

every whit whole in the sight of God ; and, in that blessed consciousness, every day perfect your holiness as in His holy presence, until the end come and your holiness shall be no longer in the course of perfecting but perfected for ever." But that will be in the eternal temple.

We must not forget, in conclusion, that these last words "in the fear of God" were intended by the apostle to encourage many who, like most of us, were conscious of being far from a perfected holiness. In the very act of setting up this very high standard, St. Paul sends out a strong exhortation to those who were still too much infected, as we are, by the spirit of the world. There is something very impressive in the style of his quotation from the ancient scripture, applying it to his present readers as a promise to them, as if they were yet to begin the pursuit of perfect holiness. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you ; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Surely that exhortation is adapted to an imperfect state ; and is full of encouragement to every one of us. Let us come out from the world this day and separate ourselves more fully than ever we have been separated from its defilements : let us enter the house of God where we shall find Him ready to receive us as a Father, and into the temple which is still the same house, where we shall find Him a sanctifying Spirit. And from this time let us fix our thought and hope on "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" : to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

THE PERFECT EXEMPLAR.

“And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins ; and in Him is no sin.”

HERE at the close of the New Testament the Spirit of revelation who is the Spirit of Jesus gives us the secret of Christian perfection: not so much in His description of perfected love, and of the new birth that cannot sin, as in the perfect Image of the sinless Saviour, who shows us what sinlessness is in that very nature of ours which He made His own, and says to us : “ Be as I am, for I am as ye are.” At the very end of the volume of the book, now unrolled to its last line, there rises before us the Form of One like a son of man who is the Son of God, with His two attributes of purity and righteousness. This is the last vision on which our eye is suffered to rest, more glorious and precious to us than the apocalyptic visions which had gone before. While we are beholding it and gazing up into the heaven where that image of human perfection now is, we hear the voice not of two angels but of the apostle John, one of ourselves, saying : “ in Him is no sin ! ” “ He was manifested to take away our sins ! ” And what his silent meaning is we soon hear : “ As He is so are we in this world.” It is the most ennobling, the most inspiriting thought that can enter

the mind of man : may the Holy Spirit give us eyes to see this great sight and ears to hear these wonderful words !

I.

“In Him is no sin ;” in the Son of God, that is, who was manifested in the flesh. Here we must pause at the very outset, and, forgetting for a moment all else, lay the unlimited emphasis on this “Him.” Of whom does the evangelist speak but of that “Word of life,” that “only begotten Son,” who was manifested not so much out of the depths of eternity as “out of the bosom of the Father ?” And concerning Him he may well say, using the indefinite, absolute, timeless, present tense, “In Him is no sin.” We have said, “manifested in the flesh ;” but in this passage there is no “in the flesh.” The apostle cannot forget that, of course ; but here it might almost seem as if he were simply falling down before the Image he had set up and paying the homage of his deepest reverence, awe, devotion, delight, desire, and love to the Son of God revealed. “He can never sin ! Neither God, nor the Son of God, can be tempted of evil ! On whatever errand He has come, for whatever purpose He has become incarnate and visible on earth, He can never cease to be the Eternal Son of God and ‘separate from sinners’ even before He was ‘separated’ again from them.” “In Him,” said this worshipper of the ascended Lord, “is no sin !” with a fervour of loyalty that wanted no other words : as if of all inconceivable impossibilities this were the most inconceivable. Indeed, the very thought is not by him

even in argument conceived. If we could only enter into the feeling of this lover and worshipper of Jesus, and possess our souls with that most blessed sentiment which filled his heart when he penned this little saying, the greatest in the New Testament on this subject, we should be saved from much that is the offence and the weakness of our poor theology!

Still, it remains true that the Son of God "came in flesh," and His only manifestation was under human conditions. Did He not so share our nature, and become so entirely one with us, that we must attribute to Him a perfect humanity, a humanity therefore which was tempted at all points as ours is, and saved from sinning through the victory that the Divinity gave it? To these questions there is but one answer: an answer which must be accepted at whatever cost, and whatever may be the consequences that follow. He who became incarnate for our salvation never ceased to be the Son of God; and therefore through all His mingled history, whether in the wilderness of temptation, or on the mountain of transfiguration, or in the Gethsemane of mortal agony, this superscription must be written over the record concerning Him, "In Him is no sin." He had no human fellow whom His Divinity must save. There were not two persons in the Saviour of men: the Son of God and the Son of man are always one and the same Son; the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. This truth is the very foundation of the Gospel; and it is so absolutely and necessarily true, that never once through the New Testament is there any attempt to prove it or any

indication that it might be supposed to need proof. "He came *IN* flesh," not *INTO* it; and, if any one should say that none can appear in flesh and be sinless, the answer is that His flesh was a new humanity, the "body prepared for Him," of the Holy Ghost. He showed among men that man's nature might be sinless, and made it the vehicle of all Divine perfections in human form and in the human sphere. By taking our nature He "condemned sin in the flesh:" the sin which had defiled every mortal since the fall was "cast out" from this new man, this last Adam, whose human nature was as pure as when it first came from the Creator; and, more than that, it was condemned by the Son of God to "come no more into it." Whatever vehicle the Son of God assumes in which to appear must needs be impeccable, or for ever by an eternal necessity shielded from the possibility of sin. St. Paul indeed means that the Father condemned sin in the flesh when He sent His Son; and to that other meaning we shall come presently. Meanwhile that apostle takes care when he utters so bold a word to keep his doctrine safe. He is, like St. John, profoundly anxious to make the Saviour entirely human, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," that we may be "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh" by an equality. But he is also keenly sensitive for the dignity of the Son; and devises an expression which, knowing full well that heretics would abuse it, he used nevertheless, "He sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." This was St. Paul's way of saying what St. John says in the sublime simplicity of our text: "The Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. And in Him is no sin."

But the thought of that temptation recurs and haunts us: as if the conjunction of "flesh" and "temptation" must needs imply in Him also that secret of a bias to be excited or suppressed with which we are so familiar. This leads us, however, directly to the second point made emphatic in our text: "The Son of God was manifested to TAKE AWAY OUR SINS. In Him is no sin."

II.

Let those two sentences be viewed in the connection just suggested; and they tell us plainly that the Saviour who came to deliver us from our sins did not come to deliver Himself. Our redemption demanded the ransom-price not of a humanity retrieved from sin, but of a Divine-human life the infinite value of which no sin had impaired: not that of a life or a nature, or of a life in a nature, first sanctified from its own sin and then offered on the altar. God forbid! "The precious blood of Christ" was as "that of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who was foreordained indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times." St. Peter's word "manifested" is the link with our text. The "Lamb of God," whom God provided before the world was, that He might in due time "take away the sin of the world," was no other than His only-begotten Son: that was the secret of His being "without spot and blemish." "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," was the Father's testimony to Him who went down into the waters of baptism as the Representative of sinners. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am

well pleased," was the second testimony when the Sufferer was examined on the mount, searched through and through by the glory of heaven, and approved as a spotless victim, and sent on His way to the cross. And between these Satan was permitted, yea required, to tempt Him; that is, to test to the uttermost this "Second Man" in whom "dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The tempter was not cast out, but found no entrance; "at all points" he was baffled; and we know the full meaning of the Saviour's word when, in the sanctuary of the paschal chamber, He was preparing to "bear the sin of the world," and felt the presence of the returning tempter near: "the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." Could the accuser have found any sin in Jesus, that is, any of that principle from which human sins spring, he could have challenged the virtue of the atonement for men; and he could not then have been cast out of the court when he pleaded that this sufferer, like all the rest, suffered indeed "justly," "being in the same condemnation," and was "bound for Himself to offer for sins." But our adorable Redeemer "knew no sin." The typical high priests, appointed by the law, were men "having infirmity." "But the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointed a Son, perfected for evermore." That son who "at the end of the ages was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," of whom St. John also says, that "to this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" and "to bear away our sins."

But does not that word in the epistle to the

Hebrews, "a Son, perfected for evermore," explain our text, "in Him is no sin?" Does not the inspired writer there say that He, "though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation?" To this question and to all similar questions, there is as before but one answer: the perfecting of the Son was His perfect consecration through suffering to the high-priestly service of redemption, He learned what the obedience of His voluntary humiliation under the curse of the law meant for Him; but He did not learn how to obey. The process of His preparation to enter the Holiest as One who had found eternal redemption did not include His own victory over sin. We cannot too firmly hold fast the fundamental truth that the Saviour of men must not be His own Saviour: if He has to take away His own sin first, then He cannot take away ours afterward. "Save Thyself and us!" was the mockery of the robber on the left hand of the cross: alas, that it should be repeated by our theology! The firm foundation of the atonement is the Eternal Sonship of Him who offered it. "The blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth from all sin:" the human nature of Jesus provided the blood; but the Divine nature of the Son gave it its atoning value; and the One Person of the Godman calls that blood His own. All its value is for us, "to take away our sins." None of it was needed for Himself: "in Him is no sin."

The force of this is not fairly met by those who insist that, though our Lord never actually sinned, He nevertheless conquered the power of sin, thus

becoming an example to us. To them "in Him is no sin" means either that He kept the sin that came not into the world with Him from entering at all, or that finding it in the humanity He assumed, He vanquished it under temptation and thus could say "I sanctify Myself." As to the former, no one can say that it is not true: it is indeed so true that it is a truism. Whatever were the awful sufferings that the Incarnate Son of God endured on our behalf, they were altogether the pressure of "our sins," or "the sin of the world," and by no means the agony of resisting the entrance of sin into His person through the avenue of His flesh. The most distant thought of this makes the vicariousness of the atonement tremble. As to the latter, it not only makes the vicariousness of the atonement dissolve but dissolves the very atonement itself. The Redeemer would be "divided against Himself," would in fact "destroy his own works;" for a being that needed expiation for the least sin in himself, could offer no valid atonement for others. When He said above, "I sanctify Myself," He only said that He consecrated Himself to the solemn task of offering Himself, that Self which was in glory with the Father before the world was, which came forth from Him, and went back to Him, and which was consecrated to sacrificial death, "for their sakes" only and not for His own.

But, reverting to the thought of temptation, it will be said that we thus lose all the preciousness of our Lord's example. If He was not "tempted at all points as we are," why is His victory proposed to us for our encouragement in the conflict? Those

who are so anxious to retain the example of Christ in the conquering of sin hardly bethink themselves at what a tremendous cost they purchase it. If they will have the example at all points, they cannot have at all points the Saviour. What the apostle says is, that "He, the Son of God, was manifested to take away our sins:" not by any means to show us how to put them away ourselves. Every one will admit that He is no example to us in the conflict with the manifestations of sin. Our own apostle's word is, it is true, "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked." But here we must add what the epistle to the Hebrews inserts, "apart from sin." We cannot find the print of His footsteps in the way of the prodigal son's return to his father. But He sets the faultless pattern of all excellence even where He cannot set the example of the process of attaining it. He was indeed "tempted at all points like as we are, without sin:" not "yet" without sin; that "yet" creeps unworthily into the text, and has no right there. The difference is explained by St. James in his final doctrine of temptation. He shows that there are two kinds of temptation: one applied by God Himself for the best of all purposes and the endurance of which is blessed; the other addressed to a man's "own lust" which conceives and beareth the progeny of sin and death. "In Him is no sin," no mother-lust to which temptation addresses itself; therefore He was not "at all points tempted like as we are" save under the condition that it was "without sin." Those innumerable temptations which beset us through the fact that "in us there is sin" He

knew not ; nor could He know them and be the Eternal Son manifested in the flesh. We abhor the thought, or we ought to abhor the thought, of seeing in Him the example of the suppression of pride, vainglory, sensuality. For this kind of example we must go to Peter, and Paul, and Magdalene, and the saints "of like passions with ourselves." Temptation in that sense our Lord never knew, nor could know. But the other kind of temptation, that which by pressure of suffering tests the quality of the virtue of man, and proves the quality of the virtue of the Man who is the Son of God, none ever knew among all the children of sorrow as the Son of man knew it. "He suffered being tempted." Again we say that those who insist on the reality of the struggle through which the Incarnate Son emerged as conqueror, and will have it that He "saved Himself" there, are trying to unite things absolutely incompatible : a Saviour manifested as the Son of God to bear away sins, destroying the works of the devil, and a Saviour who comes into a flesh tainted with sin and disciplines Himself to victory as an example to His followers for ever. There is much dignity, and grandeur, and beauty in such a captain of salvation as this latter would be. But he is a human Saviour, teaching by precept and example. He is not the Divine-human Redeemer who was "manifested to take away sins, and in whom there is no sin."

Do we then make void the example of Christ ? God forbid : yea, we establish that example. That indeed is the pith and substance of the whole passage. St. John was not simply paying his loyal homage to

the majesty of the Son of God, whose sinlessness is essential to His eternal sonship, and could never be surrendered by any humiliation; not only establishing the sufficiency of the atonement as a provision for taking away sin by showing that He who offered it had no sin of His own to bar the substitutionary character of His sacrifice; he was also and mainly writing over the whole economy of redemption as individually applied, and enjoyed the signature of Christian perfection as exhibited in Him the Son of God, and rendered possible through Him to all who are His. To that then let us now turn.

III.

Nowhere in the New Testament is the example of our sinless Lord so comprehensively, impressively, and specifically exhibited as in this closing epistle of the New Testament. Though it is nowhere said that St. John has this object in view, we plainly perceive that it is always before him: and in a great variety of methods he shows it. The Son of God whom He worships has in Him no sin; but He is ever present in the epistle as the pattern and standard to those in whom there is sin, but from whom their sins are to be removed. Here in the middle is the great text which perhaps surpasses anything in the New Testament. "In Him is no sin; He was manifested to take away utterly from us the sins that we have, so that each of us may be pure as He is pure, and righteous as He is righteous." This text is enclosed within two wonderful words which help to explain them: on the

one hand we have the chrisma or unction descending upon us "from the Holy One" for our sanctification; and on the other we have His sperma or seed abiding within us, the secret of an ever-deepening and ever-strengthening new life; both these being one and the same Holy Spirit, the supply of the Spirit of Jesus. Then, going back to the beginning of the epistle, we find among its first keynotes, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself to walk even as He walked." And then going onward to the end of the epistle, we find among its last keynotes, "As He is even so are we in the world." The gracious and inspiriting "as He" runs through the whole like a continuous call to the highest perfection of the Christian life. The holy ambition of the lover of Jesus is nowhere more vehemently excited and at the same time more amply justified than here. The Lord of all perfection seems to be uttering from the height of His human perfection that mystic "Come" which Simon Peter heard when his daring heart prompted him to be near his Master in spite of natural laws and human fears. Let him whose soul hungers and thirsts after righteousness and the purity of heart which shall see God read the whole epistle in this light, that is, as the New Testament treatise on the "Imitation of Christ," and he will most certainly find that in it the Master is calling him to be like Himself in a more direct and searching and stimulating manner than in any other part of the New Testament.

The eye of the believer's hope is fixed generally on the sinlessness of Christ as a standard, or pattern,

or copy. It is not set before him as an example of the process by which sinlessness is reached: it is rather as an exemplar than a literal example. We are bidden to keep ever in view the consummate perfection which was not so much reached as brought down from heaven; or, if reached, not as coming up out of imperfection, but as exhibited through stage to stage of a discipline unknown to any other human being, and of atoning sorrows that showed of what more than heroic patience and self-sacrifice and devotion human nature is capable when incapable of sin. Surely patience may have its perfect work in One who could not "fail nor be discouraged"; and submission may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, in One who says "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done;" and a perfect model of self-sacrificing devotion may be given by One who is Master and Lord, and without any pride to cause reluctance while washing His disciples' feet. Never once in the New Testament is the Saviour set before us as a pattern in the pursuit of perfection. Not when He said "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," the distant echo of which here in our epistle tells us otherwise, "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God:" not he that imitates the conduct of Jesus in gradually bringing the world and the flesh and the devil under his feet, but he that believes in Jesus, the Son of God, Who was "manifested to take away our sins," and "destroy the works of the devil," and in Whom "is no sin."

In harmony with this the strain is general. The law of the Christian life is "No sin," for "in

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Him there is no sin ;” they are supposed to have renounced sin in every form for ever. The very theory of their relation to Jesus is that they have ceased to live in sin. It might seem as if the purpose were to lay down the simple argument : “ There is no sin in Christ ; all who are His are in Christ ; therefore those who are in Christ do not sin.” We may perplex ourselves needlessly by questions as to the meaning of “ sinneth not ” and “ cannot sin : ” words which are plain enough so long as we remember that they are the watchwords of fellowship with Christ, which is the watchword of the whole epistle. “ Those who practice sin are of the devil : to this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might annul the works of the devil.” To be in Christ and to have Christ in us are one and the same thing : we are in Him and His seed is in us, and we cannot sin. Of course the commission of sin is not impossible ; else, what would mean the solemn concession of chap. ii. 1 : “ These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin ! ” any even of you who are in fellowship with the Father and the Son and walk in light ! But the whole strain of the exhortation, if it is not rather a statement of privilege than an exhortation, is that the sinlessness of our Lord is the law of His people and the standard of their aspiration. The apostle does not precisely define what degree of conformity to His image we may reach ; but contents himself by saying that our Lord came to take all our sins away, explaining what that means by the words “ in Him is no sin.”

IV.

But the exhortation is not left thus indefinite, nor is the Saviour's example left thus general. The words "in Him is no sin" stand in the middle between two other more definite statements; on the one hand, "as He is pure," and on the other, "as He is righteous." Here we are bidden as it were to contemplate Christian perfection in Christ our Head as being perfect freedom from defilement and perfect conformity to the Divine will. On these two hang all the law and the gospel of our restoration; and that to which we are to be restored is exhibited as being already "in Him." His purity is not set before us as that Divine holiness which is elsewhere made our standard, "Ye shall be holy for I am holy;" but a term is used that shows holiness to us as the specific opposite of human defilement. "As He is pure" signifies that His humanity, whether as it was seen among men or as it exists in heaven, is free from the stain of human passion and sin, as pure as it first came from God. We are supposed to be able to conceive of such a purity as that in man; and there is no nobler mark of the dignity of our regeneration than that we are capable of such a conception and inspired by it with desire. That is human nature unclothed of evil; but our Pattern shows us that human nature clothed upon with righteousness. And His righteousness too is not declared to be the Divine righteousness as such; but it is said that "He is righteous" as one who "doeth all human righteousness." His humanity

whether on earth or in heaven is perfectly conformed to every requirement of the Divine law, which is in Him supremely "the perfect law of liberty." The word in the middle, "in Him is no sin," unites these two in one; into it those two melt; and it is their finished consummation. Christian perfection, which is the perfection of the human estate retrieved in Christ, shown to be possible in Him, and to be possible to us through His indwelling in us, is the union of purity and righteousness. That perfection in Christ as man was the result of His Divine Sonship animating His humanity. And if we ever reach it, it will be through the same Divine Son becoming our life in our regeneration. We were "predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." "He that hath the Son hath the life;" that new regenerate life, the moral perfection of which is, may be, must be, and shall be our being pure "as He is pure" and righteous "as He is righteous."

And now let us fix our attention very steadily on the method the apostle adopts to teach us that we are to aspire to the reflection of the Saviour's image in these two aspects of a human perfection. No thoughtful reader will fail to see two things: first, that he is exhibiting each standard of perfection as something up to which the believer is to be always steadily working; and, secondly, that he is anxious to teach that the two are to be always united. A third thing will be added by the reader who is profoundly in earnest; that St. John impresses on us the individuality of the pursuit, as if he were stirring every member of the Christian household to attain himself that perfection which is always shining before the whole family in the person of the Elder

Brother of the house. Without following these points in detail, let us receive the lesson here taught. Christian perfection is conformity to the image of the Son : filled with His life alone, and therefore without sin ; pure from stain as He is pure ; and righteous as He is righteous. He who has a hope in Jesus must aim at this perfection : it must be his one business to do all that in him lies to reach the character of his Master. Whatever other meaning the words had when Jesus spake them, he must take literally the promise, " Every servant shall be as his Lord." Of course we understand in all such sayings that what we are commanded to do is to be done in the use of the means which God sanctifies. We are said to do what He really does in us and through us. But still the emphatic testimony remains : to imitate Christ is to make it a law of life to be holy as He is holy, to be in all things righteous as He is righteous. And it is the character that is to be formed : it is said with strong emphasis that he is to purify " himself," and not simply abstain from impurity ; and that he is by doing the deeds of righteousness to " be righteous." The combination of these is Christian perfection : to be cleansed from all inward sin, and in the strength of the love so to do righteousness as to be counted and to be righteous, or all that the law of God requires in the children of faith.

V.

The question of course finally arises : what is the meaning of St. John's " as ? " Does it signify that, Christ's holiness and righteousness being the standard, we are to walk in the way that leads towards it ; or

that it is the privilege of the son of God to aspire to become "what He is," the Supreme Son, "in the world." The former is the current interpretation: it seems better to harmonize with the common religion of the church; and the profound humility of the true Christian instinctively takes that side. But this may be said of it, that it fails to give any good account of the "as" and in fact reduces it to "because." It must not be forgotten that a stronger little word could not have been chosen; and that it is used four times during the course of the epistle with precisely the same reference, being as it were reserved for that: "as He walked," "as He is pure," "as He is righteous," "as He is, in the world." For the latter interpretation there is much to be said. It satisfies, and it alone satisfies, the deep desire of the regenerate heart to be delivered from all unholiness, and from all unrighteousness: to realize that ideal which is said in the epistle to the Ephesians to have been in the Divine mind concerning us when He "predestinated us to the adoption of sons to Himself," "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." The Lamb of God was "without blemish"; the same word is used concerning the saints walking in love before God, that is, in the present world. Nor is there any reason found in the economy of grace or in the promises founded upon it why the sons who are one with the Son should not "in Him" be cleansed from all stain of sin. The same may be said of the aspiration to be righteous: that is, to be all that God's law demands according to the new provisions of the "righteousness of God" which is revealed "from faith to faith." The apostle's language is here stronger even than with regard to

purity : his words are that " he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." The character of the Christian may at all points be conformed to the will of Christ as the Lawgiver of His people. " Love is the fulfilment of the law," or " The whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this." This is a saying of St. Paul : St. John's comment on it is found at the close of his epistle, and of the whole New Testament : " Herein is love made perfect with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment ; because as He is even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment ; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love." Surely they ought not to be charged with fanaticism who gather from the apostle's teaching that the Spirit of Christ the Son may make us the sons holy and righteous in this present world : so that the inquisition of the Divine holiness and righteousness shall find no fault in us.

As to the possibility of being stainless and righteous like our Lord in this life, we are left to the interpretation of our faith. But one thing is certain, that we must be " like Him " before we go hence, " for we shall see Him as He is ;" and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. At the beginning of the chapter, the apostle, paying his tribute to the glory of Christian sonship, declares that what we shall be must be revealed with the revelation of the Saviour Himself. One thing, however, he says is known to all, that the sons of God will be like the Son incarnate : like Him in their whole being, both in body and in soul. The conformity of their bodies of humiliation to His glorious body will be the result

of a direct exertion of omnipotence. But not so the conformity of their spirits to His glorious spirit : that must be accomplished in the world that now is, the world of probation. It is the glory of our inheritance as sons that we shall see God in His incarnate Son : God, otherwise than in the face of His incarnate Son, "no man hath seen, nor can see." Then if we are to "see Him as He is," not as reflected from the mirror of His word but in Himself and face to face, we must be first made "like Him" : like Him in purity, like Him in righteousness, like Him in the utter, perfect, and eternal destruction and absence of sin. The apostle leaves the filling up of the argument to us, to our faith under the influence of the "unction from the Holy One," by which we "know all things." The death of all life that is not "the life" which he hath who "hath the Son" must take place before we can be said to be "like Him ;" for purity like His and righteousness like His both imply the spiritual life of which these are only attributes. But there is no provision for this beyond the range of the present life. There is no sanctifying process in the interval between death and the day when we shall "see Him as He is." There is no "doing of righteousness" beyond the grave. Nor is there in death physical any virtue to annihilate the sinful life of nature which has come to us through the fall. All this argumentation the holy apostle leaves, I say, to be supplied by us. He sums the whole in the text : "He was manifested to take away our sins. And in Him is no sin." To Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever. Amen.

THE INTERIOR FEAST.



“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.

“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.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”—REV. iii. 20, 21, 22.

THESE are the last words of our Saviour's new communications from heaven : wherein He speaks, not as formerly in His visible person, but by the Holy Ghost. It is His voice that we hear, and not another's : “I stand and knock.” And yet it is said, “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” In fact these epistles are really a continuation of the four Gospels, adapted to the change that took place with Pentecost. It is the same Jesus ; the tone and accent are the same ; the style and address unchanged throughout. And, if we did not know what has taken place in the interval, we might suppose that the Lord was visiting His churches in person ; and that He was addressing to them warnings and promises just as He used to administer to the old church in the temple or His new church as represented by the apostles and disciples. That almost perfect identity we must keep in mind throughout.