

## THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

(The discourse below by Bro. Wm. W. Johnston, given at Manchester, England convention, held Dec. 30, 31, 1906 and Jan. 1 and 2, 1907.)

The passage of Scripture, dear friends, which furnishes the basis of our instruction and confidence, you will find in 1 Pet. 2:7, the first clause of the verse. It reads thus:—"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." I am aware that the rendering of this passage in the Authorized Version is open to question; but whether the translation be literally accurate or not, we are none the less indebted to the translators for providing us with a theme, which will furnish food for an ample, and we trust, a profitable reflection this afternoon. The preciousness of Christ is a subject of perennial freshness. It is an inexhaustible mine of information to which we turn again and again with renewed zest, and find in it each time some new beauty to reward our ardent labours. And yet it is a subject that does not unfold its treasures to all and sundry. It requires that we should be in heart harmony with Jesus Christ in order to appreciate him. It is unto you therefore which believe, and only to such that Christ is precious.

There is no more striking figure in the history of our race than that of Jesus of Nazareth. Born, humanly speaking, of humble parentage, and raised amid lowly surroundings, it was his high privilege, nevertheless, by reason of his moral excellence and superior wisdom, to raise the level of religious thought to a plane which it had not heretofore occupied, and from which it was equally impossible for it to recede. To know Jesus Christ is at once to recognize his preeminence over every other religious teacher the world has ever produced. And to sit at his feet and to learn of him, is to become eternally dissatisfied with every other system of theology that the world has known. The question which he put to the Jews nearly 1900 years ago: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46) still remains unanswered. It stands as an eternal challenge before which the moralists of all ages are reduced to silence.

But while all would readily subscribe to such a negative estimate of the character of Jesus, there are nevertheless varying degrees of positive appreciation of his unique personality, based upon different conceptions of his life and work. For instance, there are those who hold what we might term the "Unitarian" conception of Christ. Their attention is concentrated entirely upon his life. They see him as a man among men. They see in him one who embodied in his person all the virtues and graces that pertain to the perfect type of character. Unto them, he is honourable. He is a glorious ideal, a splendid pattern, which we would all do well to copy; but his death has no charm for them. They look upon his death only as a regrettable termination to a useful career; and the manner in which it was brought about, is to them the best possible evidence of their contention that Jesus was a man who lived ahead of his time, and that he suffered the death of a martyr in a righteous cause. This is the "Unitarian" conception of Christ. There are others again

who hold what we might term the “Trinitarian” conception of Christ. Their appreciation of Jesus Christ is based upon their inability to comprehend him. They hold that Jesus actually was the incarnation of Jehovah; that in the person of Jesus Christ, God the Creator, and man the creature, became so inextricably intermingled, that throughout all succeeding ages they must for ever remain inseparable. This inconceivable admixture of natures is to them the very hall-mark of religion. For them, religion begins at the unknowable. The words of our Lord to the Samaritans apply fitly to this class—“Ye worship ye know not what” (John 4:22). Unto them, Jesus is awe inspiring. He is reverential. He is majestic! but they cannot truthfully say in the words of our text —“Unto us he is precious.”

There is another class, however, whose conception of Christ is as high above the others as the heavens are above the earth. We might term them the “Nonitarians;” and if you ask me to define that term, I should say it is a compound word which I coined myself. It is composed of a Latin prefix “non” signifying “not,” and an English word, “tare”—“spurious wheat.” They are those who have not anything of the “tare” element about them at all. I trust, dear friends, I am addressing a company of “Nonitarians.” But what is **their** conception of Christ? Theirs is an intelligent appreciation of Jesus Christ as he is set forth in the pages of God’s Word. They see him, not as Jehovah, but as the Son of God, whose devotion to the Divine will was such a delight to the heart of the Father, that he could say of him—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear ye him**” (Matthew 17:5). To them, Jesus is “the chiefest among ten thousand; the altogether lovely one.” These are the believers mentioned in our text; and it is “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”

Wherein consists this superior appreciation of Jesus Christ which is the exclusive privilege of believers? What is the basis of such a preciousness? As we seek to answer this question there are so many arguments, so many reasons that chase each other across our minds, each one clamoring for recognition, that the difficulty is to make such a selection as would best lay the subject before you in a comprehensive and coherent manner. We propose, however, to select seven reasons why Christ is specially precious to the believer; and to allow the perfect number to stand as an indication of the others which time will not permit us to go into.

Naturally the first reason that suggests itself to our minds is that, Christ is precious to us because he is **our REDEEMER**. Any appreciation of the life and work of Jesus Christ which does not include his work of “atonement” is lacking in the one element which is essential to a due estimate of its importance. It may be a paradox, dear friends, but it is true none the less, that the most important event in the life of Jesus Christ—and we need to emphasize this, in these days when men are denying the Lord that bought them—the most important event in the life of Jesus Christ was his death; for in that death, God was dealing with the question of man’s sin. Sin had raised an impenetrable barrier between

God and man. It barred the way of man's approach unto God. It interposed a most effectual veto upon the benevolent intentions of the Creator towards his creature. As long as man remained a transgressor, there was but one thing that God could mete out to him, and that was, death—"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23); and while man remains a transgressor, while sin remains in evidence, death must of necessity reign supreme. This seems to have been the thought in the mind of the Apostle Paul when he penned 1 Cor. 15:56—"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Now what is it, dear friends, that stings particularly about death? It is the knowledge that it is the total cessation of being, that there is—"no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10); that in the day a man "returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:4). That is what stings about death. There are many good Christians who spend the greater part of their lifetime dodging that sting, but sooner or later it gets at them in a vital part, and their last argument is silenced. But what adds venom to the sting, is the knowledge that this death, this cessation of being, is the result of sin, and that while sin remains, death must also remain; that if sin remains during all eternity then for all eternity the sinner must remain in the grave. But someone says—"How is the law the strength of sin?" We answer, that the law is the strength of sin because the standard of its requirements was so high, that for 4,000 years it was found utterly impossible for any man to reach up to that standard. There was none who could deliver his own soul from the grave. There was none who could redeem his brother nor give a ransom for him (Psalm 49:7.); but as our brother said yesterday afternoon, "man's extremity became God's opportunity," and what man could not accomplish for himself, God wrought out for him, in the person of Jesus Christ our Saviour; and so we can join with the Apostle Paul in the language of exultation—"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

How has Christ obtained the victory for us? How did he give us the victory over death? Did he instruct us that we had been labouring under a delusion for a long time? Did he gather his disciples together and say to them something like this:—"Don't you know that the world of mankind has been mistaken in this matter regarding death? It is most absurd to talk about dying. Don't you know you are immortal and cannot possibly die?" No, he did not say anything like that. He knew better. It was not in any of his teachings, it was not in any act of his life, that the Lord Jesus secured for us the victory over death and the grave; but it was in his death that he triumphed over sin and over Satan. Sin and death are related to each other as cause and effect; and our Lord Jesus abolished the effect by removing the cause, as we read in Heb. 9:27—"Once in the end of the age hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and in thus putting away sin, he at one and the same time abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). Well may we join in the Apostle's exultant language and exclaim with him—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Christ is precious

to us, dear friends, because we owe to him our very existence. Had he not hung upon Calvary's tree, we must have remained forever in the grave. But just as truly as he has risen from the grave, just so truly must the world of mankind be delivered from the bondage of death. The law which formerly frowned upon the sinner has become the very ground-work of his deliverance. Now that Christ has put away the transgression, the law demands that those for whom the sacrifice was made should be delivered from the bonds of death, and should have an opportunity to hear in order to believe, that they may have that life which is held out to them through Christ. The Lord himself said—"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul [life]?" (Matt. 16:26). Life is the most precious of all things to us; and if Christ has given us life, if he has redeemed us from the power of the grave, he is indeed the very greatest of benefactors. Surely this in itself would cause us readily to subscribe to the language of our text—"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."

The second reason which we would offer for the preciousness of Christ is, because he is **our LORD**. There is a theory of judgment, dear friends, which is well known to students of Oriental religion. It is a theory of payment by merit. It is termed the "doctrine of the transmigration of souls." It teaches that man at death is recompensed by reappearing on the stage of life on a higher or lower plane of being, according as he has used or abused his previous opportunities. That is to say, that the low caste man who has made the best use of his previous opportunities, would in all probability reappear as a high caste man: or if he had been very good he might become a spirit being. If, on the contrary, he had abused his opportunities, misused his privileges, he would reappear in the form of a horse or a dog; or if he had been particularly vile he might become an insect of some kind. This principle or reward according to merit, is the sum of human effort in feeling after God; but when God deigns to reveal himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ, the question of human merit vanishes into the background, and God opens the storehouse of his grace, and pours out upon us favor upon favor.

We have seen how God has provided for us the initial grace of redemption, and we feel if it were for nothing else but this, we should be compelled to offer him our everlasting gratitude. And this grace we receive, not because of any merit in ourselves for—"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). When the Gibeonites found that the bitterness of death was passed, and that Joshua with the princes of the congregation of Israel did not intend to mete out to them that death which they merited, because of their deception, they were exceedingly grateful to him, and they accepted gladly the menial position assigned to them as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation of Israel. This might well be our position. Were it only for the fact that Jesus Christ had given us life, we would feel it incumbent upon ourselves to be his slaves, and to serve him, the holy angels, and all the holy ones throughout eternity. We would feel it to be our duty to be servants of Jesus Christ, and to receive gladly whatever post he might allot to us in the scheme of salvation; but our Lord

Jesus says—"I call. you not servants; Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14, 15). And when we hear the voice of our Lord Jesus speaking to us in this way, there is but one answer we can return, and that is the answer of the Apostle Paul—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Yes, dear friends, this is the position that we are invited to take up.

Our Lord's invitation comes to us on a two-fold basis: (a) The basis of what he has done for us; and (b) the basis of what he is still going to do for us. (a) The former is embodied in that familiar passage in Rom 12:1—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,"—by that initial grace of redemption, by all that that grace has already wrought through Christ on your behalf,—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your **reasonable service**." The Apostle tells us that this is our reasonable service.

Some years ago, dear friends, I was what I might term an inveterate novel reader. I suppose that some of you, like myself, have cause to regret the time you have spent in such intellectual dissipation. I remember, however, that there was a marked similarity about the stories which I read. As a rule, the hero rescued the heroine from a watery grave, or by stopping a runaway team when it was about to dash over a precipice. This formed an introduction; and in due time they were married and lived happy ever after. You could usually tell what was going to happen. Whenever we met the runaway team, we knew that the wedding bells would ring in the last chapter; and if it did not, we were somewhat disappointed, and began to think there was a conspiracy on the part of the author and publisher to cheat us out of our money. Why? Because we recognized it as a right principle, as the right thing to expect, that the saved life belongs to the saviour. We looked for such reasoning even in our romances. Dear friends, I want to tell you that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf is the greatest romance that ever was written in the history of literature; and its value is the greater because it is absolutely true in every detail. We belong to the Lord Jesus by right of purchase. We belong to him by right of salvation; and if we seek to retain our lives and apply them to purposes of our own, we violate the principles of equity and justice. We belong to God. We are not our own. We are bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). God might well have demanded our obedience. He might have said—"You cannot now recall the purchase. I have paid the price in the sacrifice of my Son, and you must obey me, and you must present your bodies a living sacrifice." But he does not. No. He comes and beseeches our acquiescence in his plan of salvation. He says through the Apostle—"I **beseech** you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."

(b)—Again, in the 14th chapter of John, verse 23, we have the other basis of appeal, namely, as to what God is willing to do for us through Jesus Christ. Our Lord himself there says—"If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and

we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” How our hearts have filled with desire as we have read the story of that home in Bethany; and we have pictured to ourselves the two sisters and Lazarus sitting together with the Master. We have thought within ourselves—Oh! how I would have liked to have been there! What a privilege to have sat with Mary at Jesus’ feet and to have listened to the gracious words that fell from his lips, or with Martha to have spread the table for the Lord of glory! What a joy to have listened while the brother whom Jesus loved discoursed with his Lord weighty problems arising out of the Law, etc.! But I want to tell you my dear friends, that you can entertain royal guests every day, that you can have the Father and Son with you every day. “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and **make our abode with him.**” Surely gladness will have come to stay in our hearts if the Father and the Son are dwelling therein! “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we,—even we,—should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

How is it that we find ourselves transferred to this place of favour in the bosom of the Father, the place which was occupied formerly by the Son of God himself? Is it because of anything in us? Is it because of any merit that we possess? Why, no, dear friends. The Apostle tells us in Rom. 5:1—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have seen that already, in considering the first point, the preciousness of our Lord as the Redeemer. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, “by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (verse 3). But God’s grace does not end even there, for being in this grace wherein we now stand, we “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” **It is in the merit of Jesus Christ**, dear friends, **that we are rescued from death**; that we have been taken from the fearful pit, and from the miry clay; and it is by the same merit that we have entered into all the privileges of the sons of God.

The third reason which I would offer for the preciousness of Christ to believers is, because he **our IDEAL**. A proper appreciation of Jesus Christ is the outcome of the experience of a lifetime, and because of this fact, such appreciation must of necessity be a progressive development. I have no hesitation in saying, therefore, that the appreciation of Christ as our ideal is an advanced stage of Christian experience. When first our attention was attracted to Christ, we saw him with outstretched arms on the cross of Calvary, nailed to that cruel tree by our sins; and as we looked there upon him, our hearts were filled with such abounding gratitude, that we readily complied with his invitation to present ourselves in sacrifice, and to acknowledge him as our Lord and Master.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,  
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands myself, my life, my all.

Having thus become part of the flock of the good Shepherd, he leads us into green pastures and beside still waters; and under his guidance and instructions, seeds of godliness—the last vestige of that Divine image which was originally upon man, and which had long lain dormant under the debris of worldliness and selfishness—these seeds are quickened into life by the power of Christ, and they sprout and send forth tender shoots of holy aspiration and righteous desire. We begin to love righteousness and hate iniquity, under the tuition of our Lord and Master. And as we are thus quickened by the spirit of holiness, we begin to see Jesus in a new light. We see him encircled with a halo of righteousness, invested with a new beauty, the beauty of holiness. We see him, not only as the channel of Divine benevolence, but as the embodiment of all those sterling virtues which are elemental factors in the composition of the Divine holiness. Our appreciation of Christ has deepened and widened. We see him, not only as the one who gave us life, not only as the one who has rescued us from the grave, but we see him as the embodiment of these new-born desires and holy aspirations which have been begotten in us by the Holy Spirit of God; and as we look upon him in this new light—Philippians 2:5 becomes the motto of our lives—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

I pause here, dear friends, to put a personal question to you. Has that been your experience? Have you reached this stage of Christian development? Is Christ your ideal? Does he embody all the desires of your heart? Have you set Christ on the pinnacle of your aspirations? If you cannot answer that question in the affirmative, then I want to tell you that you have some way to go yet. It is a grand thing to know that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. It is a grander thing to know that we are no longer reckoned as human beings, but that God is looking at us through the merit of Christ as one of his Spiritual Sons. But I want to tell you, dear friends, that these favours are but the platform along which we must proceed to affinity with Christ; and if we do not realize that, then we are receiving the grace of God in vain. This is God's desire for all of us. Let me illustrate this in a homely way: Within a month or two, the brothers will be thinking of Spring suits; and when they go to the tailor or hatter, they will find that, Fashion, that unbending autocrat, has decreed that they must wear a certain cut of coat or a certain style of hat; and if they do not comply with its demands, they will be regarded as behind the times. If they are sufficiently interested in the matter to enquire why it should be so, they would probably find that for some reason, good, bad, or indifferent, King Edward or some other on high in authority has worn this particular style of hat, or this particular style of coat, and therefore, all his dutiful and loyal subjects must follow

suit—literally and metaphorically. Dear friends, the King of heaven set the fashion of character in the person of Jesus Christ; and that fashion must ultimately prevail throughout all his dominion. He has set before us a great ideal in the person of Christ; and you and I must conform to his decree. It is our privilege now to put on Christ, to become conformed to God's fashion, to become conformed to the image of his dear Son; and as we thus walk in daily communion with our Lord Jesus Christ, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed indeed into his image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Christ is precious to us, exceedingly precious to us, because he is our ideal. We desire to be and we hope to be all that he now is.

The fourth reason which we would offer for the preciousness of Christ to believers is, because he is **our BURDEN-BEARER**. As we thus seek to walk in daily communion with our Lord, there is a heavenly joy and peace that fill our hearts to overflowing; and yet we are conscious that the path along which we tread is a strait and narrow path, that there are many obstacles to be overcome ere we reach the heights of glory where God dwells. There are various burdens that press upon us, more or less heavily, and these may be summed up under three heads:—(1) The burden of human weakness and imperfection. (2) The burden of divinely imposed chastisements and disciplinary afflictions. (3) The burden of persecution and reproach of men. With regard to the first, **the burden of human imperfection**:—When we see the standard which God has set up in Christ Jesus, we are almost filled with dismay, we become discouraged. It would seem as if we never could reach up to the high measure which he has set before us. We are inclined to say in the words of the prophet Job (42:5, 6)—“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself.” It is only as we get a proper view of Jesus Christ that we are able to measure ourselves; and as we do measure ourselves by Jesus Christ, we see how far short we come of God's requirements. It would seem as if there was a great gulf fixed between us and our ideal. How is it possible for this wreck of sin to be transformed into the image of God? How is it possible to get up yonder where Christ stands? And just at this point in our experience, we hear behind us the voice of the prophet Isaiah speaking, and it is these familiar words that fall upon our ears:—“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5, 6). Oh! thank God, dear friends, for the provision he has made for our overcoming in Christ Jesus! Yes, Lord, we do believe. Yes, Lord, we have faith to believe, that our weaknesses are atoned for by the merit of Christ's sacrifice. But how are we going to get up yonder where Christ is? Again we hear another voice speaking to us; and this time close by, it is the familiar tones of the Master himself: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:29, 30). Yes, that is it. Most gladly will we lay the burden of our responsibility upon our Lord and Head. We will come, in the language of the Psalmist,

with large petitions—“Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law. Make me to go in the paths of thy commandments. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity” (Psalm 119:34-37). When we recognize what Christ has gone through for us, we will lay the burden of human imperfection and weakness upon him. We will make full surrender of ourselves to him, and ask him to work in us according to the mind and will of God. Christ is precious, then, because he has borne for us, and is bearing for us, the burden of our imperfections.

The second burden to which we wish to refer, is **the burden of Divinely imposed afflictions and chastisements**. We are glad to know that our Heavenly Father is not overindulgent: that he will afflict us with the rod, when he thinks it is necessary. I feel quite sure that if I were to go round this room and ask each of you if you had reason to rejoice because of the afflictions of God, you would immediately answer, Yes. I am sure we can look back upon our experiences and bless God for the time when he used the rod as a mark of his disapproval of our course, and called us back to the right path, when we had erred. We are glad to know that we have not an over-indulgent Father. He gives us these chastisements, because—“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?” (Heb. 12:6, 7).

There are also the afflictions which come to us in our Christian experience, not necessarily as the result of sin. These are simply the means which God in his wisdom uses to develop in us certain graces, to bring out in us that which he knows is lying dormant there. We know that this was the experience of our Lord. For instance: when he was tempted in the wilderness, we see there, Divinely permitted affliction; again, in that experience in Gethsemane, and in that last sad hour when all the disciples forsook him and fled.

If the Son of God was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10), shall you or I complain at the afflictions that come to us in seeking to be his footstep followers? Why, we read that he trod the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with him (Isa. 63:3); but not so you and I. We do not tread the winepress alone, for the Lord himself said—“Lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). We have an Apostle and High Priest of our profession, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because he himself has passed through them (Heb. 3:1; 4:14, 15). In every time of trouble, and in every time of trial, whether it be because of sin or whether it be those disciplinary afflictions which God imposes upon us for our edification, we can turn to our Lord and Saviour and find in him that sympathy, that grace, which will enable us to triumph, and to rejoice in our tribulation. Christ is precious to us, dear friends, because he is our burden-bearer in these afflictions.

The other burdens which press upon us in our Christian way, are **the burdens of persecution and reproach of men**. It is still true, dear friends, that—“all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). The Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world are as opposite as the poles. They are naturally antagonistic; and they can no more be assimilated than fire and water. As we have the spirit of Christ, and as we seek to live godly, we shall have persecution in the world, but here too our Lord comes to our aid. You remember his own words, when he assured us that we would have such a hard time. He said—“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:s 33). Thank God; if we are in Christ we can overcome the world. If the love of Christ is filling our hearts, if the preciousness of Christ is appealing to our souls, we will consider these things—worldly reproaches and persecutions—as nothing compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us—“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). We shall count it a privilege to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death, as the Apostle again says in Phil. 3:8, 11)—“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things ... That I might know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Christ is precious then, to us, dear friends, exceedingly precious to us, because he is our burden bearer in these three senses.

The fifth reason which we would offer for the preciousness of Christ is, because he is **our ADVOCATE**. In seeking to bring about the restoration of the moral equilibrium of the universe disturbed by the Fall, there is an important factor which requires complete and continual satisfaction, the factor of Divine justice. Justice is the foundation of God’s throne; it is the basis of his sovereign right to rule over creation, as we read in Psalm 89:14—“Justice and judgment are the habitation [margin—establishment—foundation] of thy throne.” We are glad that this is so, because this very fact is to us the best assurance of the eternal happiness of every creature of God’s dominion. It was the necessity for satisfying Divine justice which required that Christ should be “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). It was because God could look away to Calvary and see with the fullest confidence, with the fullest assurance, Christ hanging there on behalf of the human race, that he was able at all to have any dealings with sinful men, and accept from their hands such transitory reminders of the great and perfect sacrifice, as the blood of bulls and goats. It is for this reason also, dear friends, because we have again come into touch with Divine justice, that you I require an advocate. We do require an advocate in the presence of the justice of God, to plead our cause. When the work of the Millennial Age is completed, when the Kingdom of God has prevailed on the earth for one thousand years, and mankind has been restored to that perfection of being and character which was God’s original intention—“Then cometh the end, when he [Jesus] shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have

put down all rule and authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:24-26). At that time man shall stand upon his own merit before God, because he will have been so changed, he will have been so educated and uplifted, that he will not require the services of an Advocate at the bar of Divine justice. In harmony with this we read in Rev. 20:7, 8 —“And when the thousand years are expired [when all men are brought to perfection as the result of Christ’s reign], Satan shall be loosed out of his prison [where he had been bound for these thousand years—see verses 2 and 3], and shall go out to deceive the nations”—and test them to see whether they will remain righteous. But those whom God is now choosing out during this Gospel Age, have this post-millennial perfection already imputed to them. (Comment: the Brother in line 9 above used the word “Advocate” in error—Mediator is the correct word, as was understood more correctly in later years. T.A.S.)

By faith God looks upon you and me as if we had already attained to this perfect condition; and his purpose in thus imputing to us such perfection of being is, that we may lay down our perfect lives in sacrifice, as co-sacrificers with Jesus Christ. But we know that we have not yet apprehended that for which we are apprehended of God in Christ Jesus. Paul says—“Not as though I had already attained [perfection], either were already perfect: but I follow after [perfection], if that I may apprehend [lay hold on] that [perfection] for which also I am apprehended [laid hold upon and reckoned perfect] of Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12). We know that this perfection is only imputed. It is not actual, and if we had not an advocate in the presence of the Father—swift vengeance must follow on the first transgression. But if we sin, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Then let Satan deride and scorn us! Let him exaggerate our weaknesses, and magnify our imperfections, and bring all the charges he possibly can against us, **Christ is our advocate!** The blood of Jesus is our defence: —“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33, 34). Therefore, we are assured—“he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). My dear friends, how far down are you in the scale of Christian experience? How far are you from the perfect pattern which God has set up? How much of this salvation do you expect to get? I want to tell you, dear friends, he will mete out to you if you have faith, just as much as will bring you up to that perfect standard. The Apostle assures us—that Christ can save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him [Jesus], and that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Surely, this is another valid reason why Christ is precious to those who believe.

The sixth reason which I would offer for the preciousness of Christ to the believer is, because he is **our JUDGE**. When I voice this reason, there will perhaps, be some who

will say “Not so. God is our judge, not Christ.” I know that this is a point of dispute amongst some of the Brethren. We are both right. The Scriptures distinctly teach that both God and Christ are judging, not only the Church, but will ultimately judge the whole world of mankind. In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, the 23rd verse, we find there, God described as the judge of all; while it is just as emphatically declared and as clearly stated in the 5th chapter of John, 22nd verse,—“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Again, in Acts 15:14, Simeon declares “how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name”—a people to bear the name of Christ; and if we turn to Eph. 5:25-27, we shall see just as clearly that the work of selection and sanctification is the work of Christ. These verses read, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” How are we to reconcile these contradictory statements? We answer, that the reconciliation is effected by a proper appreciation of the relationship existing between God and Christ; and that relationship is elaborated in 1 Cor. 8:6—“to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” That is to say, that in all God’s works, both in creation and redemption, God is the author, and Jesus Christ has been and ever will be, the agent by which the Divine purposes are accomplished. It is only as we keep this in mind, this relationship existing between the Father and the Son, that we can understand the language of Scripture; for we find the same titles applied in the Scriptures to both.

Not only is this true of the judgment as we have seen in the passages quoted, but there are other works which are spoken of in the same way. For instance, in Gen. 1:1, God is said to be the creator of all; while it is just as clearly stated in Col. 1:15, 16 that Christ created all things—“Who [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, powers: all things were created by him and for him.” In 1 Tim. 1:1, God is said to be our Saviour—“Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour,” while in 2 Tim. 1:9, 10 the same Apostle assures us that Christ is our Saviour—“Who [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which he hath given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” These contradictions vanish into thin air when we remember that God is the Author, and Christ the agent, in all the Divine work. I will give you an illustration. In business, supposing there is a pair of boots to be made. The employer designs the shape of the last; he provides the machinery, and the leather, and takes the responsibility for the finished article. He is very properly described as a “bootmaker;” and yet the probability is that he

did not make the boots. On the contrary, he would turn the work over to a workman of his, and the workman would put into operation the power which the employer had supplied. He would take the employer's material, he would form the leather into the shape of the last which the employer had designed; and when the work was completed and the boots laid on the bench, the man would very properly be described as a "bootmaker." Now, we see the term "bootmaker" might apply just as properly to the employer as to the workman; and so it is, that the term, Judge, Creator, Saviour, which are applied both to the Father and to Christ, are properly applied. We have only to take this reasonable view of the matter in order to dispel the seeming contradictions that exist.

It is the failure to observe this distinction that has caused men to have such peculiar ideas of Jesus Christ. They have looked upon him as a dual entity, as God-man. It is the failure to observe this distinction which has caused them to place Christ in the position of a usurper of Divine authority and prerogative, and also to view him in the impossible position of being his own father; but when we see that Christ is the agent, and God the author, of all things, then we have a harmonious interpretation of the whole. As our Lord Jesus said—"I and my Father are one,"—not in substance—that is unreasonable, just as unreasonable as it is unscriptural—but one in purpose, one in design, one in character, in desire. The judgment of the Church is no exception to the general rule. God has committed all judgment unto the Son, and judges all through him. "It has pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:19, 18). Therefore, as the Apostle reminds us—"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). If we turn to the second and third chapters of Revelation, we shall see there a prophetic picture of the Church throughout the period of the whole Gospel Age in seven different stages, the seven letters to the Churches. There we find Christ at work, judging the Church; and we find him using the first personal pronoun throughout. He says—"I know thy works, I have somewhat against thee. I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." He says—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

We are glad to know, dear friends, that the work of our judgment is in the hands of Christ. We are glad to know that Christ is our judge. We see in it another reason for his preciousness to those who believe. Why? Because we have learned to associate Jesus Christ, not so much with the sterner elements of the character of God, but with the fulness of mercy, with love and grace, that fulness of God which was revealed only through him. We know the necessity of God's justice. We know that if the holiness of the universe is to be attained and maintained, that it must be established on the basis of Divine justice; but we do not want to deal with God along that line. Christ has met all its requirements for us. We would rather deal with God's mercy. We know the necessity of Mount Sinai;

but we do not want to meet the Lord there. We would rather meet him in the Holy of Holies in the person of our Advocate, our High Priest, before the blood-sprinkled mercy seat where God is waiting to be gracious. And thank God we can thus meet him in Christ Jesus. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). But if we come to God through Christ, we shall find justice tempered with mercy, and we shall have our weakness taken into consideration. We are glad to know that Christ is our judge, because he himself has passed through our experiences. He has passed through our environment; and he knows all the difficulties by the way. He has an experimental knowledge of these trials and difficulties; and we are glad to know that our judgment is in his hands. Unto you therefore which believe; Christ is precious because he is our judge.

And lastly, dear friends, Christ is precious to us because he is **our BRIDEGROOM**. Have you ever had a wedding in your home? I suppose most of you have, and you remember that for six months you lived in an atmosphere of subdued excitement. It began with the announcement of the engagement. Of course, everybody knew that it was going to come off, and they were not surprised; but immediately the engagement was announced, the young couple became at once the object of interest to all their relations and friends. The sewing machine began to rattle merrily in the house, and wonderful garments began to appear upon the scene; and by and by, after the great preparations were over, the day of the happy event came along, and the bride and bridegroom went off to their new home amid the acclamations of all the immediate friends of the family. After it was all over, there was still an outer circle of distant friends who did not know anything about it, till they saw the advertisement in the newspapers. When they did learn, however, they were none the less glad that the young couple had been made happy.

Dear friends, this is an illustration of a grand and glorious spiritual truth. We are engaged to a Heavenly Bridegroom. While it is true that the bride of Christ is a company, the dignity of that company rests upon every individual member of it. You and I have to regard ourselves as if we, and we alone, had the chance of being the bride of Christ. You and I have to live up to the honour which is being conferred upon us. When did our engagement begin? When we went down into the waters of baptism, we proclaimed to men and to angels that we had become engaged to the Lord Jesus Christ. Henceforth, we were set apart for him; from that very moment the work of preparation began. The bridegroom provided us with a beautiful bridal garment. It was a robe of linen of the finest texture, pure and white as the driven snow. It is known as "The Robe of Christ's Righteousness." And more than that, there was a pattern on the garment, which he had stamped with his own hand. It was a beautiful pattern. Would you like to hear it detailed, dear friends? Let me tell you. It had for a center-piece a white rose—the emblem of the pure unsullied love of God. It was crossed on the right with a red carnation—the emblem of sacrifice; and on the left, with a violet—the emblem of patience; and overshadowing all these, was a large white lily—the emblem of purity of thought and intent. These encompassed by two sprigs of laurel—emblematic of victory—were set in a chain of ivy

leaves—the emblem of faith—which encircled the garment. It is a beautiful pattern is it not, dear friends? And the beauty of it lies in the knowledge that it represents to us, in symbol, the character of the bridegroom himself; and as a test of our affection he desires us to embroider this pattern upon the garment which he himself has provided. He desires us, by his grace, to develop within ourselves these graces which are inherent in him, so that we may indeed be a help meet for Christ, so that we may be found worthy of the honour being conferred upon us.

What were the thoughts that filled the mind of the bride in our illustration as she diligently applied needle and thread in her work of preparation? Was she thinking of the joys of her girlhood, and of the old home she would have to leave behind? Was she thinking of the pain of parting with friends and acquaintances dear to her? Not at all. At that time she did not give those she left behind a thought. Her heart and mind were filled with the joy that would be hers when she became Mrs. Somebody-else. Her mind was occupied with visions of the time when she should stand by the side of her loved one, and hear the word pronounced which should make them forever one; with the future joy which should be hers when as his bride she should share his happiness and reign as queen in his home. And, dear friends, as you and I engage in our work of preparation for our Heavenly Bridegroom, what are the thoughts that fill our hearts? Are we allowing our thoughts to dwell upon the present transitory things of life which must be left behind? Are we mourning worldly joys, worldly aspirations or ambitions formerly surrendered, or are our thoughts away where Christ is? Are we looking forward to that time when, as members of his bride we shall share with him in his joy, in his glory? When we shall share his nature we shall be like him, as we read in 1 John 3:2—“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Oh, how rich the promise! May God send it home to each of our hearts! May it be the moving power in our live, to bring out in us the graces of Christ!

The days of waiting are about at an end; soon the last member of the body of Christ will be glorified, and then the marriage of the Lamb will take place. I always think I can detect a note of exultation in the words of the angel to John the Revelator—“Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9); as if he were so anxious to display the beauties and glories that pertain to the bride of Christ, the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. The holy ones will rejoice at the marriage of the Lamb, as we read—“Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Heb. 12:22). We know also that there will be an outer circle of friends and acquaintances of the bride, who won’t know anything about the matter until it is all over; but although they will not discover till then that the marriage has taken place, nevertheless, they will “be glad and rejoice because the marriage of the Lamb came; and the bride had made herself ready.” I refer to the whole world of mankind, who are going to be blessed through the marriage of the Lamb. They will know

that the bride hath made herself ready. They will know that the Church of Christ has been glorified; and they will rejoice because of the blessings which will come to them through that wedding—“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of man waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb came and his wife had made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:6-8, Diaglott).

And now, just a final word and I am done. Someone may say—“Don’t you make too much of Christ. Is it not the case rather, that Christ came to reveal God to us; and should we not allow our thoughts to dwell upon God?” Dear friends, you cannot think too much of the preciousness of Christ. I want to tell you that the only way you can realize the Father, is to dwell on the preciousness of Christ, because in Jesus Christ, the Father was brought down to the level of our comprehension. Apart from him, we should never have known the Father. He himself says—“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). As we look upon Jesus, as we see all the beauties of that character which he displayed, we see in him the reflection of the Father, God made manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). May he then be the centre of our affections! May he be the inspiration of every thought, word, and action! May he be the guiding star of our lives, and the hope of our future blessedness; and as we thus dwell upon the preciousness of Christ, we shall not only know the Son, but the Father also. We shall rejoice and be glad in the riches of his grace, in the abundance of his love which not only gave Christ to die for us, but revealed him as the door by which we may enter into hallowed relationship, into the closest possible relationship with the Father himself. May God help us to appreciate to the fullest, the preciousness of Christ. *Amen.*

My Saviour is precious to me,  
Unspeakably precious is He;  
I have yielded my all in response to His call,  
Forsaking the world His to be,  
In the banquet of love He has guided my feet,  
In His presence to feast on the finest of wheat.

Secure in His tender embrace,  
I rest at the fountain of grace;  
'Neath its life-giving flow I am kept here below,  
In the sight of His glorious face.  
O, so peerless the beauty in Jesus I see,  
That I cry out in wonder “How could He love me!”