

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

(2 John 9-11)

The aged Apostle John, writing to the unknown "elect lady and her children," gave a very solemn warning as to departing from "the doctrine of Christ." We quote his words.

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11).

In a letter addressed to a lady and her children, one would not expect that anything of assembly discipline would be mentioned. But if they were exhorted to shut their door against any, who brought not the doctrine of Christ, and were warned, that to bid such God speed would make them partakers of his evil deeds, surely it would be necessary, if such cases occurred in any Christian assembly, to excommunicate the offenders, after every effort, to show them the seriousness of their teaching, had failed.

And note, it would not have sufficed for those, who brought not the doctrine of Christ, to say that they neither affirmed nor denied that doctrine, for the Scripture plainly says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." This specious middle course of neither affirming nor denying, when teaching plainly contrary to the doctrine of Christ is in question, would leave the door open to the possibility of evil being spread secretly among the Lord's people with disastrous consequences. Hence the utmost diligence is demanded.

When once a body of believers cannot or will not be vigilant in this matter, it would mean the end of their true testimony to the Lord.

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WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST?

Without in any way setting up a creed, it is very evident it would cover the truth of the Lord's Deity, His true Manhood, His sinless life on earth, His atoning death on the cross of Calvary, His resurrection from among the dead. His coming again, the testimony of Christ to the Scriptures, and of the Scriptures to Christ. It is very evident "the doctrine of Christ" is something very vital and fundamental concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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JESUS IS GOD

The very name, JESUS, given to our Lord by the angel when intimating to the Virgin Mary the high honour God was putting upon her, in choosing her as the vessel of the Holy Spirit of God in bringing the Saviour into the world, intimated His Godhead. The meaning of the name, JESUS, is Jehovah-Saviour. JEHOVAH is one of the great names for God in the Old

Testament, the One, who ever was, who ever is. who ever will be, the Eternal Present. Jehovah of the Old Testament is Je*us in the New Testament.

Prophecies in the Old Testament concerning our Lord are clear and definite. We read,

" Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name IMMANUEL." (Isa. 7:14).

Here was something that had never occurred in ail the history of the world, that a virgin should bear a child. Immanuel signifies God with us. We read the answer to this in the New Testament: —

" Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is. "God with us." (Matt, i:22, 23).

Still more fully does the prophet unfold his theme. We read,

" Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and

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His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6).

No man, uninspired of God, would have dreamed of penning such words. On the surface they appear to contain a contradiction. Who would have dared to prophesy that a Child. of days should be at the same time The everlasting Father "? Or that an Infant in the manger of Bethlehem should be at the same time " The mighty God "?

Yet how true is this prophecy, wailing until seven long centuries had passed before being fulfilled in the birth of our Lord.

One of the names given to this Child is "Wonderful" [Hebrew pele], meaning something not to be grasped or

understood]. The same word is used when the Angel of Jehovah (in this case clearly the Lord Himself), appeared

to Manoah and his wife, prophesying the birth of a son.

When Manoah, wishing to show homage to the heavenly Visitor, asked Him His name, the reply was given,

"Why asketh thou thus after My name, seeing it is secret [Hebrew pele]? (Judges 13:18}.

We get the full answer to this in the New Testament, when our Lord said,

"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and NO MAN KNOWETH THE SON BUT THE FATHER " (Matt 11:27).

Here is plainly stated what was wrapped up in the words, " Wonderful " (Isa. 9:6), and " Secret " (Judges 13:18), viz., the inscrutability of the Person of our Lord, a mystery only knowable to the Father and the Son. No creature mind, however penetrating, can ever remotely understand this mystery of mysteries. It is the transgressing of Scripture that is responsible for all the heresies concerning the Person of our Lord, that have afflicted the church of God, occasioning such widespread havoc. It is sufficient for us to receive the testimony of Scripture that our Lord is very God, is very Man, united in One in Christ. Let us welcome every item of testimony to our Lord found in the Scriptures, but let us take care not to speculate, to

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add to Scripture, to take from Scripture, or try to explain to our hurt what neither angel nor saint can ever fathom. * * » * *

JESUS IS THE SON IN THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD

The very first verse in the Bible ascribes the creation of the universe to God. His Being is stated, but no explanation as to His Godhead given. From the very first this was manifested in the mighty act of creation. We read,

" The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD." (Rom. 1:20).

In the light of the development of doctrine in the Scriptures we recognize that the Three Persons of the Godhead — Father, Son, and Spirit — were included in the name God, in Genesis 1:1. This we will proceed to show.

It may not be widely known among English-speaking people, unacquainted with the Hebrew language, that the name of God in Genesis 1:1, and throughout that chapter, is in the PLURAL number. That may be apparent to even a careful English reader when he comes to Genesis 1:26 and reads,

" Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness."

This is still more remarkable when we learn that the Hebrew language contained THREE numbers: —

SINGULAR = one only. DUAL = two only. PLURAL = three at the least, or more.

We thus see how very striking it is that the name, God, in Genesis 1:1, and throughout that chapter, is always in the plural.

And further in Genesis 1:1 the word, God (plural) is followed by a singular verb. Surely Moses could not have written such words except under the direct inspiration of the Spirit of

God. The plural noun followed by a singular verb preserves the thought of the UNITY of the Godhead

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— Father, Son and Holy Spirit — one God — a plural Unity.

We thus see that in the very first verse of the Bible, originally written by Moses in the desert of Sinai on tablets of clay, was enshrined the truth of the Holy Trinity, unfolded more and more progressively in the Old Testament, and taught in all its fulness in the New Testament.

There is one specially illuminating Scripture, confirming this. We read,

"Hear O Israel: The LORD Hebrew, Jehovah, singular] our God [Hebrew, Elohim, plural] is one LORD" [Hebrew, Jehovah, singular]. (Deut. 6:4).

Here in the very assertion that there is one God, care is taken to show that the UNITY of the Godhead embraces Three Persons — One in substance, power, will, wisdom, knowledge and counsel. No mind of man, however, acute, can fathom this mystery. We know the truth of it from revelation alone.

The fullest and most detailed intimation in the Old Testament of the Three Persons of the Godhead comes from the inspired pen of the prophet Isaiah. We read.

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"Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there AM I: and now the Lord GOD, and His Spirit, hath SENT Me." (Isa. 48:16).

The One, who speaks, presents Himself in two ways. First as the I AM, the assertion of Deity; and secondly as THE SENT ONE. There are Three Persons seen here acting in fullest harmony.

"The Lord GOD and His Spirit, hath sent Me."

When we come to the Gospel of John we find the fulfilment of this prophecy in the Person of our blessed Lord. How dear must the thought of being the SENT ONE OF THE FATHER

have been to His heart, when we find His recording it no less than twenty-seven times in that Gospel, thrice within the compass of three verses (John 6:38-40).

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Anyone denying that our Lord is the Son in the Unity of the Godhead does not bring the doctrine of Christ, and comes under the sweeping condemnation of 2 John 9-11

THE SON IS OF THE SAME SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

What we have put as the sub-title of this section of our pamphlet was a matter of the most utmost concern in the early history of the church. It is sad how these heresies of ancient times seem to continue more or less to these present times.

Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, died in 336. He taught that our Lord existed before His incarnation, but Was created of God, the highest of His creatures, empowered to create all else; and, that as the highest and most ancient of God's creatures, He is to be worshipped, but not in full measure as applied to God, the supreme Creator. This perversion of truth obtains more or less With Millennial Dawnists and its offshoot, Jehovah's Witnesses.

However, in the mercy of God, there was raised up a mighty defender of the faith in the person of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (326). He suffered greatly in his defence of the truth, for he was exiled several times. He died in 373.

The controversy raged tor years round the meaning of two Greek words, differing only by a single letter, yet that small difference in the lettering of the two words revealed that which was of vital importance in regard to the Christian faith. One word as applied to our Lord stood for the truth, a matter of supreme importance. The other word **s applied to our Lord contained blasphemous error, Undermining the very foundations of the Christian faith, striking a fatal blow wherever it obtained a foothold.

These two Greek words, homoiousian and homootisian, Were used in this controversy in relation to the Person of Our Lord. The former stood for SIMILAR in Substance With the Father; the latter for SAMENESS of Substance With the Father, thus claiming full equality of the Son

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with the Father. Similar stands for two things not the same, however close the similarity may be. Sameness means identity of Substance; mark well that word identity.

In the Bampton Lectures at Oxford in 1866, the late Canon Liddon, the Lecturer, said:

"Ascribe to the Christ of Arius an antiquity as remote as you will from the age of the Incarnation, place him at a height as high, as any you can conceive, above • the highest archangel; still what, after all, is this ancient, this super-angelic being, but a creature who had a beginning, and who, if the Author of his existence should so will, may yet cease to be? Such a being, however exalted, is parted from the Divine Essence by a FATHOMLESS

CHASM; whereas the Christ of Christendom is internal to that Essence; He is of one Substance with the Father; and in this sense, as distinct from any other. He is properly and literally Divine." (p. 32).

Deny that the Lord was of the same Substance as the Father, and you have completely shattered and destroyed the Christian Faith.

Our Lord Himself testified,

"I and My Father are One." (John 10:30).

The creed that evolved from all this controversy, as far as it goes, is something we may be deeply thankful for. It was indeed a very great deliverance that was given to the church at that time, the benefits of which we are reaping today.

"I believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only- begotten Hon of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, Being of ONE SUBSTANCE WITH the Father; by Whom all things were made. Who (or us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

The Arian heresy raged for many years. The Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, presided at the First General Council at Nicaea, a city of Bithynia, Asia, when no fewer than 318 bishops were assembled. It was held from June 15th to August 25th, 325. It condemned the Arian heresy, though alas! its evil teaching obtains a measure of currency to this present day.

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We do well to learn a solemn lesson in drawing attention to this sad attack upon the Person of our adorable Lord, that we may be strengthened resolutely to stand by the truth of our Lord's Person as revealed in Holy Scripture, as being of the same Substance as the Father and Holy Spirit — one God.

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JESUS IS THE ETERNAL WORD

The Gospel of John begins straightway by introducing our Lord as the Eternal Word [Greek, Logos]. We read.

" In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Same was in the beginning with God." (John 1:12).

Here we get the Word as from all eternity, a separate Person standing in full relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Word being Himself God, and that from all eternity with God.

A similar testimony is born to our Lord. Writing of Him as the Word of Life, we read,

"For the life was manifested; and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John 1:2).

Now we come to an amazing statement, apart from which there can be no Christian faith. We read,

"THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH." (John 1:14)

How surpassingly wonderful that the Eternal Word, the Son in the Unity of the Godhead, the express Image of God's Person, the Brightness of His glory (Heb. 1:3), should become a Man on this earth, the Revealer of the Father, the Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). With amazement we read the wonderful news,

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14).

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He

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hath declared Him." (John 1:18). In the Gospels we trace the footsteps of our Lord as He went about doing good (Isa. 52:7). Perfectly sinless in His nature, He was altogether pleasing to God in all His holy ways.

At this point we would like to sound one word of earnest entreaty. Believers have alas! as long as they are on this earth the flesh in them, born of sinful parents. Let us then refrain from comparing our feelings with those of our blessed Lord. How do we know what a sinless Man feels? In contrast to ourselves there was with Him no response in His sinless nature to temptation without. It is sad indeed when comparisons between our feelings and those of our blessed Lord are indulged in. Such talk is irreverent, defiling and foolish. Let us carefully refrain from such folly.

Our Lord's own testimony to His Manhood is clear and definite. We read,

"When Jesus had cried with a loud voice. He said. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (I. uke 23:46).

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"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me." (Matt. 26:38).

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"He spake of the temple of His body." (John 2:21).

Scripture teaches us that man possesses spirit, soul and body, and lacking one of these component parts, there could not be a man. We read,

"I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23).

The writer James tells us plainly,

"The body without the spirit is dead." (James 2:26).

Scripture makes it plain that our Lord in taking Man- hood to Himself took it in all its fulness — spirit, soul and body. To deny this, or weaken it, would be the complete destruction of the Christian faith.

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"There is one God. and one Mediator between God and men. THE MAN. Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5).

Tamper with the Person of the Mediator, and the approach between God and man is shattered. The fact is, if our Lord were not a Man with human spirit, soul, and body (sin apart), we have no Christ at all.

We read of our Lord,

"Verily. He took not on Him the nature of angels: but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (Heb. 2:16, 17).

Denying or not affirming that our Lord had a human spirit is not bringing " the doctrine of Christ."

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JESUS IS THE ETERNAL LIFE

This great truth is plainly stated in Scripture. We read,

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE." (1 John 5:20).

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it. and bear witness, and shew- unto you that ETERNAL LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John 5:2).

If we reflect what wondrous meaning is wrapt up in these two words, ETERNAL LIFE, we shall see two things clearly,

(a) They stand for life, that is life INHERENT, the SOURCE of it.

(b) That life is ETERNAL, that is, it never had a beginning, and can never have an end.

To whom can this description apply? Not to mortal man, with whom life has both beginning and end, whose days arc as a weaver's shuttle, so quickly do they pass away (Job 7:6). Not to the life of the Christian, for

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eternal life has for him a beginning, when he first receives it as a gift from a gracious God; though, thank God, it will never have an end. To whom then can the two words, ETERNAL LIFE, apply? It is most obvious that they can only apply to Deity, with whom alone, life has neither beginning nor end.

Eternal life has a beginning with the believer for we read,

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have EVERLASTING LIFE."* (John 3:16).

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It may be asked at this point, If our Lord is the Eternal Life, and gives eternal life to the believer on Him, would this not mean conferring Deity on believers? The question of course brings its obvious answer. By no means can it mean any such thing. There is not A SINGLE WORD IN SCRIPTURE to suggest such an idea. It is plain that Deity cannot be conferred on any creature. That our Lord is the Eternal Life, and that believers receive the gift from God of eternal life, are two statements equally true. But we must ever bear in mind that there is all the difference between our Lord, who is the Life inherently, that is as the Fountain and Source of life, of whom we read, " In Him was life " (John 1:4); and believers, the recipients of eternal life as God's good and gracious gift.

In a footnote in Letters of J. N. Darby, Vol. 3, p. 103. we read, concerning eternal life; " This. . . the believer has, not as a gift, which on its bestowal becomes detached from its Source and Spring, but in inseparable connection with Himself, where it is enjoyed in common, or in communion with Him."

Thus we can trace the stream of eternal life up to its Source, even to our blessed Lord, " The TRUE GOD

•Note. —The words, everlasting and eternal, have exactly the same meaning. They represent the same Greek word, *aionos*, in the original Scriptures.

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AND ETERNAL LIFE." What is bestowed on believers is a life answering to the moral qualities of God, but in no wise lifting them up to the level of Deity: an utter impossibility.

There is an analogous Scripture confirming what we have just said. The Apostle Peter wrote concerning God's Divine power these words:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4).

This Scripture does not state that believers partake of Deity, but are " partakers of the Divine nature," that is, apart from omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, believers have conferred upon them a spiritual life, which can exhibit the moral features of the life of God, such as love, truth, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, compassion, tenderness, enabling them to live a life pleasing to God.

We come now to a point that puzzles many Christians. In the Gospel of John we read again and again that the believer on the Lord Jesus receives the gift of eternal life; whereas in the Epistle of John we read these words,

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is IN HIS SON." (1 John 5:11)

John's Gospel says that the believer has eternal life. John's Epistle tells us that this life is in His Son. Both statements are true, and there is no contradiction in them.

"Doth not even nature itself teach you?" (1 Cor. 2:14). We know that a leaf has life in it, just as the believer knows that eternal life abides in him. But we can say equally truly that the leaf has life in the tree, and only in the tree, just as Scripture tells us that the believer's life is in the Son. It is plain that apart from the leaf's connection with the tree, it would at once perish. In our Lord's parable of the Vine and its branches, it is only as the branch abides in the Vine, that it lives. What security is the believer's, that his life is in God's Son, in our Lord, for He never fails nor breaks down. The

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Apostle Paul put the same idea thus,

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid WITH CHRIST in God." (Col. 3:2).

What blessed security has the believer that his life is hid with Christ in God, that his life is in the Son of God. Nothing can be more wonderful.

Finally the Apostle Paul wrote of eternal life as some- thing to be lived. By no means does he contradict the Apostle John in this matter. We read,

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end EVERLASTING LIFE. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:22, 23).

In this Scripture the Apostle Paul looked at eternal life as God's gift, but he also looked at eternal life from a practical standpoint, that is, living the life, as something to be laid hold of.

Again he wrote, giving a solemn charge to Timothy, his son in the faith,

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good confession before many witnesses." (1 Tim. 6:12).

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Again he exhorted the rich to lay hold on eternal life in a practical way,

"Charge them that are rich in this world. . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

The Apostle John looked at the subject from the Divine side, what God does in sovereign grace, imparting eternal life to every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul looked at it from our side, the aspect of the believer's privilege and responsibility. His exhortation should be laid to heart. We believers possess eternal life. Are we diligently living the life?

It is as if two neighbours owned gardens adjoining

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each other. The one garden is neglected and (nil of weeds; the other is tidy, filled with flowers, fruit and vegetables. Both men own their gardens, just as believers alike have the possession of eternal life. One man neglected his garden; the other put hard and intelligent work into his garden with happy and profitable results. Many believers are carnal and slack in their Christian lives and are certainly not laying hold on eternal life. Others are earnest diligent Christians, seeking to follow (he practical exhortations of Scripture, and are thus laying hold on eternal life.

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THE TESTIMONY TO OUR LORD'S MANHOOD

First of all our Lord's manhood was perfectly unique. He was a true Man, but stands in vivid contrast to man-kind in general. We were born of sinful parents, born in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). Our Lord was born sinless of the Virgin Mary as overshadowed by the Holy Spirit of God (Luke 1:35). W. Kelly well writes, " The incarnation was no mere emanation of Divinity, neither was it a Person once Divine, who ceased to be so by becoming man (itself an impossible absurdity), but One, who, to glorify the Father, and in

accomplishment of the purposes of grace to the glory of God, took humanity into union with Godhead in His Person." (Exposition of the Gospel of John, p. 60).

We have in Scripture a threefold testimony to the sinlessness of our Lord.

The Apostle Peter's testimony,

"Who did no sin." (1 Peter 2:22).

The Apostle Paul's testimony,

"Who knew no sin." (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Apostle John's testimony,

"In Him is no sin." (1 John 3:5).

And still further, we have the august testimony of the Father Himself to His beloved Son. At His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, as He came up out of the water, a voice from heaven was heard,

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17).

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Again, at the end of His earthly life, in full view of the cross, we read,

" He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory. This is My beloved Son. in whom I am well pleased." (2 Peter 1:17).

The holy God, who expelled our first parents from the Garden of Eden for one single sin, would not have uttered these testimonies to His beloved Son, had He not been perfectly sinless, and altogether pleasing to Him in every thought, word and deed.

The Levitical offerings, typical of our Lord in His Person, in His life, in His death, emphasise His sinlessness in a remarkable way. The meat offering particularly does this in detail. We read,

"If thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be UNLEAVENED cakes of fine flour mingled with oil. or UNLEAVENED wafers anointed with oil." [Lev. 2:4).

The oblation was to be baked in the oven, setting forth that our Lord was truly tested in His pathway. This was particularly seen in the terrible temptation in the wilderness that our Lord endured at the hands of Satan. Scripture speaks of " the furnace of affliction " (Isaiah 48:10).

The bread was to be unleavened. Leaven is always in Scripture typical of evil. We read.

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:8).

The unleavened cakes were to be made of fine flour. They were not to be made of rough or gritty meal. With the ripest and most mature of God's saints there is at times unevenness and grit in their lives. With our Lord everything was perfect. No failure whatever in His life. To use the figure of speech used in the type, the fine flour of His life was perfectly smooth.

The unleavened cakes were to be mingled with oil. Of what is the oil typical? In Scripture it is typical of the Holy Spirit of God. The New Testament bears this

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out when we read of the Holy Spirit of God as "The Anointing" (1 John 2:27). Mingled sets forth the fine flour and the oil being thoroughly mixed together. This type was clearly fulfilled when our Lord was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit of God at His birth of the Virgin Mary, and further we read,

"For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." (John 3:34).

This abundance of the Spirit surely marked our Lord all the days of His earthly life.

Equally clearly was the type of the "wafers anointed with oil" fulfilled on the occasion of our Lord's baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, marking, as it did, His entrance into public service. We read,

"And Jesus, when He was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and in the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:16, 17).

Thus typically was the sinlessness of our Lord prophetically intimated in the ordering of the Levitical offerings, and in due time fulfilled by our Lord.

One further word as to the testimony of our Lord's Manhood. It is commonly taught in Christendom today that our Lord perfectly kept the law in His holy life on earth, which is blessedly true; but it is further taught in many quarters that His keeping the law perfectly atoned for our sins. This is a most serious perversion of the meaning of the death of Christ by which atonement was made, and made in no other way. It is the contradiction of Scripture, which plainly says,

"WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD IS NO REMISSION." {Heb. 9: M).

Even in the types we read that the animals to be offered were to be "without blemish," but, mark it well, it was in view of their being offered up in sacrifice, that they were to be "without blemish," perfectly suitable for sacrifice. So we are reminded of the Apostle Peter's words, that believers are redeemed to God by

"The precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb with- out blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19).

If the perfect life of our Lord had been sufficient to atone for our sins, then His death would have been bereft of all its true significance, and would have been a useless tragedy, instead of being, as it was, an absolute necessity.

This false teaching is a subtle attack of the enemy to weaken the full appreciation of the atoning death of our Lord. We cannot think too highly of our Lord's perfect life on earth, but if there is attributed to it a measure of atoning value, we can only see in such teaching the trail of the serpent, the Judas kiss of the traitor.

Unitarian beliefs, once confined to Unitarian chapels, now alas! permeating largely other sections of the professing church, go still further in their denial of the plain statements of Scripture. They deny the Deity of our Lord, they allow Him to have been a good man, but only a man. They deny the atoning value of His death, but hold Him up as a great example to the human race. Christians are indeed exhorted to follow in the footsteps of Christ as an Example (1 Peter 2:21), but, it is as SAVED PERSONS, they are thus exhorted.

There is a very illuminating passage of Scripture, which reads,

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:10).

Notice carefully, believers are already reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and as such are saved by His life. It is very clear this does not refer to our Lord's life as lived on this earth, but to His RISEN life in glory. By the Lord's atoning death on the cross believers receive the forgiveness of their sins, and the salvation of their souls, and are thus privileged to enjoy the ministrations of our Lord as their Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16), supporting, succouring, sympathising, and are thus saved by His life amid all the temptations and trials of this life. We read,

"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25).

OUR LORD'S DEATH ON THE CROSS OF CALVARY

Two very striking lines of a hymn come to mind. Referring to the cross our Lord Jesus Christ we read,

"Centre of two eternities.
Which look with rant adoring eyes,
Onward and back to Thee."

The following Scripture proves that the cross of Christ was no afterthought with God, but was in His mind from all eternity. We read,

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was FOR EG RI > AIN K D BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." (1 Peter 1:18-20).

"Before the foundation of the world " means before lime, stretching back to a measureless eternity. Here we have the backward look. What of the forward look? We read,

"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. 3:21).

The Ephesian epistle tells of grace that saves through faith, of Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers, of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, then it bursts forth with this adoring doxology. Shall such praise ever die down? Never! It will continue throughout the ages of eternity, blessed be God's holy name.

No wonder Sir John Bowring gave expression to his feelings when he pondered over this entrancing theme.

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime. '1

We shall miss the real meaning of the cross unless we distinguish between its two aspects — man's and God's. On man's side it constituted the blackest crime this world

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has ever known. Jew and Gentile were alike guilty of the death of our Lord. The Jews, led by high priests and elders of the people, clamoured for His death. The Gen- tile Pilate gave sentence of death by cruel crucifixion, spite of his asseveration that he could find no fault in our Lord. A Roman soldier pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (John 19:34).

But man's cruelty was not the inner or chief meaning of the cross. We may well ask, What was the meaning of the bitter, bitter cry that rent the heavens when our Lord cried,

"My God, My God, whv hast THOU forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

Our Lord had only and altogether glorified God in His life of utter devotedness to His holy will. His being on the cross was the mark of His devotedness even to such a death. What then was the meaning of that bitter cry?

Here is the answer, and this from the Old Testament, penned long centuries before our Lord died on the cross.

"He was wounded for OUR transgressions; He was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of OUR peace was upon Him, and with HIS stripes WE are healed." (Isa. 53:5).

Our Lord died a sacrificial death, an atoning death, a vicarious death. He did not die for Himself. He took the sinner's place on the cross, bearing the punishment due to sin, upholding God's righteous claims and the holiness of His Person, making the way clear for God to righteously express His love in the offer of forgiveness of sins to guilty sinners. If not a single sinner were saved by His death, yet that death infinitely glorified God.

As our Lord cried with a loud voice,

"IT IS FINISHED " (John 19:30). He declared the triumph of His death. No one died as He did. His was the only true sacrificial death, the sinner's only hope. Our Lord died representatively, and was in consequence raised representatively, as we shall now see.

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THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

The deep importance of the resurrection of our Lord is seen in that, when some in the early church denied that there was a resurrection of the dead, the inspired Scriptures points out,

"If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ he not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (1 Cor. 15:13, 14).

In these two verses we see how the denial of the resurrection means the complete overthrow of the Christian faith, than which nothing could be more serious. But in the case of our Lord the testimony to His resurrection historically is so full and complete, that even acute infidel lawyers have found it impossible to deny that it did occur. Our Lord, had He wished, could have gone straight to glory when He rose from the dead, but instead He spent forty days on this earth, proving to His disciples beyond any doubt that He was indeed risen from the dead. On one occasion the number of witnesses was very great, for we read,

"He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." (1 Cor. 15:6).

And furthermore, consider the moral results flowing from our Lord's resurrection. Take one outstanding example. Think of the life and labours of the Apostle Paul, once the greatest persecutor of the Church of God. Think of the countries he evangelized, the churches he planted, stretching far out to Asia and Europe, to Rome itself, spreading more and more till, we may say, the whole of the then civilized world was marked as the place where the Gospel of the grace of God had made its deepest mark and gained its greatest triumphs. It speaks of an irresistible urge that led the Apostles to lives of poverty, persecution, imprisonment, scourgings, and generally martyrdom, and has since led countless missionaries to cross the seas, and plant their mission stations in the heart of heathen

lands, in many cases at the cost of their lives. And this impetus still continues to this day, after nearly two thousand years.

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But to come more closely to the inner meaning of the resurrection of our Lord. It has been truly said, Prove the resurrection of our Lord, and you incontestably prove Christianity.

Our Lord when on earth claimed to be the Son of God, which the Jews resented as blasphemy. He claimed to be the Son of Man, the anointed Christ to reveal God to man. He lived a life for three-and-a-half years of the greatest publicity, meeting continuous opposition and persecution, ending in His crucifixion. He claimed beforehand that His death would be an atoning death, for He said,

"I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world/1 (John 6:51).

He prophesied again and again that He would be crucified by wicked men, and be raised the third day. And what was God's answer to all this? We read,

"Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." (Rom. 6:4).

* * * *

"God raised Him from the dead." (Acts 13:30).

Christ's resurrection was unique. Never in all the history of the world was there a resurrection where there were no earthly witnesses to give testimony to it, and when the raised person did not rise to die a natural death in the end. For forty days our Lord lived a risen life on earth, and then ascended to glory, and lives " after the power of an endless life." (Heb. 7:16).

When God raised His Son from the dead, it constituted the fullest acknowledgment of all that He claimed to be, of all that He ever did, and above all it declared on the part of God the fullest acceptance of His sacrificial atoning death on the cross of Calvary, whereby salvation can be offered to sinful men — the sinner's only hope. Can anything be grander than the resurrection of our Lord in all that it involved? There was no resurrection like His.

Then further, as to believers on the Lord, we read that Christ

"was delivered for our offences, and was raised again

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for our justification." (Rom. 4:25).

When we come to 1 Corinthians 15, the great chapter that argues out the whole truth of the resurrection, we see how intimately the believer's resurrection is connected with the resurrection of our Lord. We read,

"But every man in His own order: Christ the Firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." (1 Cor. 15:23).

Note well the word, "Firstfruits." It carries with it the thought of after-fruits. If you will turn to Leviticus 23:10-12, you will find the solitary sheaf, that was waved before the Lord, was the promise of the whole harvest to be gathered in. Typically, it was prophetic of our Lord in His resurrection. So similarly, we find our Lord is "the Firstfruits" in His resurrection, and thus the pledge of the whole harvest of grace, that those, who believe on Him, will be raised in the power of His resurrection. The following Scripture shows how the resurrection of the believer flows from our Lord's own resurrection. We read,

"If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you. He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11).

We can easily see, even in this very slight sketch, how it would be far from bringing the truth of the doctrine of Christ were we to question our Lord's resurrection, or our own as dependent upon His. The Person of Christ is the touchstone of everything. To be right about Him is to be right about all. May we all be zealous for the truth, and above all to seek to be in communion with Him, who is the truth.

THE COMING OF OUR LORD

This is an integral part of the Christian's faith. The hope of believers, who have passed away, is linked up with the coming of our Lord. This was true of Old Testament saints. "These all died in faith" (Heb. 11:13). Still more clearly do believers in this dispensation die with a certainty the full light of the Gospel gives. So we read,

"WE KNOW that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, WE HAVE a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," (2 Cor, 5:1).

The coming of our Lord is the culmination of our pilgrim journey through this vale of tears, when in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead that are Christ's will be raised incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:52-53), the living saints will be changed, and all together caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:14-18). We wait for that blissful moment, which surely must be on the very threshold, for manifold are the signs around us which tell us that things are shaping for the very last days,

"When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1:7. 8).

Then will follow our Lord's millennial reign over the earth. This earth marked by blood and tears will at last be under His blissful sway, a blessed time of security and peace.

"He'll bid the whole creation smile, And hush its groan."

May the Lord keep His people in lively expectation of His return, more and more till He come.

* * * *

CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES

It is remarkable that our Lord is spoken of as " The Word " (John 1:1), and our Lord Himself refers to the Scriptures as " The Word of God " (John 10:35).

Writers sometimes refer to our Lord as the living Word; to the Scriptures as the written Word. It is clear that our Lord and the Scriptures stand or fall together. Our Lord refers to the Scriptures repeatedly as inspired, and were they to fall short of that claim, it would mean the utter overthrow of the Christian faith. On the other hand, the Scriptures refer to our Lord. Of course when

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our Lord was on this earth there were only the Old Testament writings. These prophesied the coming of our Lord, that He should be the Child of a virgin, that He should be born at Bethlehem, that He should live a life altogether pleasing to God and be refused by men, that He should be crucified, that He should rise from the dead. If these Scriptures were not literally fulfilled in every detail to the very letter, that would prove the Scriptures were not fully inspired, and where could we turn for assurance about divine revelation, or the way of salvation?

In this way we can see that unless we bring the doctrine of Christ in maintaining that the Scriptures are infallible as the inspired book of God, we have no sure ground for our faith. On the other hand, unless we have a Christ fulfilling every prophecy and every type of the Scriptures to the very letter, again the whole scheme of the Christian faith would fall to the ground.

Blessed be God, the Scriptures have stood the cease- less attacks of the long centuries. And attacks on the Person of our blessed Lord can only recoil to the destruction of those who make them. We read,

" We can do nothing against the truth. but for the truth." (2 Cor. 8).

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By the same Author

THE TABERNACLE'S TYPICAL TEACHING

THE AMAZING JEW

" THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS "

WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD and

THE GREAT ADVERSARY