

SHORT
EXPOSITORY READINGS
ON THE
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

A SELECTION DESIGNED FOR
Family Reading, Mothers' Meetings, and
District Visitors.

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I.

THE DIVINITY OF
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN I. 1-5.

“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.

“All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

“And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

THE five verses now before us contain a statement of matchless sublimity concerning the Divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. He it is, beyond all question, whom St. John means, when he speaks of “the Word.” No doubt there are heights and depths in that statement which are far beyond man’s understanding. And yet there are plain lessons in it, which every Christian would do well to treasure up in his mind.

We learn, firstly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is *eternal*. St. John tells us that “in the beginning was the Word.” He did not begin to exist when the heavens and the earth were made. Much less did He begin to exist when the Gospel was brought into the world. He had glory with the Father

“before the world was.” (John xvii. 5.) He was existing when matter was first created, and before time began. He was “before all things.” (Col. i. 17.) He was from all eternity.

We learn, secondly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is *a Person distinct from God the Father, and yet one with Him*. St. John tells us that “the Word was with God.” The Father and the Word, though two persons, are joined by an ineffable union. Where God the Father was from all eternity, there also was the Word, even God the Son,—their glory equal, their majesty coeternal, and yet their Godhead one. This is a great mystery! Happy is he who can receive it as a little child, without attempting to explain it.

We learn, thirdly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is *very God*. St. John tells us that “the Word was God.” He is not merely a created angel, or a being inferior to God the Father, and invested by Him with power to redeem sinners. He is nothing less than perfect God,—equal to the Father as touching His Godhead,—God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds.

We learn, fourthly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *Creator of all things*. St. John tells us that “by Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” So far from being a creature of God, as some heretics have falsely asserted, He is the Being who

made the worlds and all that they contain. “He commanded, and they were created.” (Ps. cxlviii. 5.)

We learn, lastly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is *the source of all spiritual life and light*. St. John tells us, that “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” He is the eternal fountain, from which alone the sons of men have ever derived life. Whatever spiritual life and light Adam and Eve possessed before the fall, was from Christ. Whatever deliverance from sin and spiritual death any child of Adam has ever enjoyed since the fall, whatever light of conscience or understanding any one has obtained, all has flowed from Christ. The vast majority of mankind in every age have refused to know Him, have forgotten the fall, and their own need of a Saviour. The light has been constantly shining “in darkness.” The most have “not comprehended the light.” But if any men and women out of the countless millions of mankind have ever had spiritual life and light, they have owed all to Christ.

Would we know, for one thing, the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Let us often read these first five verses of St. John’s Gospel. Let us mark what kind of Being the Redeemer of mankind must needs be, in order to provide eternal redemption for sinners. If no one less than the Eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, could take away the sin of the world, sin must be a far more abominable thing in the sight of God than most men suppose. The right measure of sin’s sinfulness is the dignity of Him

who came into the world to save sinners. If Christ is so great, then sin must indeed be sinful!

Would we know, for another thing, the strength of a true Christian's foundation for hope? Let us often read these first five verses of St. John's Gospel. Let us mark that the Saviour in whom the believer is bid to trust is nothing less than the Eternal God, One able to save to the uttermost all that come to the Father by Him. He that was "with God," and "was God," is also "Emmanuel, God with us." Let us thank God that our help is laid on One that is mighty. (Ps. lxxxix. 19.) In ourselves we are great sinners. But in Jesus Christ we have a great Saviour. He is a strong foundation-stone, able to bear the weight of a world's sin. He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. (1 Peter ii. 6.)

II.

THE TRUE LIGHT: ITS RECEPTION AND REJECTION.

JOHN I. 6–13.

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

“He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

WE see in these verses *one principal position which our Lord Jesus Christ occupies towards mankind.* We have it in the words, “He was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

Christ is to the souls of men what the sun is to the

world. He is the centre and source of all spiritual light, warmth, life, health, growth, beauty, and fertility. Like the sun, He shines for the common benefit of all mankind,—for high and for low, for rich and for poor, for Jew and for Greek. Like the sun, He is free to all. All may look at Him, and drink health out of His light. If millions of mankind were mad enough to dwell in caves under ground, or to bandage their eyes, their darkness would be their own fault, and not the fault of the sun. So, likewise, if millions of men and women love spiritual “darkness rather than light,” the blame must be laid on their blind hearts, and not on Christ. “Their foolish hearts are darkened.” (John iii. 19; Rom. i. 21.) But whether men will see or not, Christ is the true sun, and the light of the world. There is no light for sinners except in the Lord Jesus.

We see, also, in these verses, *the desperate wickedness of man’s natural heart*. We have it in the words, Christ “was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

Christ was in the world invisibly, long before He was born of the Virgin Mary. He was there from the very beginning,—ruling, ordering, and governing the whole creation. By Him all things consisted. (Coloss. i. 17.) He gave to all life and breath, rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. By Him kings reigned, and nations were increased or diminished. Yet men knew Him not, and honoured Him not. They “worshipped and served the creature more than

the Creator.” (Romans i. 25.) Well may the natural heart be called “wicked”!

But Christ came visibly into the world when He was born at Bethlehem, and fared no better. He came to the very people whom He had brought out from Egypt, and purchased for His own. He came to the Jews, whom He had separated from other nations, and to whom He had revealed Himself by the prophets. He came to those very Jews who had read of Him in the Old Testament Scriptures, seen Him under types and figures in their temple services, and professed to be waiting for His coming. And yet, when He came, those very Jews received Him not. They even rejected Him, despised Him, and slew Him. Well may the natural heart be called “desperately wicked”!

We see, lastly, in these verses, *the vast privileges of all who receive Christ, and believe on Him*. We are told that “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

Christ will never be without some servants. If the vast majority of the Jews did not receive Him as the Messiah, there were, at any rate, a few who did. To them He gave the privilege of being God’s children. He adopted them as members of His Father’s family. He reckoned them His own brethren and sisters, bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. He conferred on them a dignity which was ample recompense for the cross which they had to carry for

His sake. He made them sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Privileges like these, be it remembered, are the possession of all, in every age, who receive Christ by faith, and follow Him as their Saviour. They are “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. iii. 26.) They are born again by a new and heavenly birth, and adopted into the family of the King of kings. Few in number, and despised by the world as they are, they are cared for with infinite love by a Father in heaven, who, for His Son’s sake, is well pleased with them. In time He provides them with everything that is for their good. In eternity He will give them a crown of glory that fadeth not away. These are great things! But faith in Christ gives men an ample title to them. Good masters care for their servants, and Christ cares for His.

Are we ourselves sons of God? Have we been born again? Have we the marks which always accompany the new birth,—sense of sin, faith in Jesus, love of others, righteous living, separation from the world? Let us never be content till we can give a satisfactory answer to these questions.

Do we desire to be sons of God? Then let us “receive Christ” as our Saviour, and believe on Him with the heart. To every one that so receives Him, He will give the privilege of becoming a son of God.

III.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

JOHN I. 14.

“And 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.”

THE main truth which this verse teaches is *the reality of our Lord Jesus Christ’s incarnation, or being made man*. St. John tells us that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

The plain meaning of these words is, that our Divine Saviour really took human nature upon Him, in order to save sinners. He really became a man like ourselves in all things, sin only excepted. Like ourselves, He was born of a woman, though born in a miraculous manner. Like ourselves, He grew from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to man’s estate, both in wisdom and in stature. (Luke ii. 52.) Like ourselves, He hungered, thirsted, ate, drank, slept, was wearied, felt pain, wept, rejoiced, marvelled, was moved to anger and to compassion. Having become flesh, and taken a body, He prayed, read the Scriptures, suffered being tempted, and submitted His human will to the will of God the Father. And, finally, in the same body, He really suffered and shed His blood, really died, was

really buried, really rose again, and really ascended up into heaven. And yet all this time He was God as well as man.

We must never forget, that though our Lord was God and man at the same time, the Divine and human natures in Him were never confounded. One nature did not swallow up the other. The two natures remained perfect and distinct. The divinity of Christ was never for a moment laid aside, although veiled. The manhood of Christ, during His life-time, was never for a moment unlike our own, though, by union with the Godhead, greatly dignified. Though perfect God, Christ has always been perfect man from the first moment of His incarnation. He that is gone into heaven, and is sitting at the Father's right hand to intercede for sinners, is man as well as God. Though perfect man, Christ never ceased to be perfect God. He that suffered for sin on the cross, and was made sin for us, was "God manifest in the flesh." The blood with which the Church was purchased, is called the blood "of God." (Acts xx. 28.) Though He became "flesh" in the fullest sense, when He was born of the Virgin Mary, He never at any period ceased to be the Eternal Word.

This constant undivided union of two perfect natures in Christ's Person is exactly that which gives infinite value to His mediation, and qualifies Him to be the very Mediator that sinners need. Our Mediator is One who can sympathize with us, because He is very man. And yet, at the same time, He is One who can deal with the Father for

us on equal terms, because He is very God.—It is the same union which gives infinite value to His righteousness, when imputed to believers. It is the righteousness of One who was God as well as man.—It is the same union which gives infinite value to the atoning blood which He shed for sinners on the cross. It is the blood of One who was God as well as man.—It is the same union which gives infinite value to His resurrection. When He rose again, as the Head of the body of believers, He rose not as a mere man, but as God.—Let these things sink deeply into our hearts. The second Adam is far greater than the first Adam was. The first Adam was only man, and so he fell. The second Adam was God as well as man, and so He completely conquered.

Did the Word become flesh? Then He is One who can be touched with the feeling of His people's infirmities, because He has suffered Himself being tempted. He is Almighty because He is God, and yet He can feel with us, because He is man.

Did the Word become flesh? Then He can supply us with a perfect pattern and example for our daily life. Had He walked among us as an angel or a spirit, we could never have copied Him. But having dwelt among us as a man, we know that the true standard of holiness is to "walk even as He walked." (1 John ii. 6.) He is a perfect pattern because He is God. But He is also a pattern exactly suited to our wants, because He is man.

Finally, did the Word become flesh? Then let us see

in our mortal bodies a real, true dignity, and not defile them by sin. Vile and weak as our body may seem, it is a body which the Eternal Son of God was not ashamed to take upon Himself, and to take up to heaven. That simple fact is a pledge that He will raise our bodies at the last day, and glorify them together with His own.

IV.

THE WITNESS OF JOHN.

JOHN I. 15–18.

“John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me,

“And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

THE passage before us contains three great declarations about our Lord Jesus Christ. Each of the three is among the foundation principles of Christianity.

We are taught, firstly, that *it is Christ alone who supplies all the spiritual wants of all believers*. It is written that “of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.”

There is an infinite fulness in Jesus Christ. As St. Paul says, “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.”—“In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Coloss. i. 19; ii. 3.) There is laid up in Him, as in a treasury, a boundless supply of all that any sinner

can need, either in time or eternity. The Spirit of Life is His special gift to the Church, and conveys from Him, as from a great root, sap and vigour to all the believing branches. He is rich in mercy, grace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Out of Christ's fulness, all believers in every age of the world have been supplied. They did not clearly understand the fountain from which their supplies flowed in Old Testament times. The Old Testament saints only saw Christ afar off, and not face to face. But from Abel downwards, all saved souls have received all they have had from Jesus Christ alone. Every saint in glory will at last acknowledge that he is Christ's debtor for all he is. Jesus will prove to have been all in all.

We are taught, secondly, the *vast superiority of Christ to Moses, and of the Gospel to the Law*. It is written that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Moses was employed by God "as a servant," to convey to Israel the moral and ceremonial law. (Heb. iii. 5.) As a servant, he was faithful to Him who appointed him, but he was only a servant. The moral law, which he brought down from Mount Sinai, was holy, and just, and good. But it could not justify. It had no healing power. It could wound, but it could not bind up. It "worked wrath." (Rom. iv. 15.) It pronounced a curse against any imperfect obedience.—The ceremonial law, which he was commanded to impose on Israel, was full of deep meaning and

typical instruction. Its ordinances and ceremonies made it an excellent schoolmaster to guide men towards Christ (Gal. iii. 24.) But the ceremonial law was only a schoolmaster. It could not make him that kept it perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. (Heb. ix. 9.) It laid a grievous yoke on men's hearts, which they were not able to bear. It was a ministration of death and condemnation. (2 Cor. iii. 7-9.) The light which men got from Moses and the law was at best only starlight compared to noon-day.

Christ, on the other hand, came into the world "as a Son," with the keys of God's treasury of grace and truth entirely in His hands. (Heb. iii. 6.) Grace came by Him, when He made fully known God's gracious plan of salvation, by faith in His own blood, and opened the fountain of mercy to all the world.—Truth came by Him, when He fulfilled in His own Person the types of the Old Testament, and revealed Himself as the true Sacrifice, the true mercy-seat, and the true Priest. No doubt there was much of "grace and truth" under the law of Moses. But the whole of God's grace, and the whole truth about redemption, were never known until Jesus came into the world, and died for sinners.

We are taught, thirdly, that *it is Christ alone who has revealed God the Father to man*. It is written that "no man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

The eye of mortal man has never beheld God the Father. No man could bear the sight. Even to Moses it was

said, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see Me, and live." (Exod. xxxiii. 20.) Yet all that mortal man is capable of knowing about God the Father is fully revealed to us by God the Son. He, who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, has been pleased to take our nature upon Him, and to exhibit to us in the form of man all that our minds can comprehend of the Father's perfections. In Christ's words, and deeds, and life, and death, we learn as much concerning God the Father as our feeble minds can at present bear. His perfect wisdom,—His almighty power,—His unspeakable love to sinners,—His incomparable holiness,—His hatred of sin,—could never be represented to our eyes more clearly than we see them in Christ's life and death. In truth, "God was manifest in the flesh," when the Word took on Him a body. "He was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." He says Himself, "I and my Father are one." "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Coloss. ii. 9.) These are deep and mysterious things. But they are true. (1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. i. 3; John x. 30; xiv. 9.)

And now, after reading this passage, can we ever give too much honour to Christ? Can we ever think too highly of Him? Let us banish the unworthy thought from our minds for ever. Let us learn to exalt Him more in our hearts, and to rest more confidently the whole weight of our souls in His hands. Men may easily fall into error about the three Persons in the holy Trinity, if they do not

carefully adhere to the teaching of Scripture. But no man ever errs on the side of giving too much honour to God the Son. Christ is the meeting-point between the Trinity and the sinner's soul. "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him." (John v. 23.)

V.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

JOHN I. 19–28.

“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou ?

“And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

“And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

“He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

“And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

“And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

“John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth One among you, whom ye know not;

“He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

“These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan,

where John was baptizing.”

WE have in these verses *an instructive example of true humility*. That example is supplied by John the Baptist himself.

John the Baptist was an eminent saint of God. There are few names which stand higher than his in the Bible calendar of great and good men. The Lord Jesus Himself declared that “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” (Matt. xi. 11.) The Lord Jesus Himself declared that he was “a burning and a shining light.” (John v. 35.) Yet here in this passage we see this eminent saint lowly, self-abased, and full of humility. He puts away from himself the honour which the Jews from Jerusalem were ready to pay him. He declines all flattering titles. He speaks of himself as nothing more than the “voice of one crying in the wilderness,” and as one who “baptized with water.” He proclaims loudly that there is One standing among the Jews far greater than himself, One whose shoe’s latchet he is not worthy to unloose. He claims honour not for himself, but for Christ. To exalt Christ was his mission, and to that mission he steadfastly adheres.

The greatest saints of God in every age of the Church have always been men of John the Baptist’s spirit. In gifts, and knowledge, and general character they have often differed widely. But in one respect they have always been alike: they have been “clothed with humility.” (1 Pet. v.

5.) They have not sought their own honour. They have thought little of themselves. They have been ever willing to decrease if Christ might only increase, to be nothing if Christ might be all. And here has been the secret of the honour God has put upon them. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” (Luke xiv. 11.)

If we profess to have any real Christianity, let us strive to be of John the Baptist’s spirit. Let us study humility. This is the grace with which all must begin, who would be saved. We have no true religion about us, until we cast away our high thoughts, and feel ourselves sinners.—This is the grace which all saints may follow after, and which none have any excuse for neglecting. All God’s children have not gifts, or money, or time to work, or a wide sphere of usefulness; but all may be humble.—This is the grace, above all, which will appear most beautiful in our latter end. Never shall we feel the need of humility so deeply as when we lie on our death-beds, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Our whole lives will then appear a long catalogue of imperfections, ourselves nothing, and Christ all.

VI.

“THE LAMB OF GOD.”

JOHN I. 29.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

THIS name did not merely mean, as some have supposed, that Christ was meek and gentle as a lamb. This would be truth, no doubt, but only a very small portion of the truth. There are greater things here than this! It meant that Christ was the great Sacrifice for sin, who was come to make atonement for transgression by His own death upon the cross. He was the true Lamb which Abraham told Isaac at Moriah God would provide. (Gen. xxii. 8.) He was the true Lamb to which every morning and evening sacrifice in the temple had daily pointed. He was the Lamb of which Isaiah had prophesied, that He would be “brought to the slaughter.” (Isa. liii. 7.) He was the true Lamb of which the passover lamb in Egypt had been a vivid type. In short, He was the great propitiation for sin which God had covenanted from all eternity to send into the world. He was God’s Lamb.

Let us take heed that in all our thoughts of Christ, we first think of Him as John the Baptist here represents Him. Let us serve Him faithfully as our Master. Let us obey

Him loyally as our King. Let us study His preaching as our Prophet. Let us walk diligently after Him as our Example. Let us look anxiously for Him as our coming Redeemer of body as well as soul. But, above all, let us prize Him as our Sacrifice, and rest our whole weight on His death as an atonement for sin. Let His blood be more precious in our eyes every year we live. Whatever else we glory in about Christ, let us glory above all things in His cross. This is the corner stone, this is the citadel, this is the root of true Christian theology. We know nothing rightly about Christ, until we see Him with John the Baptist's eyes, and can rejoice in Him as "the Lamb that was slain."

Christ is a Saviour. He did not come on earth to be a conqueror, or a philosopher, or a mere teacher of morality. He came to save sinners. He came to do that which man could never do for himself,—to do that which money and learning can never obtain,—to do that which is essential to man's real happiness: He came to "take away sin."

Christ is a complete Saviour. He "taketh away sin." He did not merely make vague proclamations of pardon, mercy, and forgiveness. He "took" our sins upon Himself, and carried them away. He allowed them to be laid upon Himself, and "bore them in His own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 24.) The sins of every one that believes on Jesus are made as though they had never been sinned at all. The Lamb of God has taken them clean away.

Christ is an almighty Saviour, and a Saviour for all mankind. He "taketh away the sin of the world." He did

not die for the Jews only, but for the Gentile as well as the Jew. He did not suffer for a few persons only, but for all mankind. The payment that He made on the cross was more than enough to make satisfaction for the debts of all. The blood that He shed was precious enough to wash away the sins of all. His atonement on the cross was sufficient for all mankind, though efficient only to them that believe. The sin that He took up and bore on the cross was the sin of the whole world.

Last, but not least, Christ is a perpetual and unwearied Saviour. He “taketh away” sin. He is daily taking it away from every one that believes on Him,—daily purging, daily cleansing, daily washing the souls of His people, daily granting and applying fresh supplies of mercy. He did not cease to work for His saints, when He died for them on the cross. He lives in heaven as a Priest, to present His sacrifice continually before God. In grace as well as in providence, Christ worketh still. He is ever taking away sin.

These are golden truths indeed. Well would it be for the Church of Christ, if they were used by all who know them! Our very familiarity with texts like these is one of our greatest dangers. Blessed are they who not only keep this text in their memories, but feed upon it in their hearts!

VII.

THE CALL OF SIMON PETER.

JOHN I. 40-42.

“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother,

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

“And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”

WE see, from these verses, *what good a believer may do to others by speaking to them about Christ.*

No sooner does Andrew become a disciple, than he tells his brother Simon what a discovery he has made. Like one who has unexpectedly heard good tidings, he hastens to impart it to the one nearest and dearest to him. He says to his brother, “We have found the Messias,” and he “brings him to Jesus.” Who can tell what might have happened if Andrew had been of a silent, reserved, and uncommunicative spirit, like many a Christian in the present day? Who can tell but his brother might have lived and died a fisherman on the Galilean lake? But happily for Simon, Andrew was not a man of this sort. He was one whose heart was so full that he must speak. And to

Andrew's outspoken testimony, under God, the great Apostle Peter owed the first beginning of light in his soul.

The fact before us is most striking and instructive. Out of the three first members of the Christian Church, one at least was brought to Jesus by the private, quiet word of a relative. He seems to have heard no public preaching. He saw no mighty miracle wrought. He was not convinced by any powerful reasoning. He only heard his brother telling him that he had found a Saviour himself, and at once the work began in his soul. The simple testimony of a warm-hearted brother was the first link in the chain by which Peter was drawn out of the world and joined to Christ. The first blow in that mighty work by which Peter was made a pillar of the Church, was struck by Andrew's words: "We have found the Christ."

Well would it be for the Church of Christ, if all believers were more like Andrew! Well would it be for souls if all men and women who have been converted themselves, would speak to their friends and relatives on spiritual subjects, and tell them what they have found! How much good might be done! How many might be led to Jesus, who now live and die in unbelief! The work of testifying the Gospel of the grace of God ought not to be left to ministers alone. All who have received mercy ought to find a tongue, and to declare what God has done for their souls. All who have been delivered from the power of the devil ought to "go home and tell their friends what great things God has done for them." (Mark v. 19.) Thousands,

humanly speaking, would listen to a word from a friend, who will not listen to a sermon. Every believer ought to be a home-missionary,—a missionary to his family, children, servants, neighbours, and friends. Surely, if we can find nothing to say to others about Jesus, we may well doubt whether we are savingly acquainted with Him ourselves.

Let us take heed that we are among those who really follow Christ, and abide with Him. It is not enough to hear Him preached from the pulpit, and to read of Him as described in books. We must actually follow Him, pour out our hearts before Him, and hold personal communion with Him. Then, and not till then, we shall feel constrained to speak of Him to others. The man who only knows Christ by the hearing of the ear, will never do much for the spread of Christ's cause in the earth.

VIII.

PHILIP AND NATHANAEL.

JOHN I. 43–51.

*“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee,
and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me,*

*“Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and
Peter,*

*“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We
have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the
prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,*

*“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good
thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come
and see.*

*“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of
him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

*“Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou
Me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip
called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee,*

*“Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi,
Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel,*

*“Jesus answered and saith unto him, Because I said
unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?
thou shalt see greater things than these,*

*“And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you,
Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God
ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”*

LET US observe, as we read these verses, *how various are the paths by which souls are led into the narrow way of life.*

We are told of a man, named Philip, being added to the little company of Christ's disciples. He does not appear to have been moved, like Andrew and his companions, by the testimony of John the Baptist. He was not drawn, like Simon Peter, by the out-spoken declaration of a brother. He seems to have been called directly by Christ Himself, and the agency of man seems not to have been used in his calling. Yet in faith and life he became one with those who were disciples before him. Though led by different paths, they all entered the same road, embraced the same truths, served the same Master, and at length reached the same home.

The fact before us is a deeply important one. It throws light on the history of all God's people in every age, and of every tongue. There are diversities of operations in the saving of souls. All true Christians are led by one Spirit, washed in one blood, serve one Lord, lean on one Saviour, believe one truth, and walk by one general rule. But all are not converted in one and the same manner. All do not pass through the same experience. In conversion, the Holy Ghost acts as a sovereign. He calleth every one severally as He will.

Let us observe, also, in these verses, *the good advice which Philip gave to Nathanael.* The mind of Nathanael

was full of doubts about the Saviour of whom Philip told Him. "Can there any good thing," he said, "come out of Nazareth?" And what did Philip reply? He said, "Come and see."

Wiser counsel than this it would be impossible to conceive! If Philip had reproved Nathanael's unbelief, he might have driven him back for many a day, and given offence. If he had reasoned with him, he might have failed to convince him, or might have confirmed him in his doubts. But by inviting him to prove the matter for himself, he showed his entire confidence in the truth of his own assertion, and his willingness to have it tested and proved. And the result shows the wisdom of Philip's words. Nathanael owed his early acquaintance with Christ to that frank invitation: "Come and see."

If we call ourselves true Christians, let us never be afraid to deal with people about their souls as Philip dealt with Nathanael. Let us invite them boldly to make proof of our religion. Let us tell them confidently that they cannot know its real value until they have tried it. Let us assure them that vital Christianity courts every possible inquiry. It has no secrets. It has nothing to conceal. Its faith and practice are spoken against, just because they are not known. Its enemies speak evil of things with which they are not acquainted. They understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. Philip's mode of dealing, we may be sure, is one principal way to do good. Few are ever moved by reasoning and argument. Still fewer are

frightened into repentance. The man who does most good to souls, is often the simple believer who says to his friends, "I have found a Saviour; come and see Him."

Let us observe, lastly, in these verses, *the high character which Jesus gives of Nathanael*. He calls him "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

Nathanael, there can be no doubt, was a true child of God, and a child of God in difficult times. He was one of a very little flock. Like Simeon and Anna, and other pious Jews, he was living by faith, and waiting prayerfully for the promised Redeemer, when our Lord's ministry began. He had that which grace alone can give,—an honest heart, a heart without guile. His knowledge was probably small. His spiritual eyesight was dim. But he was one who had lived carefully up to his light. He had diligently used such knowledge as he possessed. His eye had been single, though his vision had not been strong. His spiritual judgment had been honest, though it had not been powerful. What he saw in Scripture he had held firmly, in spite of Pharisees and Sadducees, and all the fashionable religion of the day. He was an honest Old Testament believer, who had stood alone. And here was the secret of our Lord's peculiar commendation! He declared Nathanael to be a true son of Abraham,—a Jew inwardly, possessing circumcision in the spirit, as well as in the letter,—an Israelite in heart, as well as a son of Jacob in the flesh.

Let us pray that we may be of the same spirit as Nathanael. An honest, unprejudiced mind,—a childlike

willingness to follow the truth, wherever the truth may lead us,—a simple, hearty desire to be guided, taught, and led by the Spirit,—a thorough determination to use every spark of light which we have,—are possessions of priceless value. A man of this spirit may live in the midst of much darkness, and be surrounded by every possible disadvantage to his soul. But the Lord Jesus will take care that such a man does not miss the way to heaven. “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.” (Psalm xxv. 9.)