore, thou child of God, and fear not. Thou hast the promise, the power, the mercy, and the truth of Jehovah on thy side; and who can prevail against him? If thou dost not wholly believe, or art not perfectly cleared from all doubts, be not, however, dismayed. The faithfulness of thy Lord is not grounded upon the perfect exercise of thy faith, but upon his own sovereign grace and love. Thou desirest to trust him with thy whole heart; but thou never couldest have desired this, if he had not wrought that disposition within thee. He was the Author, and he will be the Finisher, of all in thee, as well as of all for thee. If God did not spare his own Son for thy sake, what will he

spare beside? Who shall, or who can, lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God himself, with whom there is neither evil nor folly, that justifieth thee from both. Who can condemn thee! It is Christ who blotteth out thy sins by his precious blood, or rather is risen again to present thee faultless in his righteousness before the throne, and to plead for thee as that Advocate who never lost a cause. Who shall separate thee from the love of Christ? Shall the evils of life, all the distresses of time, and all the rage of the devil? Nay, in all these things thine Almighty Saviour will render thee a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, because he hath loved thee. O divine words that follow! From thine inmost affections, from the very ardour and spirit of faith, mayest thou breathe them forth! "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."



ON COMMUNION WITH THE DIVINE PERSONS IN JEHOVAH

Curious speculations upon the Trinity profit not. There is a sort of knowledge in this, as in other

things, which betrays its own falsehood by puffing up the soul.

Much time hath been lost, and many hurtful disputes have been raised concerning the mode of the Son's generation from the Father, and the manner of the Spirit's procession from both; points which have not been revealed, and which therefore are not necessary to faith. It is sufficient for us to apprehend, that there are three persons in one Jehovah, or self-existent Godhead, and that this Godhead is One; that we are privileged to have communion with these divine persons in their several offices of salvation; and that, by the unction of the Spirit, we come into the grace of the Son, and possess the love of the Father, now and for evermore. He that doth not thus apprehend the doctrine of the Trinity, only apprehendeth the phantom of his own imagination, and is never the better for his speculation, however abstruse or refined.

Of what avail to my soul are all the nicest disquisitions of men? I want food and light, reality and enjoyment. These do thy word, O Lord, afford in plentiful measure, when thy grace opens the well-spring to my heart. I am there taught to pray for that anointing of the Holy One, which shall lead and guide me into all thy saving truth. By him I am both instructed and enabled to renounce myself, to put on Christ, and to cleave to my Redeemer as my only portion and hope. By the Spirit and Son of God, I am led up to fellowship with the Father, and to call upon him as my Father,

even mine. O my blessed God, my Abba, my Father, my life and my all, what hast thou revealed to my poor soul; and how much more thou hast done and prepared than thou hast hitherto revealed to men, or than men in this state are able to conceive? O thou fountain of unutterable blessedness, thou unfathomable height and depth of love, help me thus to know thee in the secret of my soul; and may all thy works of providence and grace increase this inward knowledge to the end! While others dispute, let me enjoy. Manifest thy precepts to my mind, and say to my longing spirit, “Peace be unto thee, for I am thy salvation.”

One spark of this life is of more worth than the whole universe of notions; for this not only brings an understanding of divine things superior to all speculations, but gives with it a fullness of satisfaction, arising from the very taste and perception of the things themselves. Faith takes them for realities, hope is kindled by them as such, and love finds them to be so, and embraces them with joy to the end.



ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, BY WHICH HE BECAME IMMANUEL

Who shall unfold this mystery, or unfathom this love of my God! The ancient of days became a

child of days, and the Lord of all would be the servant of all, that he might be a Redeemer, a Brother, a Friend of poor unworthy mortals, of vile apostates and rebels, such as I am, and such as, without him, I and all others for ever must have been.

He took our nature without sin, that he might bear our sin. If sin had been in that which he took for himself, it would not have been possible that one who was equally sinful should have taken off sinfulness from others. Thus he, who was not, and could not be a sinner by nature, did, by imputation, become the greatest of sinners. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and Jehovah laid upon him the iniquities of us all. This dear Immanuel was a lamb without spot, and therefore meet to be slain for atonement; and a scape-goat, or strong-one, going off, laden with iniquities; and so able to bear them away into everlasting forgetfulness.

He was very God and very man in one Christ. As Christ he is Immanuel, or God with us. What his name implies, that he truly is. He is God with us, able to save and to succour, able to bless and to enliven, in all our pilgrimage from earth to heaven. “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

And is this thy promise, O thou meek and lowly Jesus! and shall I be still slow of heart to believe it? Shall I always be hanging my head like a bulrush; and shall my eyes be still gushing out their faithless tears; when thou hast promised not only the best of creatures in earth and heaven, but thine own blessed Self to be with

me, who art Lord of all? O my dear Redeemer, be so with me by thy gracious power, that I may be deeply sensible of thy continual presence; manifest thyself to me as thou dost not unto the world; for I am thine, and I desire to give up myself and all I am and have, to thy blessed will, for evermore. Be indeed, according to thy name, my Immanuel, my God with me, and in me of a truth, that I may walk with thee as one agreed, and draw from thee all those supplies of grace, life, and peace, without which I can neither be happy, nor alive to thy glory. O hear and answer, for mine eyes are upon thee.



ON CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO EGYPT

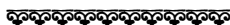
It behoved this Immanuel in all things to be made like unto his brethren; therefore he went down into Egypt. All he did upon earth had some use and meaning. By some facts he testified what he was doing, and by others, what he would continually do for his people.

Out of Egypt have I called my Son, saith the Lord. His redeemed were spiritually in Egypt, the house of bondage. They were there under the service of a cruel king, a prince who ruleth in the world by usurpation till the time appointed. Grievous are the tasks, and sad are

the wages of this tyrant of souls. Jesus went down and came up again for a sign. As the head of his people he did this, preaching their redemption from bondage in himself. In their order and times, they come up out of Egypt too, by the strong hand of this captain of salvation. He is great in might, and therefore not one of them faileth. The prince of the air loseth his dominion over them; and though he follows them like Pharaoh, and chase them all the way, he cannot hinder their course of faith, nor rob them of their Canaan in glory.

O marvellous love of my Saviour! Was it not enough for thee to take up my nature in its best estate, without submitting to a manger, to contempt, to persecution, to banishment, and all the wrongs of men? O how low must I be fallen, that it should be needful for thee, (for if it had not been needful, this act had been spared) to endure poverty, wretchedness, and shame, that I might be delivered from all! I was in Egypt, and thou camest to me. Thy grace preached liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Thy power performed what thy love proclaimed; thou broughtest the prisoners from the prison, and those that sat in darkness out of the prison-house. I, O wonderful to tell! I, among thy ransomed, have followed thee in the regeneration out of this dismal Egypt, and have tasted a little of the glorious liberty of thy children. Not unto me, my dear Saviour, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the praise. I was wallowing in the mire of Egypt, and in the mud of the Nile; I was entirely

given up to the filth and pollutions of this world, and should have remained therein till I had been sunk for ever in its woe; unless thy mighty arm had wrought my deliverance, and set me free. Glory to thee, Jehovah Jesus, thou Saviour all divine, for mercy unmeasurable like this, for grace and glory yet before me, to which there is no end! O how shall I show forth thy praise for all which thou hast done for my soul!



ON THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

We see but little into the true worth and importance of the miracles of Jesus, if we look no farther than the outward facts. These indeed do speak aloud the glory of his divine person to the carnal sense of man, and did so even to those who hated and blasphemed him; but the grandeur of his works consisted in this, that they were only outward testimonies of the far more noble operations of his grace within the soul, which were not to endure for a time only, like their outward signs, but throughout eternity.

He gave sight to the blind, that he might testify unto men his sovereign power in giving light and understanding to the mind. He opened the deaf ear that men might know by whom alone they can hear aright the

good news of salvation, and live for ever. The lame he caused, in a moment, to walk, that his people might learn, that they can only move, as well as live by him, and that without him they can do nothing. He cured the foul leprosy of the body in order to show that only by him can be healed the far more deplorable leprosy of sin, which covers and defiles the mind. All sicknesses vanished at his command, that we might have hope in him as the only Restorer of our souls. He cast out unclean spirits and suffered them to possess the swine, who were thereby lost, that he might teach his redeemed that he only delivered and can deliver them from the power of darkness, which being let loose upon the world, drive them violently and swiftly down the steep course of time into a gulf of inextricable woe. The hungry multitudes were fed by his miraculous power to explain this great truth, that he is not only the Giver of spiritual life, but the constant Sustainer and Nourisher of it from day to day. And he did this by small means, that the excellency of the power might be known to be his, and not in the creatures, however sanctified, blessed, and used. The winds and waves were instantly obedient to his word, that his beloved might rejoice in him as the Stiller of all spiritual waves, the tumultuous madness of this world, the ragings of Satan and the confusion of all things. These can roar and foam no longer than it pleaseth him; and when they roar and foam at all, it shall turn out in the end for the good of his people. The dead were raised to proclaim his rising

power, and to declare that the issues also of spiritual life and of endless death are altogether in his hands. Whatever he did was an act of mercy, under which he revealed, as a parable, innumerable lessons of grace and love. All his works proclaimed him to be both the Creator of all, (and what seems more comforting to his chosen) the Redeemer and Restorer of millions that were lost.

Learn from these things, O believer, what thy Lord God hath done for thy soul. He quickened thee from the death of trespasses and sins; he giveth light and peace to thy mind; he feedeth thee with the bread of life; he cureth all thy spiritual diseases; he quelleth all thy manifold enemies and temptations; he strengthened thee with strength in thy soul; he doth all that is done in thee by grace; and he will never cease working in thee both to will and to do, no, not even when he hath brought thee to his kingdom in heaven.

O pray fervently my soul, rightly to apprehend these precious things. If thou teach me, blessed Lord, then shall I know them, in some measure at least, according to my capacity, as they ought to be known. Such knowledge indeed is too excellent for my clouded faculties of nature; they cannot, if left to themselves, attain unto it. I therefore seek not to obtain the apprehension of these truths, as fallen man can teach or attain them, but as thou dost teach and enforce them. In thy teaching, though the substance of the truths be the same, there is a wide difference from all the

teaching of men. Man by his own study gropeth in the dark, and wearieth himself in vain to reach up to the perception of thine excellent wisdom; but thou art light in thyself, and sendeth down both illumination and influence at once, to such as are taught by thee, by which they not only know thy truth, as a truth in itself, but feel the blessings of it, as a truth applied and made their own. They find strength and nourishment in what thou givest for food, and not airy words or unprofitable speculations, which, without thee, are all that can be found in the best and wisest instructions of men. O raise me up, then, my blessed Teacher, above the pictures of things which may be gained by words, to the true enjoyment of the things themselves. So shall I not hear or give discourse only of thy spiritual feast, like a man in a dream, but shall taste and see indeed how good and gracious thou art, and that all life, power, and consolation are from thee.



ON THE WORD OF CHRIST

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven; and upon earth it runneth very swiftly. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting. Give me understanding, and I shall live.

Such is the word, and the end of the word, of my gracious Redeemer. It is called a word, because it is a revelation; all words being only the revelation or expression of things. This revealed word is settled in heaven upon the throne of God, is ordered by the Divine persons in all things, and is sure, because ordered by them in a covenant which cannot be broken.

It is a word too of testimony, because it testifieth of my Saviour throughout, either directly by the institutions and declarations of his grace, or indirectly by the courses and actions of his providence, meeting in one and the same end, which is the guidance and salvation of his people.

This word, in the conduct of the Divine Spirit, is also a word of power, and the fit instrument of all his works. It is his spiritual sword, by which he divides asunder the soul and spirit, and effects that circumcision of the heart, whereby his people are enabled to live no longer unto themselves, but unto God. The operation is painful indeed to the flesh, or to nature; but it causeth the spirit to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to give up its confidence in all things beside.

For this purpose, then, of testifying for Christ, and of acting by the Spirit in the redeemed, is all the written word calculated and given. Hence, the institutions of the law preached Jesus and his salvation, the prophecies declared the same truth, the histories are records of God's conduct towards his people from age to age, the gospels are evidences of the accomplishment of all these

things in Christ, and the epistles are explanations and enforcements of these things to believers. In short, all the holy writings relate to Christ, and to the redeemed in him. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of the whole word and work of the Most High.

In this word and its experience consist all the wisdom and comfort of a Christian. Here is truth without errors so that he may read without fear, and trust without danger. All other books, as they come from men, have more or less of folly or vanity in them, and often are looked over with little true satisfaction and improvement. But in this volume, grace not only discovers something new, but brings new force out of old truths, which have charmed the soul a thousand times. It discovers the multiform and manifold wisdom of God, in what he hath spoken; insomuch that, from under the veil of one precious instruction, another and another shall arise, as the soul is improved to bear them. These are the steps of the kingdom; and the higher the renewed mind can ascend, it not only understands better what it hath already passed over, but sees farther and wider into the glories yet before it, till it is ravished with unspeakable delight in the infinite knowledge and love of God.

The right understanding of this word doth not puff up, but humbleth. He hath not a true apprehension of its sense, who is lifted by it in himself. The lowly reader is the only learner. To him is not a word lettered or sounded, so much as a living and lively word engrafted.

It enters into his heart more than his ears, and diffuseth its sweet savour through all the faculties, setting them into delightful exercises for the divine glory.

The great depth of the word of God keeps the real Christian ever a learner. He knows that it is impossible to reach the utmost of God's wisdom. There will be always mysteries to be unfolded, because man's capacity is finite; at the bound of which, how wide soever it may extend, remaineth ignorance. One who had been in the third heaven, and in spirit caught up into paradise itself, where he heard unspeakable words, could only say, when he talked of the divine counsels, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" He could stand upon the shore and taste, but all beyond was an infinite ocean.

The true disciple, however, knows enough to make him see the vanity and unprofitableness of all learning and wisdom, (if so they may be called) out of Christ. The speculations of men are but dreams, and their pursuits but idle labours at the best, which begin and end in self, and have no higher object than this evil world. The poor simple countryman who hath learned Christ, (and many such, blessed be God, there are) can pity the pompous ignorance of those who know almost everything but God and the proper value of their own souls. By a logic, far beyond that of the schools, he hath been led to this conclusion, that God is his Father, that Christ is his Saviour, that the Holy Spirit is his guide,

that the Bible is his charter and his library, that the devil, the world, and the flesh, are his foes, that the earth is the wilderness of his banishment, that heaven is his home, and that all the favour, love, and power of the Godhead are engaged to bring him thither. The worldly wise can only value this (if at all) when carnal knowledge is dying with their bodies, and all their trifling thoughts are about to perish. Hence it is that the poor man's knowledge being sound and true, though ever so small, can stand the onset of trials in the world and death at last; while the learned and knowing, with none or small degrees of the true understanding, fall into errors, fail in their course, or die almost doubting and despairing.

O my soul, seek thou the substantial wisdom, which cometh from God, and which time, or rather eternity itself, cannot diminish, but will brighten and improve. Though other knowledge may be valuable for the purposes of this world, yet this alone can ripen for heaven, and is therefore most earnestly to be sought by thee, whose business and calling, whose citizenship and hope, are most principally there.

And, O thou, who art the living and life giving word itself, through whom and for whom all the written word was given, come and possess my soul! I long for nothing, and would always long for nothing, but for thy wisdom and thee. O forgive my unsettled heart, which hath so often been taken up with a multitude of unprofitable things, instead of being fixed wholly upon

thee, who art the only Way, the Truth, and the Life. I can have no rest, no firm establishment, but upon thee. My nature is unstable as water; and I live moreover in a slippery world. Leave, O leave me, therefore, not to myself, nor to the power of the evils, which are above, beneath, and on every side. Set me upon thyself, my blessed Rock, and order thou my goings in the way, and lead me into the way everlasting. Who is sufficient for these things, but thou, who art all-sufficient? How can I, so poor a creature, hope either to stand or to prevail, but through that strength, which is made perfect in weakness, through that wisdom, which cannot be deceived by fraud, and that love which is stronger than death, and durable as the days of heaven! O Lord, be on my side, and then neither my own flesh, nor the corruption of the flesh in others, no, nor all the powers of darkness, shall be able so much as to hurt me. I am thine, O save me now, save me to the end, and save me for ever!



ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Though my Redeemer was to be, and was, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; though he was to have, and had, all our iniquities in his own body on the cross; though he was to bear the curse, and was

cursed for the transgression of his people; and, for a token of it, was hanged on a tree; yet, in his own person, he was pure, harmless, and undefiled, and so was called typically the holy Lamb of God, without blemish or any possible defect. He was without sin from the manger to the tomb. When Satan tried him in the desert, he found nothing in him of weakness of mind or defilement of body; and therefore his temptations had nothing to lay hold of, but fell to the ground. His enemies among men, stirred up by the malice of the adversary, could not, when he challenged them, convince him of sin; nor was anything like guile to be found in his mouth. All his words were wisdom itself, and all his actions were purity and love.

There are three principal reasons why such a Redeemer became us, and these are to be found only in Christ.

A sacrifice in the first place, was necessary for our iniquities; for, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. The justice of God required atonement; because it is inconsistent with the holiness of his nature to spare the guilty. No truth, in all his word, is more plain than this. But nothing could be substituted in the room of sinners, which was sinful in itself; for this would only increase the wrath of the Most High. And, therefore, as his love was pleased to provide and accept a substitute, such an one appeared as was without spot, or defect of any kind in himself, and had nothing to answer for of his own. This is the signifi-

cation of all the pure sacrifices under the law, which speak aloud that they are altogether vicarious, or one offered in the stead of another.

In the next place, the redeemed, as sinners, wanted righteousness, without which they cannot appear with acceptance before God: and, as a perfect righteousness can only be pleasing to him, and all men are incapable of producing such an one, and as therefore it can only be obtained by accounting the righteousness of a substitute for their own; Jesus Christ was Jehovah in our nature, in order to be Jehovah our Righteousness. God is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, which is infinite and everlasting, capable of justifying from all things, and through all times, even into eternity. Christ, not for himself, but for his people, fulfilled all righteousness, and upon their account magnified the law of their God. It was for this end, that he lived so many years upon earth, and went through all the stages of human life to manhood; by which his people of all ages might have, through faith, a right of acceptance in him.

And, thirdly, the merit of the sacrifice for sin, and the substitution of righteousness for sinners, required some person to intervene, or to stand between God and sinners, and to offer these exchanges in their behalf. This office is the office of a priest, who is a mediator between God and man, and who must therefore be holy in himself. Christ was this perfect person; and so was such an High Priest as became us, holy, harmless,

undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, having an unchangeable priesthood, to which he is consecrated for evermore.

These are the reasons of all his labours in love and righteousness: and he was able to merit and go through them, being Jehovah in man; as well as to suffer what he took upon him, being man in Jehovah.

O what a task of unparalleled grace and humility is here! Who could have done such unimpeachable works; but he who is perfect in himself? Who could have done them to render others perfect for ever before God, but one so much above all created perfection, as to have for others an unbounded perfection to spare?

Lord, help me to meditate upon thee, and upon all that thou hast done upon my soul! O put on this garment of salvation, this robe of righteousness which thy blessed hands have perfectly wrought, that it may be my wedding garment in the day of my espousals, when I shall leave the world, and appear before the Majesty on high! This is the righteousness of saints, pure, white, and shining, in which they walk with thee in glory, and in which I also hope to walk, unworthy creature as I am, both with thee and with them. O then shall I appear without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, all acceptable to God, all illustrious in thee! Lord, what hast thou wrought indeed? Thou hast wrought for me to entitle me to heaven; and thou hast wrought in me to fit me for heaven; a work, as it seems to me no less difficult than the other; so stubborn and vile am I, and

so opposite to thy pure nature is mine. I marvel, and with tears of joy I marvel, at all the mysterious wonders of thy redemption, at thy plain and clear, yet unsearchable love, at thine awful justice magnified even by grace itself, at the kindness thou hast shewn and the goodness thou hast promised, at the never ending line of wisdom in thy holy word, and at the unbounded scene of glory yet before me. I am overwhelmed, I am astonished, at the weight and grandeur of thy divine benevolence. Accept the faculties of my body and soul, all I am and all I have; and let them be found to thy praise, and honour, and glory, both now and at the day of thine appearing! Amen.



ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST

“**B**ehold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger.”

No, my Jesus, never was sorrow like thine. Thou bearest the griefs of millions; griefs, which would have sunk those millions into unsufferable woe. Omnipotence itself groaned under the tremendous load, which forced from thy pure and perfect body, not common sweat (the curse, inflicted with human labour,) but a dreadful sweat, bursting forth in great drops of ago-

nizing blood. O what a doleful cry didst thou utter; and who but thyself can conceive those to us unknown pangs and sufferings, which forced from thy sacred lips, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!

The meditation of thy sufferings and death is painful in the sympathy of nature; yet I cannot wish that thou hadst not endured them, nor didst thou fully wish it for thyself. Thou wast contented to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men for this very purpose. It was by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, that all the parts of this solemn event were transacted. And it is for the everlasting interest of me and of thousands, that all the scriptures concerning thee were thus awfully fulfilled.

Lord, what is sin, that thou thyself couldest not be spared; when from the souls of thy people it was taken off, and laid upon thee? Can anything more solemnly describe the hatred of the divine nature to sin, and the severity of the divine justice upon account of it, than the pangs, the horrors, the cries of thee, my Jesus, thou suffering Son of God? And if thou wert sacrificed for sin, who in thyself knewest no sin, what shall become of those who reject thy saving sacrifice, and yet all the while have nothing but sin in themselves?

Who could support such excruciating tortures, unassisted and uncomforted as thou wert, even upon a just account? It was not in the power of a creature to sustain thine inward griefs, thine outward torments, and the entire dereliction or forsaking of God, of men,

and of nature, all together and at once, as thou didst sustain them, upon any account or motive in the world. But thou endurest the whole with dignified complacency and satisfaction, even for thine enemies, to convert them into friends, and to make rebels and apostates heirs of God, and joint heirs with thyself of an eternal weight of glory. May I not turn thine own words and say, “Behold, and see, was there ever love like thy love, which thou shewedst for thy people, when the Lord afflicted thee in the day of his fierce anger!”

Lord, how shall I speak, and what shall I say to these things? Shall my incredulous heart be still backward to believe? If Jesus died for my sins, can I die for them too? If he freely bore the curse for my sake, will the justice of my God still require the curse at my hands? If my iniquities were taken by my Saviour, and he made a full and perfect atonement for them, can I dare to affront the divine Majesty by supposing that he is yet so unrighteous as to charge them all again upon me? O forgive my hard and impenitent heart, that I should ever imagine such blasphemy against thy faithfulness and love; that I should even think, that thou canst be so unjust and untrue, even in contradiction to thine own word, as to lay that still upon myself, which for my sake was entirely laid upon my dearest and most blessed Redeemer! Lord, I melt into tears of shame at myself, and into tears of comfort upon the remembrance of all this thy kindness to my soul. Thy blood, O my Jesus, cleanseth from all sin; and if from all, what sin shall

remain to be now charged home upon me! O help me thou mighty God, thou Prince of peace that I may not be faithless, but believing!



ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Never was fact more strongly and undeniably established than this. Divine providence ordained that it should be so, because upon this great truth depend all the assurance and efficacy of our redemption. If Christ be not raised (says the apostle) your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

But is there no proof of Christ's resurrection but the historical evidence? Yes, blessed Lord, as thou givest thy people to know of the doctrine of salvation, that it is thine by the demonstration of the Spirit; so thou affordest to them a most convincing testimony, that thou art indeed risen from the dead, by their super-resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins. If thou hadst not been raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, it would have been impossible for any of them to have either received or walked in the newness of life. Their being spiritually quickened with thee, is a proof in itself of thy glorious resurrection, and a confirmation to their souls, that they are thine own

unalienable inheritance, and that they shall also live with thee for ever.

Thou hast truly and graciously said, “I am the resurrection and the life: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.” Lord, I was long, and too long, dead to God and dead to thee, shut up under the ban of thy law through sin, yet insensible, as a dead carcass is of all outward impressions, to my alienation and separation from thy life and peace. I was dead also to my own true interest and everlasting concerns, and alive only to sin, and to the service of the lord of sin, without perceiving his bitter tyranny and horrible designs. “So foolish was I and ignorant, yea, even as a beast before thee.” The beasts indeed follow the end of their being, but I did not think upon mine. In tender mercy didst thou open mine eyes, that I might know myself and my misery, and that I might behold thee as the only refuge and hope of my soul. Thou gavest me the powers of a new and spiritual life; and then I ran towards thee with an affection I had never felt before, and desired to know more and more of thee and the power of thy resurrection, that so I might no longer live in or for myself, but in thy faith and for thy glory. All this was thy work, and thine alone. I might as easily have created a world, as thus have new created myself in opposition to the millions of hindrances from within and without. No; it was thou, my dearest Redeemer, it was thou that restoredst my soul, and

ledest me in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake; and therefore I trust, (and though I am sometimes afraid, yet still do I trust, and would trust again) that, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and that I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

O what an evidence of thy resurrection hast thou thus brought home to my heart! Confirmed, as it is, by thy holy written word, it is demonstration itself, and is not to be argued away by all the corrupt reasonings of men. It is a demonstration both of word and of deed, of spirit and of thy faithfulness and truth, and of all my blessed and joyful interest therein. "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

Thomas doubted, that I might believe more strongly. He was suffered to fail in his faith, that my faith and that of all thy children after him, might be improved and confirmed. But the mere evidence of sense can draw no blessing. His bodily view of thy resurrection was indeed followed by faith; but, from hence thou tookest occasion, most happily for thy people, to say, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Through thy mercy, I have believed, and according to thy word, have tasted thy blessing. Joy and peace in believing, quietness and assurance of mind, peace and resignation of soul, some holiness and strong

desires after more, contempt of this world and foretaste of a better, preparation for death and views of a transporting eternity, are among the many proofs that thou art risen and livest, that thou art gracious and true. O that these proofs may increase in number and measure, that my faith may be more and more lively, and that my hopes may continually abound!



ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

“**T**hou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts, (in thy human nature) for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them, or that they might become an habitation of God through the Spirit.” This was prophesied of Jesus long before his advent in the flesh. It was so prophesied, as though it were a fact already past; because the things to come are, as it were, present with God, being foreknown by his omniscient mind, and ordained in his holy will, which must be accomplished in all its decree.

He ascended to the throne of the Highest with the full merits of his blood and righteousness, which were a sweet smelling savour, or a savour of rest, to the everlasting Three. By this gracious ascension Jehovah is become propitious to the redeemed, receives them in

Christ, loves them for Christ's sake, favours them with his peace in their hearts, carries them on by his providence and grace, makes all things work together for their good, bears them through life and death, and finally receives them to glory.

The ascension of Christ brought down gifts from above, and, as the greatest of all, the presence of the Holy Spirit, for his people. It was thus expedient for them, that he went away from the earth; for if he had not carried up his merits before the throne, the Comforter could not have come down to have led them into all the truth of God and of Christ, and to have made that truth effectual in their salvation. By his holy power they are brought to believe, and are kept in believing to the end.

Jesus ascended likewise to prepare a place for his chosen. In a short time they are to be dismissed from wretched houses of clay, standing in the waste wilderness of the world; and then they are to have in heaven everlasting mansions of beauty and glory, fitted and furnished by Christ himself. They are soon to leave their bodies, now thoroughly defiled by sin, and to put on some spiritual fabric, appointed for them, in which they are to remain with Christ and the blessed, till the final consummation of all things.

O what gifts, my blessed Redeemer, hast thou procured and purchased for my unworthy soul! What hast thou not brought down of grace for time, and of promise for eternity, to me, and to helpless sinners like

me! Yea, thou hast given thine own self to thy brethren, that in thee they might be given up to God, and like thee be a sweet smelling savour, ascending by thy merits to the highest heaven. O what shall I, what can I, render for mercies like these! I can give, poor as the gift is, only my heart and soul to thy dear glory; and I would not, surely I would not, restrain these. Yet I cannot offer these, so weak and so corrupt am I without the assistance of thy strength. Favour me, then, more and more, with thy gracious power, that my affections may be constantly mounting upward, longing for the place of my everlasting residence, and counting all things worse than dung, that would stop my progress thither. Where thou art, dear Lord, soon do I hope to be. I am tired of this earth, and of all its shifting, miserable scenes; I am weary of this body, full of disorder and sin; I loathe the husks, which the swine of this world quarrel for and devour; and I can be satisfied with nothing less than thee and thy presence for ever. O my Beloved, when shall I ascend up after thee! All below is Mesech and Kedar, but, with thee there is the fullness, not the mere shadow of joy; and at thy right hand there are pleasures, not for a moment only, but for evermore. Thou hast said, Surely, I come quickly. Amen, (reply the hearts of thy people, and my poor heart among them) yea, come Lord Jesus!

