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THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

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PREFACE

This work, originally published as a series of articles in The Christadelphian in 1976, deals with the most exalted subject of God's revelation of Himself to man. In compelling language, the author deals with the unique relationship between Father, Son and believer, beginning from when it was purposed before the foundation of the world, and leading to the hope of the promised era when, as the triumph of the work of the Son, the disciples will be one in the Father as even now the Son is. Brother Norris freely admits some trepidation in attempting to deal with this subject which, because it is concerned with One high above our thoughts and His exalted Son, we may see only in a glass and darkly. The assistance his work will give to all who long for the day when we shall know even as also we are known fully justifies the undertaking, and in this spirit the production is recommended to brethren and sisters.

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A DISCLAIMER

NEITHER this writer nor any other has any right to dissect the person of his Saviour. We are not discussing, as men of science might discuss, lesser created objects whose structure is open to examination, without presumption provided that we recognise that the same God made both the objects and ourselves. We are not, either, discussing merely our own selves with our powers and our problems, which we can do without offence if we acknowledge that all our powers are derived from our Creator, and none of our problems can be solved without His blessing. We are discussing the Son whom the Creator brought into the world to save sinners; and, necessarily, the Creator Himself in His inseparable involvement in that achievement. The creature, that is, is venturing into the brightness and the sanctity of the Creator's counsels: and this can only be done at all with the Creator's express permission, and can only be done fruitfully and acceptably if we take off our shoes from our feet, for the ground on which we tread is holy. There is none holier.

We take with gladness all that the Scriptures reveal to us in plain terms, therefore, about the person of our Saviour. We venture, if we venture at all, outside this field only with trepidation and humility, praying as we search, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin". And in case we are tempted, as has all too often happened, to play tug-of-war with holy things in seeking to maintain our own opinion against the opinions of others, let us remember that our Lord is listening as we speak and reading as we write; and that His judgement on matter and motive is without mistake. No matter how vehemently we might maintain that this is right and that is wrong, all our vehemence makes no shadow of difference to the real truth, which is there, unchangeable, whether we have discerned it or not. We seek not to fight and win, but to search and find.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Psalm 19:14; Isaiah 55:6, 8-9.

THE OFFICE OF THE LORD JESUS

ON the purely human level, the Lord Jesus was born great. The humble circumstance of His mother being betrothed to a carpenter, His first bed a manger, and His early dwelling place a despised town in an area little esteemed, can easily conceal the significance of admitted facts about His lineage. For He was of the line of David: He was by that fact entitled to reign on "[the throne of his father David](#)". In the sense of the prophet's word He was "[He whose right it is](#)", to whom God intended to give the kingdom.

More than that, though: the throne to which He was heir was vacant. Whatever the pretensions and apprehensions of Herod 'the Great', there was on earth no other King of the Jews than the Lord Jesus Christ; the wise men spoke truly when they asked, "[Where is he that is born King of the Jews?](#)". He was not merely born to be King. He was born King. It is a fact, of course, that He did not reign then on the throne of David, nor does He now, but this in no way diminished His rights, on an earthly level, nor the respect to which He was entitled from those who were already in principle His subjects. Jesus accepted for Himself the office which the wise men ascribed to Him.

When He entered Jerusalem on the ass of peace, it was right to repeat the prophecy, "[Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!](#)"; and for the people to cry, "[Blessed be the kingdom of our father David!](#)" The answer to Pilate's question, "[Art thou the King of the Jews?](#)" was in the affirmative. What was written over the cross, whatever the motives which inspired it, was true: here was "[Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.](#)" When the rulers asked the Lord whether He were the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, His answer, had they accepted it, would on both counts have bound them to accord Him obedience and honour.

Matthew 13:55; 2:23; John 1:46; 7:52; Luke 1:32; Ezekiel 21.25-27; Matthew 2:2,3; 21:5; 27:11,37,42; John 1:49; 18.37; 19:12; 19:21; compare Matthew 16:16; 27:63.

That Jesus was the Son of the living God conveyed an even higher office on Him. As in earthly affairs (at least until burgeoning "democracy" threatened to deprive parents of any rights over their own), so also in divine, a son takes pride of place over all categories of servants and strangers. In the angelic society of heaven, where competition and envy play no part, the coming of the Son of God was greeted with acclamation and obeisance. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord", said an angel to the shepherds, acknowledging in these words that Christ was his Lord also. The Lord might have commanded the angels to bear Him up as He fell, had He yielded to the temptation, from the pinnacle of the temple. He could certainly have had more than twelve legions of angels to resist arrest and crucifixion had He so chosen. While it might be claimed that the words "When he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world" refer only to the Lord's resurrection rather than His birth (in this writer's view unnaturally), the words "Let all the angels of God worship him" certainly refer to the proper relationship between the angels and the Son; and since we are told that "He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they", we have to conclude that it was the fact that God was His Father which gave the Lord this supremacy over every created thing, which therefore belonged to Him in principle from His birth. The Lord, indeed, only actually exercised authority over the angels after His resurrection. "angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him", but His position as by right their Lord was established from the start of His life.

Hebrews 3:1-6; Luke 2:10-11; 4:10; Psalm 91:11-12; Matthew 26:53; Hebrews 1:6 R. V.—but not A. V. or R.S. V. 1:4; 1 Peter 3:22. R.S. V. surprisingly removes the "by inheritance" of A. V. and "inherited" of R. V. in Hebrews 1:4 in favour of "obtained", but this is hard to justify since kléronomeo, the verb here used, is uniformly translated of inheriting in all its 18 occurrences, and klëronomia, the corresponding noun, by the word "inheritance" all its 14 times.

If the Lord Jesus at birth was Lord over the angels by right, He must needs be the same over mortal creatures. "Ye call me Master (Teacher) and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet . . .", He says without false modesty, and, notwithstanding His refusal to take advantage of the position which His Sonship conveyed, there is no doubt that the Lord asserts its reality. "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is he?" is not answered by saying "David's," for David correctly referred to his Son as his Lord: and this only Jesus' Sonship of God could explain. "They will reverence my Son," said God in the parable, and whereas the husbandmen did not reverence the Son at all, it was their duty to have done so. The princes of this world crucified Jesus because they did not understand the wisdom of God: had they done so, they would have known that they were doing to death "the Lord of glory". The Lord Jesus has, even in the days of His flesh, the right to say to men, "Follow me!", and it is their duty to follow when He does. Those men who understood best realised His high office, and made confessions like, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof". Elizabeth, carrying the unborn John, could refer to Mary, who but now had conceived the Lord Jesus, as "the mother of my Lord"; and such majesty attached even then to the One unborn that "the babe leaped in my womb", said Elizabeth.

Jesus was Lord over the sabbath; He was One placed under authority whom sicknesses, and the winds and the waves, had no choice but to obey. And if He called His disciples friends, that was His courtesy of condescension. It still remained true that a servant is not greater than his Lord, who is the Master of the house of which they are the members.

John 13:13,14; Mark 12:35-37; Matthew 21.37; 1 Corinthians 2:7-8; Matthew 8:22; Mark 2:14, etc.; Matthew 8:8; Luke 1:43; Mark 2:28; 4:41; John 15:15; Matthew 10.-24,25.

THE PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE LORD JESUS

THERE is no doubt that the Lord knew the Scriptures well, nor is there any reason to doubt that it was the daily spiritual meat of His childhood home. Yet there is as little room to doubt that the Scriptures which He read were not His sole source of instruction. In the first place, there is the prophecy which says that "[the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord](#)". In the second is the evident fact that, while enlightened reading of the Scriptures shows many passages which concern Messiah, only knowledge lying outside these writings can allow Jesus to say in effect, "I am myself that Messiah", as when He said, "[This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears](#)". The Lord knew, not only that the Scriptures prophesied extensively and in detail about the coming Christ, but also that it was He Himself about whom they prophesied. This knowledge must have come in some way directly from God. He would have received wise instruction from Mary, but her own understanding was not adequate to the task of telling Him all that was implied; God may also have taught Him by the angels that came and ministered to Him, or revealed to Him by the Spirit; but the confident "[I am He!](#)" demanded more than that.

This was not a matter of instruction only, but of inward certainty. The Lord Jesus knew that He was Messiah, Saviour, and Son of God, with a certainty which exceeded all that mere external instruction could have provided. He knew within Himself who He was: and for this His begetting of God must certainly have been responsible.

Isaiah 11:1-3; 61:1-2—Luke 4:17-21; Luke 2:40,52; Matthew 4:11; John 4:26, etc.

Nor was it only His knowledge of His own person and identity which marked Him out as possessing perceptions surpassing those of other men. His knowledge of the hearts of others also was instinct within Him, and might well have been innate. "[He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.](#)" Lest these words should be taken to mean only that He knew in general what man was like, we have numerous examples to the contrary. He "[knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him](#)". He "knew their thoughts" when they came to Him with questions about the tribute money. It made no difference that His disciples disputed with each other, when they thought He was out of earshot, and did not answer when He asked them what their dispute was about: by His actions immediately afterwards He showed that He had known it all the time. He could tell Simon the Pharisee exactly the thoughts which, unspoken, were going through the mind of that unfeeling host; and He could know as exactly the repentance and the love which moved the woman who, unseen by His eyes, wrought her work of gratitude upon His feet, and grant her the forgiveness which would have been impossible or presumptuous had He not also known her heart.

John 2:24-25; 6:64; Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; Matthew 9:4; 12:25; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 7:39-50.

THE LORD JESUS AND THE COUNSELS OF GOD

THE common doctrine of the personal pre-existence of Christ rests partly on passages which, speaking of the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ, can be readily explained if that fact is borne in mind. It also rests on an over-literal understanding of such passages as "[I proceeded forth and came from God.](#)" and "[I came down from heaven](#)", and the like, which can readily be understood when we consider the gradation implied in our own use of such expressions, as:

(1) I came from Norway (because I had just been visiting there); or (2) I came from North Cave (because I live there); or (3) I came from Oxford (because I received education there); or (4) I came from Bradford (because I spent my formative years there); or (5) I came from Keighley (because I was born there); or, again (6) I came from Norway (because, assuming it to be the case, I am of Viking stock). In the last sense the Lord Jesus certainly came from heaven, though in some of the earlier senses He came from Bethlehem, or from Nazareth, or wherever He happened to have been visiting last.

1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8; John 8:42; John 3:13,31; 6:33,38; Matthew 2:6; Mark 1:9; John 1:46.

There are a few passages, though, which do not precisely fall into either category. When Jesus says, "I speak the things which I have seen with my Father—ye speak the things which ye have heard from your father", He seems to be claiming a knowledge of the will of God as inward as they possess of the will of man because they are descended from the fallen Adam, "your father the devil" describing their spiritual descent far better than their claim to be descended from Abraham. When He says that God "loved him before the foundation of the world", or asks His Father to glorify Him "with the glory which I had with thee before the world was", He almost seems to claim awareness of what it was like to have been loved by God, or of the greatness of the glory for which He asks. On quite other grounds we have to reject the view that Jesus had ever actually possessed this glory or enjoyed this love, merely resuming after His death that which He laid down in order to die: for we are told that it was because of the obedient death that God "gave him the name which is above every name", which is quite irreconcilable with the idea of merely resuming something temporarily laid down. But is it not possible that One, begotten as He was, could, by this very fact, for which we have no parallel and no precedent, in some way have gained an inbuilt knowledge of what things are like in the presence of His Father, and so know as no other could know the nature of the joy that was set before Him?

John 8:26,38; 17.-5,24; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 12:2.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THE REVELATION OF GOD

GOD spoke unto the fathers by the prophets "at sundry times and in divers manners". He revealed Himself, that is, from time to time, but not all the time; and in various ways, but not to every prophet in all possible ways. The prophet was entitled to say, "Thus saith the Lord", "Hear ye the word of the Lord", or "The word of the Lord came unto me" only if it were true. If he spoke out of turn and presumed to give the verdict of God without having heard it from God first, he was liable to make mistakes, and might have to eat his words. There were also periods when there was no open vision, or a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. A prophet was only a prophet when God gave him something to prophesy; and then he might, indeed, be compelled by God to speak things he did not wish to speak, impelled by the Holy Spirit. The control came from God, and was imposed on the prophet as and when God saw fit.

Hebrews 1:1; Jeremiah 1:4-10, etc.; 2 Samuel 7:1,5; Numbers 22:38; 23:5; Jeremiah 20:7-9; 2 Peter 1:21.

But with the Lord Jesus it was otherwise. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son". This Son is agent as well as revealer. It was because of Him that God made the worlds in the first place, and through Him that He will make the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus not only spoke, but did, the things of which He, and the prophets before Him, spoke, by Himself making reconciliation for our sins before sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He spoke the Word of God but, as the fulfilment of all that the Word had spoken, He was and is Himself the Word of God.

Therefore none of the ancient formulae of the prophets is used by Him. There is never the remotest hint that the Lord Jesus needed to wait for a specific revelation before He was empowered and entitled to speak in God's name. Even though He confesses to one point on which His knowledge is incomplete, in that He did not know the day or the hour of His second advent (at least at that time of speaking), this only serves to emphasise the fact that elsewhere He takes for granted that His knowledge is adequate for completely confident pronouncement. Instead of "Thus saith the Lord", we have "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; "Verily, I say unto you"; or quite simply "I say unto you". On each occasion what he says has the force of a divine pronouncement.

Hebrews 1:1-4; Colossians 1:13-18; John 1:14; Revelation 19:13; 1 John 1:1; Mark 13:32; John 1:51; 3:3,5 etc.; Matthew 5:18,26 etc.; 5:20,22 etc.

Nowhere does this inherent authority and knowledge of the Son of God come out more clearly than in His attitude to the Scriptures. It is true that He shows the utmost respect to the entire body of the Old Testament, insisting that all that is written in Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Him must be fulfilled, and commending those who read and search in the Scriptures, condemning those who reject the teaching of Moses and the Prophets. But He approaches the record quite differently from ourselves. While we acknowledge the existence of some conditional prophecies, whose fulfilment appears to depend on the reaction to the message of those who hear them (as Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, and many nations severally at that of Jeremiah), we acknowledge nevertheless that what God has promised He will surely perform: and so we look for the completion of the restoration of Israel, the return of the Lord, the establishment of the power of the Kingdom of God on earth, and the like, with confident assurance.

But it was not really like that in the case of Jesus. "Think not", He said, "that I am come to destroy the law nor the prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." He does, indeed, say that not one jot or tittle shall fail till heaven and earth pass (making later a similar claim to the inspiration and permanence of His own words), but He takes into His own hands the power to destroy or to fulfil, and announces that He intends to do the latter. This means that He could in principle have done the former.

Luke 24:25-27; 44:47; Matthew 22:49; John 5:39; 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; John 5:46; Jonah 3:4ff—Matthew 12:41; Jeremiah 18:7ff; Matthew 5:17-18; 24:35.

"THAT THE SCRIPTURE MIGHT BE FULFILLED"

WE have to look at the meaning of prophecy in two ways. When it is revealed in God's word as something which is to come to pass, and does not fall into the conditional category already referred to, it is sure to come about. But when it is concerned with the response to temptation of a Person with freedom to choose, its fulfilment depends on His withstanding those temptations. There is nothing automatic about His doing so, and it is not made any more certain by the fact that it has been foreseen. God foresees the end result as the outcome of a struggle, or a succession of struggles, in which the victor must fight His way through to conquest. If no one had foreseen it, we should all be on tenterhooks wondering whether the struggles would be successful. The fact that it had been foreseen does not in any way diminish the nature of those struggles. Indeed, the struggles themselves represent a part of what is foreseen. As each conflict is approached, the ultimate victor must face it in the knowledge, still, that the successful outcome depends absolutely on His readiness to carry the trial through to success.

And so we do not find the Lord Jesus adopting a fatalistic attitude towards prophecy. There was no "This has got to be and nothing can stop it", about His attitude: rather it was, "The fulfilment of Scripture, and the success of the purpose of God, depends on Me. I have the integrity of Scripture and the plan of salvation in My hands. I must see to it that My response to My trials fulfils that end."

This accounts for such episodes as the one over Peter's sword. It is as though Jesus said: "I could beseech my Father, and He could even now send me more than twelve legions of angels. How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" The Lord could have done what He suggests; and He rejects it, not because a predetermined purpose makes it impossible, but because He has made the fulfilment of Scripture and the Father's will paramount. "I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." It was written, indeed, but the fulfilment of what was written was voluntary, and painful.

Romans 8:28-30, to show that the foreordaining is concerned with those whom God foreknows. He did not impose salvation on unsuitable subjects, but made it available to those whom He foreknew.

Matthew 26:53-54; Psalm 40:7—Hebrews 10:7.

The part played by others in fulfilling Scripture might have been less voluntary. The rulers, it seemed, were restrained by God from taking Jesus in the temple (though their own fears of a popular outcry might well have provided their private reasons for what they did), so that the arrest could lead to a Roman trial and then to crucifixion, rather than a lawless lynching such as slew Stephen. The part played by Judas had elements of both voluntary and involuntary fulfilment, in that Judas betrayed his Master for reasons of his own, while Jesus selected him as one of the twelve with the betrayal in mind, as all the records implicitly testify. The request of the rulers that the legs of the crucified persons should be broken might have been a deliberate attempt to falsify Scripture, and so brand Jesus yet again as an impostor: in which event this was frustrated by the providence which ensured that the soldiers did not pay their visit until Jesus had already died.

Matthew 26:55-56; 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; John 6:71; 12:4; 17:12; Acts 1:16.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS THE IMAGE OF THE FATHER

WE have now seen something of Jesus, both as Son of man and as Son of God. In the former capacity we have met Him thus far only as the destined ruler of Israel, and already its lawful King. In the latter we have seen something of His powers, His perceptions, and His potentialities for good or ill. One more point is needed before we return to His position as Son of man in order to seek to understand His temptations, and the meaning of His death. We must try to understand in measure the Lord Jesus Christ as the image of the Father.

"The Word became 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." So runs John's parallel to the annunciation of Luke, where "Word" stands parallel with "Holy Spirit", and "flesh" stands for that which the Lord received by His birth of Mary. The two together also run parallel with the passage in the letter to the Galatians in which "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law". John's passage is unique in referring to qualities which the Lord inherited from His Father, which were open to men to see, a fact which he later emphasises by quotation of the Lord's reply to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". In the first Epistle, too, John speaks of recognisable divine qualities in Jesus when he speaks of Him as "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)." Here the man Christ Jesus is described as the eternal life which was with the Father, in much the same spirit as Jesus' words, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Yet these qualities could hardly appear in the infant Christ. That they could be seen unfolding is revealed by words such as, "He grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him", and, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man". It is true that similar words are used of John the Baptist (who "grew and waxed strong in spirit"), of whom, though in a lesser sense than the Lord Jesus, it is said that he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. The infant Samuel also grew "and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men". In the Lord's case, though, they lead to the point, not where men could recognise a well-brought up and obedient child, but where they could see the unfolded glory of the Only-begotten of the Father. If these qualities could not have been shown in infancy, they could have become clouded and distorted in manhood had the Lord not lived true to His calling and birth. But so perfectly did the Lord display them, that what men saw could be described as God's eternal life. That way of living which had always been characteristic of the Father could be revealed among men by the way in which the Lord Jesus lived His life.

*John 1:14; Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4; John 14:9-11; 1 John 1:1-2; Luke 2:40,52; 1:80;
1 Samuel 2:21,26.*

Whether any men recognised this glory and grace of the Lord Jesus at once in all its fulness may be doubted. Jesus invited them to believe for the works' sake, if as yet they could for no other. There were those who said, "[Never man spake like this man](#)", or even, "[thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Holy One of God](#)". In His first of miracles the Lord manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him. All this awoke some recognition of His representation of the glory of God, whose name was called Immanuel, God with us, but it needed the composite picture, established by the resurrection, before men could perceive in its fulness that which they had seen, with veiled eyes, before. By that time the Lord had brought to a triumphant conclusion the course of humility and meekness which marked His pilgrimage, and had been seen alive after His passion in many infallible proofs.

John 14:11; 7:46; 6:68; 2:11; Matthew 1:23--Isaiah 7:14; Acts 1:3.

But if Jesus was the image of the Father, the Father was bound up in the experiences of the Son, so that His offering could be called the purchase of the church of God by His own blood, and His death be depicted as the dearest offering which God Himself could devote to the salvation of His creatures. The eternal God cannot die, but He could feel the pains of death in the dying of His Son, so that we can rightly say, "[God so loved the world](#)", and add, "[God hath commended his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.](#)"

Acts 20:28; John 3:16; Romans 5:8.

The Virgin Birth, as we call it, was there not only to provide a certain kind of man who could accomplish our salvation. It was also there to show that salvation is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:23.

THE SON OF MARY

THE genealogy of the Lord in Luke 3 commences with the Lord Jesus and works backwards. On the most likely interpretation, Jesus was supposed to be the son of Joseph, but was not in fact so (as we know for sure from the annunciation to Mary and from the account in Matthew), while the Heli of the next generation back would then be the father of Mary (since he was not the father of Joseph, as the record in Matthew plainly shows). It then follows that "[which was the son of Heli](#)", in the Greek merely "[the of Heli](#)", refers to Jesus as the descendant of Heli through Mary, and not to Joseph at all. If this is so, then throughout the list it is being stated that each person named was the ancestor of Jesus, and not necessarily (though this was naturally commonly the case) the son of the one to be named next. So we have "Jesus, supposed to be the son of Joseph, actually the descendant of Heli, Matthat, Levi, . . . and (last of all in this inverted list) of Adam."

This should be applied to the very end of the list, so that we have to conclude with, "[Jesus, son of Adam, son of God.](#)" This is infinitely preferable to reading the record as though it said that Adam was son of God. It is next-door to unbelievable that Luke, having been inspired to go to such pains to make plain that Jesus was only called the Son of the Highest, and the Son of God, because the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, should then be allowed to bestow the same unique title on the creature Adam. The end of the genealogy states a climax and a consensus: "Jesus was indeed Son of Adam, but do not forget that He is also Son of God." The words then form a fitting link with those which follow: "[And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.](#)"

Luke 3:23,24,38. Sons of God is an expression perhaps referred to the angels in Job 38:7, and certainly referred to certain privileged members of the human race in Job 1:6; 2:1; Genesis 6:2,4; Psalm 82:6. It became the position of the believers in Jesus because He, the only-begotten Son, so empowered them,

in John 1:12. But it is hardly credible that the first man, of the earth earthy, should be so described in the present context.

Jesus as Son of Adam is so convincingly identified with all those powers, weaknesses, and needs which distinguish the rest of Adam's children, in terms of the most emphatic kind, that it is impossible to read them without becoming utterly convinced that, whatever great gifts His Sonship of God gave to Him, they diminished in no particular all that belonged to Him because He was also Son of man. Not only was He made "a little lower than the angels", as are other men of whom it is asked, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?", but also He is "of one" with those whom He sanctifies; because "the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner took part of the same," made in "all-points like unto his brethren". The manner in which the expressions are heaped together in Hebrews shows how important it was judged to be that the point should not be lost.

No less convincing, if less detailed, is, the description given by Paul. To accomplish what the Law could not do, because it was weak through the flesh, God, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin—in the flesh" (the dash being introduced to remove the possibility of reading "condemned sin-in-the-flesh", rather than the much more acceptable "in the flesh condemned sin"). All that is needed at this point is to insist that "likeness" cannot possibly mean that Jesus had a fleshly nature which looked like that of other people, but in fact it was different. It is not so much that the word *homoiōma* cannot refer to a superficial resemblance (as perhaps it does in Romans 1:23 of idol-images, and 6:5 of baptism after the "likeness" of Jesus' death), as that it would make no sense if that were understood in this case. To affirm anything like "God sent His Son in something which looked like sinful flesh but really was not so, and so in this flesh condemned the sin with which it had no relation" would be to affirm nonsense. Besides, when Paul also writes that Jesus was "made in the likeness of men", using the same word, everyone agrees that this means that Jesus was man, not just someone with a deceptive resemblance to man. What sinful flesh may be, of course, and how sin could be condemned in the work of the Lord Jesus, still needs discussion. But that Jesus had this nature as truly as His brothers is not open to reasonable doubt.

Hebrews 2:9—Psalm 8:5; 2:11,14; Romans 8:3; 1:23; 5:14; 6:5; Philippians 2:7; Revelation 9:7.

If we add to these passages three which affirm that He "was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin"; and "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"; and that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (which, though it says nothing about His temptation, tells us that His behaviour was an example for us, "that we should follow his steps", and so by a different route establishes that the battle He fought in overcoming is of the same kind as our own), then the composite picture is of One built with respect to His temptations exactly like ourselves, and yet resisting completely all urges to do wrong, wherever those urges may have come from.

Hebrews 4:15; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21.

THE NATURE OF HUMAN FLESH

FIRST of all, "flesh" is a term used to denote human nature as it is: it is not necessary, and it is not helpful, to think of bones and muscle and blood when we think in New Testament terms of "flesh". "Flesh and blood" is another expression with substantially the same meaning. "Heart" is used in a similar way, not because of any belief that a particular organ so named is answerable for the qualities ascribed to the heart, but because it is a particularly expressive way of describing our inward, innate, nature. When the attributes of human nature are contrasted with the righteousness which belongs to God, then "flesh" is set in opposition to "spirit".

With respect to "flesh", and "flesh and blood", the following passages are decisive as to our disabilities and propensities:

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God";

"Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus partook of the same that by death he might destroy the devil";

"I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing";

"The works of the flesh are manifest. . . they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God";

while with respect to the "heart" the following sequence is no less decisive:

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (this of the human race at large just before the Flood);

"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (this when only Noah's righteous family had survived the Flood, and there was no "youth" present about whom this evil could currently be predicted);

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it?" (this of the folly of trusting in man and "making flesh one's arm");

"From within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed all these evil things come from within and defile the man" (this the judgement of the Lord Jesus when the Pharisees were seeking righteousness by things external).

1 Corinthians 15:50; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:19-21; Genesis 6:6; 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23.

Indeed, the last group of passages effectively establishes where the whole matter started. If the best of surviving men were still prone to sin, and their children after them, then the Flood did not eradicate human sin because in human beings it was ineradicable. And since it is inconceivable that this was so as man was made, this must have been the nature which became his after he fell from grace by partaking of the forbidden fruit.

The language used by the Lord Jesus is so similar to that of Genesis 6 and 8 that, we may believe, He used it purposefully, to show those around Him that this inward source of all sinning was something which belonged to man because he is fallen. In fact, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." So far as any ultimate righteousness was concerned, all mankind lay at the mercy of the devil, in the Scriptural significance of that term, until Jesus succeeded in the task of rescue.

Having established the dispositions of human flesh, and also that the Lord Jesus bore the same nature, we are now in a position to face the problem of the manner of the Lord's conflict and victory.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

HIS temptations were like ours. It follows that, since we sin when we are drawn away by our own desires and enticed, the Lord Himself was capable of being similarly drawn away. That "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" distinguishes the results of His temptation sharply from those of our own, and also, though this is not at all the most important part of our enquiry, presents us with a considerable problem. For the unique respect in which He differs from us is His divine begetting, which earlier we discussed in part. Can we therefore say that the Lord was sinless because He was Son of God?

In this direct form the answer must be No. For as soon as one says that something happened because of something else, in the sense of necessary cause and effect, one says that it could not have been otherwise. So that if we say that Jesus was sinless, in spite of His temptations, because He was Son of God, we say that

He was inevitably sinless: and this would mean that His temptations were bound to be ineffectual; which in its turn means that they were not truly temptations at all.

This is in fact the dilemma which confronts those who believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, since Very God is necessarily sinless, and no matter how much the human nature which the Son is said to have taken on Himself may (so to speak) have wanted to sin, it could simply not have been allowed to when combined in one nature with the impeccable nature of God. The doctrine robs us of an understanding of our Saviour by making Him necessarily sinless, depriving Him of any real victory. Such a doctrine would merely restore Jesus inevitably to His former glory. This would be no victory over sin at all, but something inevitable, even after the supposed "incarnation". God would inexorably have taken mankind with Him into glory, but there would have been no triumph.

With the Lord as He truly was it cannot have been like that. The victory which was won "[with strong crying and tears](#)" cannot have been inevitable. One who "[became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross](#)", having "[emptied himself](#)", was One who chose to do so in face of strong urges to the contrary. And that His victory was hard-earned and real stands out from the conclusive "[wherefore also God highly exalted him](#)". The high reward was the fruit of high achievement, which in fact meant total self-abasement, that the Lord God His Father might exalt Him.

But this still leaves the question: If it seems that being Son of God did not make the Lord sinless, was it then without effect on His sinlessness? And again the answer in those simple terms must be No. For if it were without effect on His sinlessness, an ordinary son of Adam might as probably have been sinless, and the Virgin Birth, save in bringing about the involvement of the Father in the sufferings of the Son, would be superfluous. Such a conclusion, too, must be rejected, for at all levels our salvation is "[not of works, lest any man should boast](#)". Without divine begetting we can safely suppose that the Lord could not have been a sinless man, and could not, if for that reason alone, have been our Saviour.

Before going a little nearer our answer to this problem, we do well to examine our own minds. In discussing the advantages, whatever they may have been, which the Lord might have enjoyed in living a spotless life, is there somewhere in our minds the thought: "If Jesus could be sinless enjoying these advantages, He had a head start over ourselves, and so His victory is unfair, and our own failure under handicap over-harshly judged"? If we have any such thought, let us reflect piously on this: Jesus was sent to save men from their sins. This office He gladly undertook. If, in achieving that end, it was needful that He be endowed with help which the rest of us have not, should we be envious on that account? Should we not rather thank God that He has provided the means for our salvation, even though sinlessness was possible for Him and has not been possible for us? The Lord is not a man outstripping us: He is a Saviour seeking to arrive at the goal from which, and in attaining to which, He can hold out the helping hand to those many sons whom He wishes to bring unto glory.

Genesis 2:16-17; 3:6-19; Romans 5:12; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 5:7; Philippians 2:6-9; Ephesians 2:9; Hebrews 2:10.

In fact the solution of our problem lies now in our hands. The Lord, who knew so much about men's hearts, and about the purpose of God concerning Himself, must also have known perfectly what God wanted Him to do, and in all particulars what would have been sinful, and what would not. This perfect enlightenment would render totally impossible any sin through ignorance. Wherever He went, He would go with His eyes wide open. There is no Scripture which indicates that He was ever in doubt as to what He ought to do. The only doubt, if we can put it so, was whether He would consent to travel the road He knew so well was right. The Lord's clarity of discernment, though, would not make sinlessness any easier for Him. For to know that a thing is sinful makes it no less attractive; and even though it preserved Him from adventitious wrongdoing, it made every step the Lord took into the future the more difficult, almost even terrifyingly so, from the fact that He knew at each stage what was in store for Him if He should go further in the fulfilment of God's will. Both in general and in much detail the Lord foresaw His own future, and any of us who have

ever been stricken helpless with fear at such a trivial thing as what the dentist might do to us at our next appointment, the date and time of which is precisely known, or the surgeon when we fulfil a rendezvous with him in hospital, will have some faint inkling of what the Lord had to face each time He thought of the future, whether it was the next step or the final agony. It is true that "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame", but that picture of the ultimate blessing, needful though it was to sustain Him in His course, could do nothing to dull the pain of the three (or more) years' anticipation of suffering, and the three or more years of actual suffering before the worst thing should descend on Him.

Isaiah 11:3; Hebrews 12:2-3.

THE LORD JESUS' ANTICIPATION OF HIS SUFFERINGS

IT needs only a casual glance at the Gospels to see in what detail the Lord, during His earthly pilgrimage, foresaw His future. Here are some of the indications:

"The hour cometh when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them."

"The Son of man is come to give his life a ransom for many."

"He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things. . . and be killed."

"have done unto (John) whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them."

"They shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him up to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify."

"This is the heir, come, let us kill him!"

"The Stone which the builders rejected."

"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

"After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified."

"With desire I have desired to keep this passover with you before I suffer."

"Knowing that his hour was come."

"I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth my bread hath lifted up his heel against me. . . One of you shall betray me. . . That thou doest, do quickly."

"The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice."

"This is my body. . . This is my blood of the new covenant."

Matthew 9:15; 20:28; 16:21; 17:12; 20:19; 21:38; 21:42; 23:32; 26:2; Luke 22:15;

John 13:2,18,21,27,38; Luke 22:19-20.

"We could not bear to hear complete the tale, if it were told," the hymn says about the future which awaits us; The Lord had to hear and bear it and live His mortal life in the shadow of it. As the day drew nearer and nearer, more and more might the Lord have said what ultimately burst from His lips: "I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" In the face of such forebodings, the expression "tempted in all points like as we are" reads almost like an understatement.

THE TEMPTATIONS IN THE WILDERNESS

WE know almost nothing about the temptations of the Lord's youthful years. That in the home of Joseph and Mary He "was subject unto them" speaks of obedience in the face of possible disobedience, and puts the submissiveness which belongs properly to childhood in perspective. That He remained behind in Jerusalem at the age of twelve to be "in my Father's house" shows that He had learned to put His heavenly Father's will before all other considerations, and this, too, must be regarded as resistance to temptation. But this is the only time the veil is lifted until the Lord reaches the age of 30. Then, however, the Lord's public life has scarcely begun before His recorded temptations begin in earnest.

His baptism represents the first of them. John's attempt to dissuade Him with, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" was just such as would have appealed to human vanity. "Baptism is all right for profligate harlots and extortionate taxgatherers and vulgar soldiers, but I am not fit to unloose your shoe-latchet. You should rather be the baptizer than the baptized!" There was enough truth in such a declaration to deceive the pride of the unwary, and though the Lord could not be trapped in that way, had He been disposed to give way to the pride of life this temptation would have provided an opportunity such as many of us, in the same position, would have found hard to resist. There is almost a note of heavenly relief in the approval from God which immediately descended on the head of the victor, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"—as though the 'pleasure' was that the Lord had so triumphantly placed Himself in His Father's hands when He insisted, "Thus it becometh us—Me and the sinners—to fulfil all righteousness."

Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Luke 2:49-51; Matthew 3:13-17,11. The word "forbade", R.V. "would have hindered", R. S. V. "would have prevented", is diaköluo, which occurs only here, though it is an emphatic form of Koluo which occurs some 23 times, most often rendered "forbid". So we can perhaps properly read: "John resolutely withstood him", which emphasises the temptation even more.

Each record of the Temptations in the Wilderness speaks of the Lord as being tempted by "the devil" or "Satan". We cannot avoid some discussion of the nature of this devil because of its crucial bearing on the nature of the Lord's temptations. But it is better to deal with the facts themselves before the consequences of accepting them are explored. The following questions arise:

1. 1. Why do Matthew (Stones—Pinnacle—Kingdom) and Luke (Stones—Kingdom—Pinnacle) give the temptations in different sequences?
2. Was any tempter from without needed to suggest the turning of stones into bread by a hungry man who had the power to do it?
3. Was the pinnacle of the temple really scaled, since the temptations took place in the Wilderness?
4. From what mountain can one see all the kingdoms of the world?
5. Before what being would the Son of God be in any way likely to bow down in worship?
6. Is there any one of these temptations which could not have arisen without the intervention of an outside tempter?

The answer to (2) is No, though this does not, of course, prove that no such tempter was present. The probable answer to (3) seems also to be No, since no such journey to Jerusalem and back is easy to harmonise with the temptations being in the Wilderness. The answer to (4), positively, is None. If one could put the largest mountain in the world in the Wilderness of Judea and avoid all obstacles to the field of view, a perfectly keen eye could hope to see over a radius of 220 miles, which would not reach to Antioch in Syria in the north, or further than the coast of Cyprus in the northwest, and only just to the Nile delta in the south-west. If we were limited to the highest mountain in the area, Hermon, the field would be cut down to about 120 miles, which would barely reach Damascus. How can one be said to see all the Kingdoms of the world when the view is less than a sixth of the way to Rome, then its chief city? The answer to (5) is None also. The knowledge of Jesus would have taught Him that any claim to be able to give Him the kingdoms was necessarily false, and any worship of a creature, however powerful he might be, absurd. And the answer to (6) is also No; there is none.

SIN PERSONIFIED

All of this leads to the view that the temptations (which even on a real mountain top must have been in the mind, since the scene could not have been beheld with literal eyes), are presented to us in dramatic form as a hand-to-hand conflict between Jesus and the personified power of sin, in which the Seed of the woman does battle with the seed of the serpent in single combat, the stakes being the salvation of mankind. The "exceeding high mountain" of this temptation finds parallels in Ezekiel 40:2 and Revelation 21:10, both

visionary experiences. And the different orders for the temptations referred to in (1) above would follow automatically from the consideration that, if they were subjective, forty days of endurance of a severe fast would cause them to recur time after time, and any order would be a right one.

Against this view there remains only one major objection: that if Jesus could entertain such thoughts, then since they were thoughts of potential sin, this would make Him already a sinner in mind if not in deed. But to this it must be answered that if Jesus could not have entertained such thoughts, then there could have been no real temptation either. For any tempter to make suggestions which do not reach the mind provides no temptation at all; while if Jesus' mind must have been able to ponder the temptations and reject them, it could have done so in the absence of any outside tempter at all. This really follows from what we have already concluded about His human nature, and in no way breaches the integrity of Jesus' righteousness. If it is the case that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed", Jesus withstands this test triumphantly, for His desires did not draw Him away, and He was not enticed. He met the understood attractions with a firm "Not so! This would be to tempt the Lord my God, to seek to live without asking Him to provide; and to have another god beside him." And that is sinlessness indeed.

FACING TEMPTATION ALONE

There is in any case an occasion when the Lord did face temptation quite alone. He raised the subject matter of the temptation Himself, produced the answer to it for Himself, and gave the decision Himself, all without the intervention of any human third party at all: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" states the problem. "Say, "Father, save me from this hour!" prompts the flesh. "But for this purpose came I to this hour", answers spiritual understanding. "Father, glorify thy name!" says Jesus in giving His decision. And the form of this temptation is just like those in the wilderness.

Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13; Genesis 3:15; Ezekiel 40:2; Revelation 21:10; James 1:14; John 12:27-28.

All three temptations, in a way, taught the same lesson: to turn the stones into bread would be to use the miraculous power which the Son of God had inherited from His Father, to satisfy the hunger which the Son of man owed to His mother. He must at least ask God's permission before doing that, and in any case real life came from the Word of God, not from food, as God had tried unsuccessfully to teach Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, and as Jesus tried to teach them again after the Feeding of the Five Thousand. The angels were there as God's servants, to further His will, not to excite the plaudits of the multitude should the Son of man put them to vainglorious test. And the Kingdom was to be gained in the way God decreed, in His good time and after the due surrender of all human potentialities for the misuse of its powers.

Resistance to all these would sland the Son of man in good stead when similar temptations assailed Him in His public life. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of", He would be able to say in good conscience to His disciples, without the qualms of conscience which would have come had He needed to confess to that proffered private feast in the wilderness. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth". He would be able to say to the multitude, without feeling compromised that there had been one time when He had been untrue to the same precept. Those twelve legions of angels would be easier to resist, now that He had declined to use angels as His playthings for vulgar public gratification. And there would be the less danger that He would ever explode into urging His disciples, or the Lord's hosts, into battle for the present Kingdom's sake, or that His head would be turned by grateful multitudes seeking to take Him by force and make Him a King, or by the enthusiastic but uncritical company who hailed Him as He rode on the ass into Jerusalem with their 'Hail to the Kingdom of David'. To have resisted all these urges to carve His own way through a life which should be devoted to God was to establish an invaluable precedent for the various forms that similar temptations would take in the future.

For this reason we can take the remaining temptations which the Lord endured as being sufficiently summed up in these early trials. What is more important, on our own level, is to recognise the true affinity

of His temptations with our own. We cannot turn stones into bread, and, because we know it, would not be tempted to try: but we can take the good gifts of the Lord and, without pausing for permission or giving thanks, appropriate them to our own uses. We could not trust in the angels to save us if we jumped from a pinnacle of the temple in our own perversity: but we can wander dangerously close to the precipices of sin, and presume on the willingness of God to raise us when we have wantonly fallen; we can, too, perform stunts in front of a supposedly admiring world, and seek our own glory from their applause. And we can certainly seek to become the biggest possible fish in whatever small pond it might be our portion to inhabit, whether in wealth, ostentation, authority, or pleasure, by offering idolatrous worship to our own covetousness. The Lord's temptations exceed in magnitude any we are likely to meet, but they are sufficiently like them in kind to provide an instructive basis for our efforts to "let this mind be in" us "which was also in Christ Jesus".

John 6:27ff; Deuteronomy 8:3—Matthew 4:4; John 4.32; Philippians 2:5.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE LORD JESUS

Peter was horrified that the Lord should talk of crucifixion. To his mind the King whom he had just confessed should go to Jerusalem to reign, not to be delivered to His enemies. "This shall not be unto thee!" meant that, had Peter found himself in Jesus' place, he would not have let it happen to him. The other disciples, too, were at least perplexed and saddened. And though it seems that they failed to understand what Jesus could have meant when He spoke of a subsequent resurrection, it is hard at first to see that they should find His words so difficult. The raising of Jairus' daughter occurred before these prophecies of the death of Jesus, and that of the son of the widow of Nain, also. It would seem that their doubts must have been deeper-rooted: Jesus could raise the dead, but who could raise Jesus? Who would raise Him? With the miracle-worker in their midst they could believe, but what when the fountain-head of their faith was gone to His grave?

Jesus had always refused to give them a sign from heaven. What assurance would there be that the heavens would give their own sign when He was dead? In any case, though, their bafflement about the crucifixion arose because they had not, any more than the Lord's enemies, appreciated that no man, not even Messiah, can "abide for ever" in a mortal condition, and that a mortal condition is not to be changed without removing the grounds of mortality.

If the Lord had been prepared to take the kingdom on the terms offered by the people, He might have done so. But He would have not wrought any redemption, and He would have become the slave of the appetites of the men, still unredeemed sinners, who had crowned Him.

Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 9:10; Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41; Matthew 9:18; Luke 7:11; John 12:34; 6:15.

THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM

The kingdom must come in another way. Flesh must be put to death so that, freed for ever from the promptings to sin, it could be made immortal with sin for ever banished. The righteousness of God must be upheld by all other flesh being taught that the proper and only end of our fleshly nature is death. When the Son of God was risen from the dead, He must be One from whom all mortality and peccability had been removed because willingly laid down. All who would be saved must be able to look at His Cross and say, "The cross is the proper place for me, if I wish to start again in newness of life."

As to the Lord Himself: "He counted it not a prize to be on equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross." He undid in Himself what Adam had done at the Fall. There Adam had grasped at the opportunity of becoming "as God, to know good and evil"; here the Lord Jesus, with the image of God new-stamped upon Him by His begettal, chooses the station of

a slave among men. There man sought to rise to God's level, and fell into disgrace and mortality; here One bearing the marks of that fall places Himself in God's hands, making no claim to anything except what it pleased God to give Him: not eating forbidden fruit, but even abstaining from what might seem to be permitted necessities, unless someone under God's hand provided them for Him. There can be no greater mark of His humility than that the Son of God should send his messengers around picking up the fragments left by five thousand untidy feasters on His miraculous food, and that He and his company should take them home for supper.

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN

In fulfilment of the need to show men the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, and its just deserts, the Lord even consented to die as though He were accursed, bearing the shame which the Law reserved for the executed criminal, though He had done no evil deed, spoken no wrong word, and harboured no unworthy thought. If this involved Him in the ultimate horror of meeting death, briefly denied that fellowship with His Father which had hitherto never left Him, and expressing the shock of the event in the cry of dereliction, "[My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?](#)" then that was the price He was prepared to pay. Such a price the Father asked of His beloved Son, that the death might clearly be seen to involve all that would be required of sinners, whose sin the Saviour took upon Himself—willing, personal without any anodyne, and complete. The Lord met His death, as the unrepentant criminal on His one side met his, utterly alone.

"IT IS FINISHED"

We are not told that the desolation was relieved before the Lord died. Certainly the shocked exclamation was followed by the calm of full acceptance. "[It is finished](#)" marked the Lord's declaration that there remained nothing more to be done; "[Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!](#)" shows the Lord's dying confidence that the Father for the moment so far away would receive the life flung out into the darkness, and be there to restore it to Him on the third day.

Acts 2:24; Romans 6:9; Philippians 2:5-8; Genesis 3:5; John 6:12-13; Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23; Mark 15:34; John 19:30; Luke 23:46. With the Lord risen and at the Father's right hand, Stephen's later sufferings could be lightened by the sight of the Lord pleading for him in heaven, and he could cry to his Saviour to grant to him the blessing He had Himself received. Acts 7:55-60.

The matter is put differently in Hebrews, as becomes a record intended to show how the shadowy offerings of the Law foresaw the culminating offering, and was itself ready to vanish away as that offering was completed. Here the old priests, with their infirmity, shut out from God's closest presence for all the year save one day, on that day drew nigh to Him with the greatest trepidation and with blood not their own in their hands. To demonstrate that even this rare privilege achieves nothing of permanent value, they did it again, year after year until they died their several deaths. Their priesthood passed on to their successors, as ineffectual as themselves in securing any permanent result, and a nation glorying in this, in itself unavailing repetition of Days of Atonement needed to be taught the "weakness and unprofitableness thereof"; until the permanent way into the Holiest of all should be made manifest.

Into this picture comes the Son of God and Son of man. Up to the point of His offering, Annas and Caiaphas cling to their dying office and, condemning Him to death, sound the death-knell of their own privilege. Both in sealing the doom of a house left unto them desolate, ready for its veil to be torn from top to bottom and its stones to be riven down so that not one is standing on another; and in fulfilling the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God by preparing for the exaltation of the Lord, they perform their last valid office by a hideously invalid crime, and are in God's sight stripped of their robes.

He, on the other hand, lays down His life. No man takes it from Him. They could not have bound Him were He unwilling, nor kept Him on the Cross if Christ the King of Israel had chosen to meet their challenge on their terms. But instead He allows His blood to be shed, says farewell to this mortal, temptable life, and

goes through the cool of the grave into the blessedness of the resurrection morning. Then, showing by many infallible proofs that this is true, He goes into the presence of God for us, by way of His own blood going into the Most Holy Place. There, cleansing all who might come there by this last and best of all sacrifices of blood, He dismisses the peripatetic priests who wander in the darkness for 364 days of the year, then to stand only briefly in a shadowy tent on the remaining day, and Himself sits down, sits down at the right hand of God to commence His age-long continuous ministry on behalf of His saints for as long as this dispensation shall last.

Hebrews 8:13; 10:1; 9:6-10; 5:2; 7:23; 7:18; Matthew 26.65-66, 23:38; Luke 13:35; Mark 15:3 7; 13:1-2; Acts 2:23; John 10:18; 18:6; Mark 15:32; Hebrews 8:1; 10:11-12.

PERFECTION OR PERFECTING?

We find it easy to speak of the Lord's "perfect life"; yet, though His life was lived without fault, this is not Bible language about Him. As compared with the inherent goodness of His Father, He even refused to be called "[good](#)", and the only occasion when He used the word "perfect" about Himself was in the words, "[Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected. Howbeit I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.](#)"

During His ministry He cured the bodies of the sick; on the third day He would Himself experience a change comparable with, but greater than, the blessings He brought to the afflicted. He would be made perfect, showing that in the sense intended perfection was not yet His. It will be achieved when, as they regard it, He "[perishes in Jerusalem](#)", that is, by His crucifixion.

The only other occasions when the same verb is used about Him are all in the Letter to the Hebrews:

["It became God, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings."](#)

["Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and, having been made perfect, he became to all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation."](#)

["The law appointeth men high priests having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore."](#) (A.V. has "consecrated" here, but this is erroneous and inconsistent, as its margin concedes.)

The Lord was always sinless in word and deed. Yet He was not perfected until the potential for sin was removed from Him. This was done on the Cross, and therefore the death on the Cross is the moment after which He can properly be described as "[perfected](#)". Nothing can ever go amiss with Him from this point on.

Luke 13:32-33; Hebrews.2:10; 5:8-9; 7:28.

THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE AND ITS PRIEST

WITH the Most Holy Place thrown open to believers, our merciful and faithful High Priest enters on His work of mediation for His saints. It is a task for which He was prepared, first by conquering and abolishing all the weaknesses which belong to human flesh; second, and dependent on this, by being granted the immortal nature which is capable of presiding over the needs of his saints throughout this dispensation; and, third, by that fixing in his nature of all the qualities of excellence which He brought to maturity during his days of weakness.

The One who had compassion on the multitude who were "[as sheep not having a shepherd](#)", who could weep with the weeping Mary and earnestly pray for the well-being of a beloved disciple in his need, is One in whom these qualities become permanent and ineradicable by his death and resurrection. It is not merely

in bodily form, and in the marks in hand, feet, and side, that the Lord bears testimony to being the same Person as the Christ who died. It is also in the fact that everything which commended Him to God during his mortal days commends Him everlastingly to that same God and Father now. Immortal though He is, He is Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today, and for ever. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is the same willing Helper of penitent sinners that He always was, now with an all-seeing eye and infinite power at his command. He is not transformed by death from Lamb of God into Lion: for the fact that He will need in time to come to execute God's judgement on rebellious nations in no way weakens His sympathy, gentleness and compassion towards those who desire to please God through Him. He is the Lamb of God for ever, "as it had been slain", pictured on "Mount Zion with the 144,000 of the redeemed", and about to be married to his saintly Bride when He returns to the earth; and it is as the Lamb of God that these saints are invited to regard Him.

Hebrews 8:2; 9:3,8,12,24,25; 10:19; 13:11; Leviticus 16:27; that it is the antitypical Most Holy Place which is referred to, and not the holy place of the 'first tabernacle' (9:1,2) is indicated by the use of the definite neuter plural form, "the holy things"; but also by comparing: Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-16; Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; 15:32; 20:34; Luke 22:31-32; 24:39-40; John 11:35; 20:20,27-28; Revelation 5:5-6; 7:9-17; 13:8; 14:1-4; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7-9; 21:9-23; 22:1,3.

The "heavenly tabernacle" is the presence of God. At two points in Hebrews it is associated with the term "the heavenly things", and when these are spoken of as being "cleansed" by the sacrifice of Christ, we are presumably to understand that those who in spiritual fellowship with their Lord enter there are so cleansed, having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb". It cannot be an accident that the Spirit has preserved the same term for repeated use in the Letter to the Ephesians of that same fellowship, brought about in the same way. For there, too, Christ is raised to sit at God's "own right hand in the heavenly places"; there His saints are "blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus", having been brought to life from a state of spiritual death and "made to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". Without leaving the presence of God there, they engage in their activities of witness among the principalities and powers of this world; and without abandoning the presence of their Helper they wage their warfare against all the powers of sin, the "world rulers of this darkness". Though literally, of course, the saints continue to live their lives on the earth, they are to consider themselves as living spiritually in the presence of God and His Christ, "looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal".

Hebrews 8:5; 9:23; Revelation 7:14; Ephesians 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

THE ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

FOR all the present exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Scriptures make it plain that He retains, and desires to retain, the status of His Father's obedient Son, ministering still to the Father's glory as He did in His mortality. "My Father is greater than I" was his declaration on earth; "to the glory of God the Father" is the destination of all honour and praise paid to Him in heaven; in the end of His labours, "Then shall the Son also be subject unto the Father, that God may be all in all". There is a very small fraction of New Testament passages, and a yet smaller fraction in the Old Testament where the name God is in some sense applied to Jesus, but the overwhelming majority of Scriptural passages are in line with the introduction to most of the Epistles, which speak of "God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ". It is this position which the Lord clearly wishes, to maintain, and wishes his servants to maintain. When He refers to the petitions which His servants will offer after He has ascended to be with the Father, His wish is always that His disciples shall present their prayers to the Father in His, Jesus', name. How thoroughly this became the practice of the early disciples will be shown in the table below.

John 12:28; 14:13; 17:1,4; Philippians 2:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Isaiah 9:6; John 20:28; and some few others; see the opening section below for the passages referring to the Father as God and the Son as Lord; John 14:13-16; 16:26-27; 15:7,16.

THE APOSTLES' GUIDE TO ADDRESS IN PRAYER

What follows is based on a probably incomplete reading through the Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse, to discover in what forms invocations, prayers, and blessings are there expressed. Many of the allusions are indirect, and more might be added, but it seems very unlikely that they will upset the general picture presented below.

1. *Invocations of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 13:14; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; 6:23; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2 A. V.; 1 Thessalonians 1:1 A. V.; 3:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 2:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3; Revelation 1:4; 5:9-14; 7:10-12.*
2. *Thanksgiving and petition to the Father, the Son not mentioned: Romans 6:17; 10:1; 11:1; 14:6; 15:13,30,33; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 14:18,25; 2 Corinthians 8:16; 9:11,15; Galatians 1:5; Ephesians 3:14-21 R. V.; Philippians 4:20; Colossians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 11; 2:13; 1 Timothy 1:16; 6:15-16; James 1:5; 1 Peter 1:17; 4:19; 5:10-11; Revelation 11:17; 15:3-4.*
3. *The same to the Father, specifically through the Son: Romans 1:8; 5:11; 7:25; 15:6; 16:25-27; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Ephesians 5:19-20; Philippians 1:10-11; 4:6-7; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 4:14-16; 13:15,20-21; 1 John 2:1; 5:13-17; Jude 24-25 R. V.; Ephesians 2:18; 3:12.*
4. *Prayer and praise to the God and Father of Jesus Christ: 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3,17; Colossians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3; Revelation 22:21.*
5. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, without reference to the Father: Romans 16:30; 1 Corinthians 16:23; Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23; 2 Timothy 4:22 A. V.*
6. *Glory to Jesus Christ: 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 1:5; 5:9-14.*
7. *Prayer to Jesus specifically: 2 Corinthians 12:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:12 (possibly 2 Timothy 4:17), together with the 'Even so come, Lord Jesus' of Revelation 22:20.*
8. *Uncertain: 2 Thessalonians 3:16; 2 Timothy 4:22 R. V.*
9. *Jesus invoked specifically in the Acts of the Apostles: 1:24-25; 7:59; 9:5; 9:10; 10:14? 22:10,19; 26:15. All these are in response to specific revelations of the Lord Jesus Himself to those concerned.*

From this table it is quite plain that invocation of the Lord Jesus is so exceptional as to afford no precedent for our own prayer, and that when it occurs it is from those closely in his care during the ministry of the apostles. That grace and peace are ministered from the Father and the Son is what we should expect from Jesus' presence at the Father's right hand, and from the Lord's mediatorial work. It is quite clear that apart from these the apostles followed the practice which the Lord has Himself recommended, and that it becomes us to follow their example.

Praying to Jesus is yielding to a kind of evangelical fashion. It is no abiding part of our heritage from the Lord, the Apostles, or the Scriptures.

TAKING UP ONE'S CROSS

WHEN the disciples sought to resist Jesus' crucifixion, this was the answer they received: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." So far from denying the Cross to their Master, they must receive it for themselves. But first they must "deny" themselves, and a simple reference to another statement of Jesus makes very plain what that expression means: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." In other words, to deny is to repudiate any connection with, and therefore to deny oneself is to disown oneself. Self-assertion, not primarily self-indulgence, is the opposite of self-denial. Merely giving up something, however desirable that might be, has nothing essentially to do with self-denial, which is giving up all confidence in ourselves. More

than that, it is the prelude to "[taking up our cross](#)", which in its turn has nothing particularly to do with bearing some affliction patiently, but is done for the same reason that the Lord Jesus took up His cross—to be crucified.

The apostle Paul is the perfect exponent of this subject: "[I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live](#)"; "[God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world](#)"; "[They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts](#)". Both for Paul and for us this is the way of Christ. It gives the fullest meaning to our baptism, for though we are right in referring to baptism as a burial in water, it is not a burial alive, but that of a crucified person: "[Buried with him in baptism—our old man hath been crucified with him](#)." The would-be disciple, as it were, places himself on trial, and decides that the old man with its affections and lusts should die; he carries out the sentence by arraying himself by the side of Jesus Christ on the cross, saying, "[I indeed justly, for I receive the due reward of my deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss](#)". And then he buries the dead old man, and commences a new life with Christ.

As in all our pilgrimage, promise outstrips reality, and sin ever and again overtakes us. The proper attitude to this is to remember our promise of self-crucifixion, and in repentance to turn to the Lord again for cleansing and forgiveness. And this, no doubt, is why the Lord, in addition to asking us to take up our cross once and for all at the time of our baptism, also bids us to take it up daily.

Matthew 10:33; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; the word used for 'deny' here is actually stronger than is used for the Lord's denial of unfaithful disciples, except in the record of the latter in Luke 12:9. The other references to denying the Lord are in Matthew 26:35,75; Mark 14:30,31,72; Luke 22:34,61, also using the stronger term; and in Matthew 26:70,72; Mark 14:68,70; Luke 22:57, John 18.25,27; 2 Timothy 2:12-13. Being crucified with Christ is referred to in: Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27; Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24. In two of these cases—Galatians 2:20 and Romans 6:6—the word is "co-crucified", the verb used in Matthew and Mark to denote the two malefactors' crucifixion side-by-side with the Lord.

CRUCIFYING THE SON OF GOD AFRESH

IT is easy to think of the cross as ending the Lord's sufferings, but it is false. When we remember that the Lord, and the angels of God, rejoice over sinners that repent and disciples who are faithful, it follows that we must concede their unhappiness when repentance is refused and faithfulness forsaken. The Ephesians were exhorted not to "[grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sanctified](#)", and since this clearly means, "[Grieve not the God who operates among you by His Holy Spirit](#)" this, too, admits sorrow for the Father when His purposes are rejected, a situation which existed because of Israel's wickedness in the days of Isaiah, too, from whom the words are quoted. In the Letter to the Hebrews are two terrible passages which paint ugly pictures of the apostate disciple "[crucifying to himself the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame](#)", and "[treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, doing despite unto the Spirit of grace](#)". It is impossible to suppose that the disciple can join the ranks of those who mocked the Lord Jesus on His cross, without the Lord Himself suffering again the shame heaped upon Him then, and it is only necessary to think literally for a moment about the picture of the crucified Son of God being trampled under foot by the relapsed believer to perceive the pain the Lord Himself must suffer when such rejection occurs.

IN REMBERANCE OF ME

BUT the Lord's pains will be healed in us if we "[bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus](#)". He will suffer for us no more if we bear our cross daily and continue to follow Him. His sadness over those who deny Him will be turned into joy on account of those who remember Him if we, in the physical memorial of bread and wine, and the practical remembrance of lives lived in daily gratitude, "[show forth the Lord's death until he come.](#)"

Then His person will be completed in the bringing of many sons unto glory. Then those who even now are undergoing the transformation described as "[beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord](#)", will see the process completed. Then He will "[see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.](#)" Then the Person will be complete when the whole body, now no more to be broken by schism or apostasy, stands up as the Lord's Bride, and the marriage of the Lamb makes the disciples perfectly One in Him, as He is even now in the Father.

Luke 15:10; John 15:11; Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 63:10; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31; Matthew 27:39-44; Galatians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 11:26-34; Hebrews 2:10; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Isaiah 53:10-12; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9-27; John 17:19-23.