

The Prayers of the Apostles

**Booklet Seven
Revelation 1:5, 6**



A. W. Pink



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“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” Revelation 1:5, 6.

Our present prayer really forms the closing part of the salutation and benediction of Revelation 1, verse 4, where “grace” and “peace” are sought from the Triune God in His distinct persons. First, from “him which is, and which was, and which is to come:” that is, from JEHOVAH as the self-existing and immutable One—He is addressed by His memorial name (Exod. 6:3). Second, from “the seven Spirits which are before his throne:” that is, from the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His power and diversity of His operations (Isa. 11:1, 2). Third, from “Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:5), who is mentioned last as the connecting Link between God and His people. A threefold appellation is here accorded the Saviour: 1. “The faithful witness,” which contemplates and covers the whole of His virtuous life from the manger to the Cross. 2. “The first begotten [better, “Firstborn”] of the dead,” which celebrates His victory over the tomb. It is a title of dignity (Gen. 49:3), and signifies priority of *rank* rather than time. 3. “And the prince of the kings of the earth,” which announces His regal majesty and dominion, and views the Conqueror as exalted “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” He is the One upon whose shoulder the government of the

universe has been laid (Isa. 9:6), who is even now “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3), and before whom every knee shall yet bow (Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11).

That recital of the Redeemer’s perfections and dignities evoked the adoring exclamation, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:5, 6). Thus, the *nature* of our prayer is again a doxology. Its *object* is the Son of God incarnate, in His mediatorial character and office. Its *adorers* are the “us” who are the beneficiaries of His mediation. Its inciting *reasons* are our apprehensions of His fathomless love, the cleansing efficacy of His precious blood, and the wondrous dignities He has conferred upon His redeemed. Its *ascription* is “to him be glory and dominion,” not merely for a thousand years, but “for ever and ever;” and closes with the assuring affirmation, “Amen”—it shall be so. For the benefit of young preachers, we will add a few more remarks to those made in a previous article on doxologies in general.

The doxologies of Scripture reveal our need of forming more exalted conceptions of the divine persons, and, in order thereto, more frequent and devout meditations on their ineffable attributes. How little do our thoughts dwell upon the display of them in the material creation. Divinity is “clearly seen” in the things which He has made, and even the heathen are charged with inexcusable guilt because of their failure to glorify God for His handiwork (Rom. 1:19-21). Not only should our senses be regaled by the lovely colourings of the trees and perfumes of the flowers, but our minds ought to dwell upon the motions and instincts of animals, admiring the divine hand which so equipped them. How little do we reflect upon the marvels of our own bodies: the structure, convenience, and perfect adaptedness of each member. How few unite with the Psalmist in exclaiming, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works” (Psa. 139:14).

How much more wonderful are the faculties of our souls, raising us high above all irrational creatures. How better can our reason be employed than in extolling the One who has so richly endowed us? Yet how little grateful acknowledgment is made unto the beneficent Donor of our beings.

How little do we consider the wisdom and power of God as manifested in the *government* of the world. For example: in the balance preserved between the sexes, and in the relative number of births and deaths, so that the population of the earth is maintained from generation to generation without any human contriving. Or in the various temperaments and talents given to men, so that some are wise for counsels and contrivances, some are better qualified for hard manual labour, and others to serve at the desk. Or in curbing the baser passions of men, so that such a measure of law and order obtains generally in society that the weak are not destroyed by the strong, nor the good unable to live in a world which lieth in the wicked one. Or in setting bounds to the success of rapacious dictators, so that when it appears they are on the very point of carrying all before them, they are suddenly stopped by the One who has decreed they shall go “no further.” Or in His application of the law of retribution, so that individuals and nations are made to reap as they sow, whether it be good or evil. It is because we pay so little attention to this and a hundred other similar phenomena that we are so rarely moved to cry, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19:6).

But it is the wondrous works of God in the realm of *grace*—rather than in creation and providence—which are most calculated to draw out the hearts of God’s people in adoring homage, and more particularly those wherein the Darling of His own heart is more immediately concerned. Thus it is in the verses we are now pondering: no sooner are the peerless person and perfections of the eternal Lover of their souls set before them, than the saints exultant cry, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:6). It is the

spontaneous response and outgoings of their souls unto Him. And that leads us to point out that one thing which is common to all the doxologies is that praise is ever offered unto Deity, and never concerns anything of or by the saints themselves. Self-occupation and self-gratulation have no place whatever in them. Far different than from the low level of spirituality generally prevailing in the churches today. This writer was once present at a service where a hymn was sung, the chorus of which ran, “Oh, how I love Jesus,” but we could not join in it. None in heaven are guilty of lauding themselves or magnifying their graces, nor should any Christians do so here upon earth.

The *Object* of this adoration and thanksgiving is that Blessed One who undertook—with the Father and the Spirit—to save His people from all their sins and miseries by the price of His blood and the arm of His power. In His essential person, He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit—“who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 9:5). He is the uncreated Sun of righteousness. In Him, all the glory of the Godhead shines forth; and by Him, all the perfections of Deity have been manifested. In response to this very homage, He declares, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8). Before the worlds were made, He entered into covenant engagement to become incarnate, to be made in the likeness of sin’s flesh, to serve as the Surety of His people, to be the Bridegroom of His Church—its complete and all-sufficient Saviour. As such, He is the Man of “the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3), the Fellow of “the LORD of hosts” and the “King of glory” (Psa. 24:10). His work is honourable, His fullness infinite, His power omnipotent. His Throne is for ever and ever. His name is “above every name” (Phil. 2:9). His glory is above the heavens. It is impossible to extol Him too highly, for His glorious name “is exalted *above all* blessing and praise” (Neh. 9:5).

In the immediate context, this adorable One is viewed in His

theanthropic person, as incarnate, as the God-man Mediator. There He is set forth in His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and Potentate. His prophetic office is clearly connoted in the title, “the faithful witness” (Rev. 1:5)—for in the Old Testament prophecy, the Father announced, “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people” (Isa. 55:4); while Christ Himself declared unto Pilate, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37). As such, He proclaimed the Gospel unto the poor and confirmed the same by mighty miracles. His sacerdotal office is necessarily implied in the expression, “first begotten [Firstborn] of the dead” (Rev. 1:5)—for in death, He offered Himself as a sacrifice unto God to make satisfaction for the transgressions of His people; and then rose again that He might continue to exercise His priesthood by His constant intercession for them. His regal office appears plainly in the designation, “prince of the kings of the earth”—for He has absolute dominion over them: by Him, they reign (Prov. 8:15); and to Him, they are commanded to render allegiance (Psa. 2:10-12). To Him, we are to hearken; in Him, we are to believe; unto Him, we are to be subject. Singly and collectively, these titles announce that He is to be greatly respected and revered.

While an exile on the isle of Patmos, John was engaged in contemplating Immanuel in the excellencies of His person, offices, and work; and as he did so, his heart was enraptured, and he exclaimed, “Unto him that loved us” (Rev. 1:5), which is a preferable rendering (we think) in the passage to the “loveth us” of the Revised Version. The love of Christ is here expressed by the apostle in the *past* tense, not because it is inoperative in the present, but to focus our attention upon its earlier exercises. The love of Christ is the grandest fact and mystery revealed in Holy Writ. That love originated in His heart and was in operation from all eternity, for before the mountains were formed, His “delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8:31). That wonderful love was put forth by Christ in connection with

the everlasting covenant, wherein He agreed to serve as the Sponsor of His people and discharge all their obligations. That He should take complacency in creatures of the dust is the marvel of heaven. That He should set His heart upon them while viewed in their fallen estate is incomprehensible. That love was expressed openly in His incarnation, humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and death.

Scripture itself declares that “the love of Christ...passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19). It is entirely beyond finite computation or comprehension. That the Son of God should ever deign to *notice* finite creatures was an act of great condescension on His part (Psa. 113:6). That He should go so far as to *pity* them is yet more wonderful. That He should *love* us in our pollution entirely transcends our understanding. That the outgoings of His heart unto the Church moved Him to lay aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, take “upon him the form of a servant,” and “became obedient unto death” for their sakes—“even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8)—surmounts all thought and is beyond all praise. That the Holy One should be willing to be made sin for His people and endure the curse that endless blessing should be their portion is altogether inconceivable. As Samuel E. Pierce (1746-1849) so ably expressed it, “His love is one perfect and continued act from everlasting to everlasting. It knows no abatement or decay. It is eternal and immutable love. It exceeds all conception and surpasses all expression. To give the utmost proof of it, ‘Christ died for the ungodly’ (Rom. 5:6). In His life, He fully displayed His love. In His sufferings and death, He stamped it with an everlasting emphasis.”

The love of Christ was a *disinterested* one. Entirely so, for it was uninfluenced by any external considerations or any thing in its objects. There was nothing whatever in them, either actual or foreseen, to call it into existence. Nothing actual, for they had rebelled against God, and deliberately chosen as their exemplar and master one who was a liar and murderer from the beginning.

Nothing foreseen, for no excellence could they bear, except what His own gracious hand wrought in them. The love of Christ infinitely excelled in purity, in intensity, in its disinterestedness, any that ever moved in a human breast. It was altogether free and spontaneous. He loved us when we were loveless and unlovely. We were entirely unable to render Him any compensation or fit return. His own essential blessedness and glory could neither be diminished by our damnation, nor increased by our salvation. His love was uninvited, unattracted, altogether self-caused and moved. It was that which stirred everything else—His wisdom, power, holiness—to activity: “He delivered me, *because* he delighted in me” (Psa. 18:19) is the divine explanation of my redemption.

The love of Christ was a *discriminating* one. “The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psa. 145:9). He is benevolent unto all His creatures, making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. 5:45). “For he is *kind* unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:35). But Christ *loved* the Church and gave Himself for it with a love such as He does not bear all mankind. The Church is the one special and peculiar object of His affections. Thus, He does not love universal creaturehood, or all mankind without exception or difference. Husbands are bidden to love their wives “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). The love of a husband toward his wife is a special and exclusive one: so Christ cherishes for His Church a particular affection. It is set upon His Bride, rather than upon the human race at large. She is His peculiar treasure. “Having loved *his own* which were in the world” (John 13:1). Instead of cavilling at this truth, let us enjoy its preciousness. Christ’s love is also a constant and durable one, exercised upon its objects “unto the end” (John 13:1; Matt. 28:20); and, as we shall now see, it is a sacrificial and enriching one.

The *manifestations* of Christ’s love correspond to our woe and

want, its operations being suited to the condition and circumstances of its objects. Our direst need was the putting away of our sins, and that need has been fully met by Him. His love alone could not remove our transgressions “as far as the east is from the west” (Psa. 103:12). The claims of God must be met, the penalty of the Law endured. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22); and Christ so loved the Church as to shed His precious blood for her. Hence, the saints here are heard exclaiming, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in [or ‘by’] his own blood” (Rev. 1:5). That is the second inspiring reason or motive of this benediction. It necessarily imports His Deity, for none but God can forgive sins. It is likewise a witness to the vicarious nature and efficacy of His sacrifice—how otherwise could it wash us from our sins? Moreover, it celebrates the supreme proof of His care for His people. “For love is strong as death...Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song 8:6, 7), as was demonstrated at the Cross, where “all [the] waves and [the] billows” of God’s wrath (Psa. 42:7) went over the Sinbearer.

The surpassing love of Christ was evidenced by His espousing the persons of God’s elect: undertaking their cause, assuming their nature, obeying and suffering in their room and stead. The apostle brought the whole of this blessed subject home with application unto believers when he said, “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). He knew what was necessary for our deliverance, and His love prompted Him to the accomplishment of the same. To “[wash] us from our sins” (Rev. 1:5) was the one thing essential in order to our salvation; and for that, His blood *must* be shed. What stupendous proof was that of His love! Herein is love: that the Just should voluntarily and gladly suffer for the unjust, that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8), making full atonement for those who were “enemies.” He chose to lay down His life for those who were by nature and by

practice rebels against God, rather than that they should be a sacrifice to the wrath of God for ever. The guilty transgress, but the innocent One is condemned. The ungodly offend, but the Holy One endures the penalty. The servant commits the crime, but the Lord of glory blots it out. What reason have we to adore Him!

Christ cannot love His people beyond what He has done. He cannot increase in His love to them unto all eternity. He cannot give a greater evidence of His love to them than He has already done. He shone forth in all the meridian power and splendour of His love in Gethsemane and on Calvary. There, He sustained in His soul the whole of the awful curse which was due to the sins of His people. Then it was that “it pleased the LORD [the Father] to bruise him” (Isa. 53:10) and put His soul to grief. His anguish was inconceivable. He cried out under it, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). It was *thus* He loved us, and it was *thereby* He provided the fountain to cleanse us from our iniquities. Through the shedding of His precious blood, He has purged His people from the whole guilt and defilement of sin. “Blessings, eternal blessings on the Lamb who bore our sins and carried our sorrows! His bloody sweat is our everlasting health and cure. His soul-travail is our everlasting deliverance from the curse of the Law and the wrath to come. His bearing our sins in His own body on the Tree is our everlasting discharge from them. His most precious blood-shedding is our everlasting purification”—S. E. Pierce.

“And washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5). Sin alike blots our record before God, pollutes the soul, and defiles the conscience; and naught can remove the same but the atoning and cleansing blood of Christ. Sin is the only thing which the Lord Jesus hates. It is essential to His holiness that He should do so. He hates it immutably, and can as soon cease to be God as love it. Nevertheless, His love to His people is even greater than His hatred of sin. Through their fall in Adam, they are sinners: their fallen natures are totally depraved. By thought,

and word, and deed, they are sinners. They are guilty of literally countless transgressions—for their sins are more in number than the hairs of their heads (Psa. 40:12). Yet Christ loved them! He did so before they sinned in Adam; and His foreviews of them in their fallen estate produced no change in His love to them. Nay, it afforded greater opportunity for Him to display the same. Therefore, did He become incarnate that He should blot out their sins. Nothing was more loathsome to the Holy One of God; yet He was willing to be an alien to His mother’s children, despised and rejected of men, mocked and scourged by them—yea, abandoned by God for a season—that they might be cleansed.

We fully agree with John Gill (1697-1771) when he says on the words, “washed us from our sins” (Rev. 1:5), that “this is not to be understood of the sanctification of their natures, which is the work of the Spirit, but of atonement for their sins and justification from them.” In other words, it is the impetration (purchase) of redemption, and not its application, which is here in view. The latter, of course, follows at regeneration—for all whom He washed from the guilt and penalty of sin are in due time cleansed from the love and dominion of sin. That which is imported in the clause before us is guilt cancelled, condemnation removed, the curse of the Law taken away, and the sentence of acquittal pronounced. This is the portion of *all* believers: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). We must distinguish between the justification of our *persons* once for all (Acts 13:39), and the pardon of our sins as Christians (1 John 1:9) which must be penitentially confessed; and then, we are forgiven and cleansed on the ground of Christ’s blood. It is the former which is in view in Revelation 1:5, where the saints are rejoicing in the love of Him whose blood has once and for all washed their *persons*; the latter is owned in Revelation 7:14, where their travel-stained *robes* [*garments*] are cleansed day by day.

Two evidences of the love of Christ for His people are

mentioned in this prayer: His cleansing, and His enriching of them by the dignities He bestows upon them. But there is also a third expression and manifestation of His love, which, though not distinctly expressed, is necessarily implied here—namely His *provision* for them. As the result of the work which His love prompted Him to perform on their behalf, He meritoriously secured the Holy Spirit for His people (Acts 2:33). He therefore sends Him to regenerate them, to take of the things of Christ and show the same unto them, to impart an experiential and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to produce faith in their hearts, so that they believe on Him unto everlasting life. We say that all of this is “necessarily implied,” for thereby—and thereby alone—are they enabled truly and feelingly to exclaim, “Unto him that loved *us*” (Rev. 1:5); yea, so that each of them may aver, “who loved *me*, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). That is the quintessence of real blessedness: to be assured by the Spirit from the Word that they are the objects and subjects of Christ’s infinite and immutable love. The knowledge thereof makes Him “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16) in their esteem, rejoices their souls, and sanctifies their affections.

See here the appropriating nature of saving faith. It takes hold of Christ and His sacrifice for sinners as made known in the Word of Truth. It says, Here is a love-letter from heaven about the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, which gives an account of Christ’s love and the strongest and greatest possible proofs thereof. I see that letter is *for me*, for it is addressed to sinners, yea, to the very chief of sinners; and that it both invites and commands me to receive this divine Lover unto myself, and unfeignedly believe in the sufficiency of His atoning blood for *my* sins. Therefore, I take Him as He is freely proffered by the Gospel, and rely on His own word, “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). This faith comes not by feelings of my love to Christ, but by the *hearing* of His love to sinners (Rom. 5:8; 10:17). True, the Holy Spirit, in the day of His power, makes impressions on the heart by the Word—yet

the *ground* of faith is not those impressions, but the Gospel itself. The *Object* of faith is not Christ working on the heart, and softening it, but rather, Christ as He is presented to our acceptance in the Word. What we are called upon to hear is not Christ speaking secretly within us, but Christ speaking openly, objectively, without us.

A most dreadful curse is pronounced upon all who “love not the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 16:22), and solemn indeed is it to realize that the same rests upon the vast majority of our fellows, even in those countries which are reputed to be Christian. And why does any sinner love Christ? Because he believes the love of Christ to sinners. He perceives the wonder and preciousness thereof, for “faith...worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6), even by the love of Christ manifested to us. It receives or takes His love unto the heart. There, it works peace in the conscience, gives conscious access to God (Eph. 3:12), joy in Him, communion with and conformity to Him. That faith, implanted by the Holy Spirit, and which works by love—the reflex of our apprehension and appropriation of Christ’s love—slays our enmity against God, and causes us to delight in His Law (Rom. 7:22). Such faith knows, on the authority of the Word of God, that our sins—which were the cause of our separation and alienation from Him—have been washed away by the atoning blood of Christ. How inexpressibly blessed it is to know that in the fullness of time, Christ appeared “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26); and that God says of all believers, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17).

Upon our belief of these divine testimonies, it depends, to a large extent, on both our practical holiness and our comfort. In proportion to our faith therein will be our love to Christ and adoration of Him. Where there is a personal assurance of His love, there cannot but be a joining with the saints in heaven in praising Christ for washing us from our sins (Rev. 5:9, 10). But many will object, “I still have so much sin in me, and it so often

gets the mastery over me, that I dare not cherish the assurance that Christ has washed me from *my* sins.” If that be your case, we ask, Do you mourn over your corruptions, and earnestly desire to be for ever rid of them? If so, that is proof you are entitled to rejoice in Christ’s atoning blood. God sees fit to leave sin in you, that in this life you may be kept humble before Him, and marvel the more at His longsufferance. It is His appointment that the Lamb should now be eaten “with bitter herbs” (Exod. 12:8). “This is not your rest” (Mic. 2:10), and He suffers you to be harassed by your lusts that you may look forward more eagerly to the deliverance and rest awaiting you. Though Romans 7:14-25 be your experience, Romans 8:1 also declares, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus!”

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father” (Rev. 1:6). Here is the third inspiring reason of the ascription which follows. Having owned their indebtedness to the Saviour’s love and sacrifice, the saints are now heard celebrating the high dignities which He has conferred upon them. They, in their measure, are made partakers of the honours of Him who is both the King of kings and our great High Priest; and the apprehension thereof evokes a song of praise unto Him. As it is realized that the Lord Jesus shares His own honours with His redeemed—conferring upon them both regal dignity and priestly nearness to God—they cannot but exultantly exclaim, “*To him* be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (verse 6). We were *virtually* made kings and priests, when He contracted to fulfil the terms of the everlasting covenant, for by that engagement, we were constituted such. *Imperatively*, we were made so, when He paid the price of our redemption, for it was by His merits that He purchased these privileges for us. *Federally*, we were made so, when He ascended on high (Eph. 2:6), and entered within the veil as our Forerunner (Heb. 6:20). *Actually*, we were made so, at our regeneration, when we became participants of His unction.

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God.” Here we have the Redeemer exalting and ennobling His redeemed. This presupposes and follows upon our pardon, and is the *positive* result of Christ’s meritorious sacrifice. The One who loved us has not only removed our defilements, but has also restored us to the divine favour and fellowship, and secured for us the award: He took our place that we might share His. In order that they may be protected from certain insidious errors—which have brought not a few of God’s children into bondage—it is important to perceive that these designations belong not merely to a very select and advanced class of Christians, but equally to *all* believers. It is also necessary, lest they be robbed by dispensationalists, that they should realize these dignities pertain to them *now*, and are not postponed until their arrival in heaven, and still less, till the dawn of the millennium. Every saint has these two honours conferred on him at once: he is a regal priest, and a priestly monarch. Therein, we see the dignity and nobility of the Lord’s people. The world looks upon them as mean and contemptible, but He speaks of them as “the excellent, in whom is all my delight” (Psa. 16:3).

“Hath made us kings and priests” is definitely implied, though not actually stated—in “and hath *anointed* us” (2 Cor. 1:21)—for it is a word expressive of *dignity*. Kings and priests were anointed when inaugurated in their offices; and therefore, when it is said that God has anointed all who are in Christ Jesus, it intimates that He has qualified and authorized them to the discharge of these high offices. As believers are informed through another apostle: “Ye have an unction from the Holy One” and “the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you” (1 John 2:20, 27). We have a participation in Christ’s anointing (Acts 10:38), receiving the same Spirit wherewith He was anointed—a beautiful type of which is set forth in Psalm 133:2. The blessedness of the elect appears in that they are made both kings and priests by virtue of the Name in which they are presented before God. They who receive “abundance of grace

and of the gift of righteousness shall *reign* in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17). Though in all things, Christ has the preeminence, being “the King of kings” (1 Tim. 6:15)—for “God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness *above* thy fellows” (Psa. 45:7)—yet His companions are invested with royalty, and “*as he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17). Oh for faith to appropriate that fact, and for grace to conduct ourselves accordingly.

We believe there is a designed contrast between the two expressions, “the kings *of the earth*” and “hath made *us* kings and priests unto God.” They are kings naturally; and we, spiritually: they, unto men; and we, unto God. They are but kings; we are priests, too. The dominion of earthly monarchs is but fleeting; their regal glory quickly fades. Even that of Solomon—which surpassed them all—was but of brief duration. But *we* shall be sharers of a Throne (Rev. 3:21) whose foundation is indestructible, whose sceptre is everlasting, whose dominion shall be universal (Rev. 21:6, 7). We shall be clothed with immortality, and vested with a glory which shall never be dimmed. Believers are “kings”—not in the sense that they take any part in heaven’s rule over the earth, but as sharers in their Lord’s triumph over Satan, sin, and the world. In *that*, they are also distinguished from the *angels*—for they are not “kings,” nor will they ever “reign,” because they are not “anointed.” They have no union with the incarnate Son of God, and therefore, they are not “joint-heirs” with Him as the redeemed are. So far from it, they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). A subordinate place and a subservient task is *theirs!*

Christ has not only done a great work *for* His people, but He accomplishes a grand work *in* them. He not only washes them from their sins, which He hates, but He also transforms by His power their persons, which He loves. He does not leave them as He first finds them—under the dominion of Satan, sin, and the world. No, He makes them “kings”—and a king is one who is

called to rule, is invested with authority, and exercises dominion; and so do believers over their enemies. True, some of the subjects we are called to rule are both strong and turbulent—yet we are “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). The Christian is “a king against whom there is no rising up” (Prov. 30:31), for though he may often be overcome in his person, yet not so in his cause. There is still a law in his members warring against the law of his mind (Rom. 7:23), yet sin shall not have dominion over him (Rom. 6:14). Once, the world kept him in bondage—presuming to dictate his conduct—so that he was afraid to defy its customs, and ashamed to ignore its maxims. But “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4)—causing us to seek our portion and enjoyment in things above.

“King is a name of honour, power, and ample possession. Here we reign spiritually, as we vanquish the devil, the world, and the flesh in any measure. It is a princely thing to be above those inferior things, and to trample them under our feet in a holy and heavenly pride. A heathen could say, ‘He is a king that fears nothing and desires nothing.’ He that is above the hopes and fears of the world, he that hath his heart in heaven and is above temporal trifles, the ups and downs of the world, the world beneath his affections; this man is of a kingly spirit. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, neither is a believer’s. Thou ‘hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth’ (Rev. 5:10)—namely in a *spiritual* way. It is a beastly thing to serve our lusts, but kingly to have our conversation in heaven and vanquish the world—to live up to our faith and love with a noble spirit. Hereafter, we shall reign visibly and gloriously when we shall sit upon thrones with Christ”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). The saints will yet judge the world, yea, angels, too (1 Cor. 6:2, 3).

The work which is assigned to the Christian as a “king” is *to govern himself*. “He that is slow to anger is better than the

mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). As a “king,” the Christian is called upon to mortify the flesh (Rom. 8:12, 13; Col. 3:5-9; Gal. 5:19-21, 24), resist the devil (Jam. 4:6, 7), discipline his temper (Prov. 16:32; 19:11; Col. 3:8), subdue his lusts (Rom. 6:12; 13:14; Gal. 5:22-24; Eph. 4:21, 22), and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). That is a lifelong task. Nor can he accomplish it in his own strength. It is his duty to seek enablement from above, and to draw upon the fullness of grace which is available for him in Christ. The heart is his kingdom (Prov. 4:23); and it is his responsibility to make reason and conscience govern his desires, so that his will is subject to God. He is required to be the master of his appetites and the regulator of his affections (Gal. 5:24; 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Pet. 1:6; Prov. 23:21), to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:12), to be “temperate in all things” (1 Cor. 9:25). He is to subdue his impetuosity and impatience (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:14; Jam. 5:8), refuse to take revenge when others wrong him (Matt. 5:39, 44; Luke 6:28, 29), bridle his passions (Jam. 3:2; Col. 3:2), “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21), and to have such control of himself that he “rejoice[s] with trembling” (Psa. 2:11); and “in whatsoever state [he be, learn] therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11).

Some earthly monarchs have not a few faithless and unruly subjects, who envy and hate them, who chafe under their sceptre, and want to depose them; nevertheless, they still maintain their thrones. In like manner, the Christian king has many rebellious lusts and traitorous dispositions which oppose and continually resist, yet he must seek grace to restrain them. Instead of expecting defeat, it is his privilege to be assured, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). The apostle was exercising his royal office when he declared, “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12)—and therein he has left

us an example (1 Cor. 11:1). He was also conducting himself as a king when he said, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1 Cor. 9:27). Yet, like everything else in this life, the *exercise* of our regal office is very imperfect. Not yet do we fully enter into our royal honours, or act out our royal dignity. Not yet have we received the crown, nor sat down with Christ on His throne—which are essential for the complete manifestation of our kingship. Yet the crown is laid up for us: a mansion (infinitely surpassing Buckingham Palace) is being prepared for us, and the promise is ours—“The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20).

Following our usual custom, we have endeavoured to supply the most help where the commentators and other expositors afford the least. Having sought to explain at some length the kingly office of the believer, less needs to be said upon the sacerdotal. A “priest” is one who is given a place of nearness to God, who has access to Him, and who holds holy intercourse with Him. It is his privilege to be admitted into the Father’s presence and be given special tokens of His favour. He has a divine service to perform. His office is one of high honour and dignity (Heb. 5:4, 5), and pertains to no ecclesiastical hierarchy, but is common to *all believers*. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9). Christians are “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). They are worshippers of the divine majesty, and bring with them a “sacrifice of praise to God continually” (Heb. 13:15). “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 2:7). As priests, they are to be intercessors “for all men”—especially “for kings, and for all that are in authority” (1 Tim. 2:1, 2). But the full and perfect exercise of our priesthood lies in the future, when—rid of sin, legality, and carnal fears—we shall see God face to face and worship Him uninterruptedly.

“To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Amen” (Rev. 1:6). This is an act of worship, an ascription of praise, a breathing of adoration unto the Redeemer from the hearts of the redeemed. Christians vary very much in their capacities and attainments, and differ in many minor views and practices, but they all unite with the apostle in this. All Christians have substantially the same views of Christ and the same love for Him. Wherever the Gospel has been savingly apprehended, it cannot but produce this effect. First, there is a devout acknowledgment of what the Lord Jesus has done for us, and then a doxology rendered unto Him. As we contemplate *who* it was that loved us—not a fellow mortal, but the everlasting God—we are bowed before Him in worship. As we consider *what* He did for us—shed His precious blood—our hearts are drawn out in love to Him. As we realize *how* He has bestowed such marvellous dignities upon us—made us kings and priests—we cannot but cast our crowns at His feet (Rev. 4:10). Where such sentiments truly possess the soul, Christ will be accorded the throne of our hearts; and our deepest longing will be to please Him and to live unto His glory.

“To him be glory.” This is a word, which, according to its derivation, signifies solid excellence and weight of splendour. The “glory of man” is a phrase used to express the human soul, for that is his most noble part. The “glory of God” connotes the excellence of the divine being, and the perfections of His character. The “glory of Christ” comprehends His essential deity, the moral perfections of His humanity, and the high worth of all His offices. He has an intrinsic glory as God the Son (John 17:5). He has an official, glory as the God-man Mediator (Heb. 2:9). He has a merited glory as the reward of His work, and this He shares with His redeemed (John 17:22). In our text, “glory” is ascribed to Him for each of these reasons. Christ is here magnified both for the underived excellence of His person—which exalts Him infinitely above all creatures—and for that acquired glory which will yet be displayed before an assembled universe. There is a glory pertaining to Him as God

incarnate, and this was proclaimed by the angels over the plains of Bethlehem (Luke 2:14). There is a glory belonging to Him in consequence of His mediatorial office and work, and that is celebrated only by the redeemed.

“And dominion.” This too belongs to Him first *by right*, as the eternal God. As such, Christ’s dominion is underived and supreme. As such, He has absolute sovereignty over all creatures, including the devil himself being under His sway. But more: universal dominion is also His *by merit*. God has made “that same Jesus,” whom men crucified, “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), and “all power [authority] is given unto [Him] in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). It was promised Him in the everlasting covenant as the reward of His great undertaking. The mediatorial kingdom of Christ is founded upon His sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection. These dignities of His are “for ever and ever,” for “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isa. 9:7, and compare Dan. 7:14). “Amen” sets faith’s seal to the same.

How blessed is this, that before any announcement is made of the awful judgments described in the Apocalypse, before a trumpet of doom is sounded, before a vial of God’s wrath is poured on the earth, the saints are *first* heard hymning the Lamb: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests [not unto ourselves but] unto God and his Father [for His honour]; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:5, 6)!

The seventh of seven booklets.

