

## **STUDY X**

### **SPIRITUAL AND HUMAN NATURES**

#### **SEPARATE AND DISTINCT**

Common Misapprehensions--Earthly or Human and Heavenly or Spiritual Natures--Earthly Glory and Heavenly Glory--Bible Testimony Regarding Spirit Beings--Mortality and Immortality--Can Mortal Beings Have Everlasting Life?--Justice in the Bestowment of Favors--A Supposed Principle Examined--Variety in Perfection--God's Sovereign Rights--God's Provisions for Man a Satisfying Portion--The Election of the Body of Christ--How their Change of Nature is Effected.

FAILING to see that the plan of God for mankind in general contemplates a restitution to their former estate--the human perfection lost in Eden--and that the Christian Church, as an exception to this general plan, is to have a change of nature from human to spiritual, Christian people generally have supposed that none will be saved except those who reach the spiritual nature. The Scriptures, however, while holding out promises of life and blessing and restitution to all the families of the earth, offer and promise the change to spiritual nature only to the Church selected during the Gospel age; and not a single passage can be found which sustains such hopes for any others.

If the masses of mankind are saved from all the degradation, weakness, pain, misery and death which result from sin, and are restored to the condition of human perfection enjoyed before the fall, they are as really and completely saved from that fall as those who, under the special "high-calling" of the Gospel age, become "partakers of the divine nature."

The failure to understand rightly what constitutes a perfect man, the misapprehension of the terms mortal and immortal, and wrong ideas of justice, have together tended to this error, and mystified many scriptures otherwise easily understood. It is a common view, though unsupported by a single text of Scripture, that a perfect man has never been on earth; that all that is seen of man on earth is only the partially developed man, and that to reach perfection he must become spiritual. This view makes confusion of the Scriptures instead of developing that harmony and beauty which result from "rightly dividing the word of truth."

The Scriptures teach that there have been two, and only two, perfect men--Adam and Jesus. Adam was created in the image of God: that is, with the similar mental powers of reason, memory, judgment and will, and the moral qualities of justice, benevolence, love etc. "Of the earth, earthy," he was an earthly image of a spiritual being, possessing qualities of the same kind, though differing widely in degree, range and scope. To such an extent is man an image of God that God can say even to the fallen man, "Come, let us reason together."

As Jehovah is ruler over all things, so man was made a ruler over all earthly things--After our likeness, let him have dominion over the beasts, fowl, fish, etc. (*Gen. 1:26*) Moses tells us (*Gen. 1:31*) that God recognized the man whom he *had made*--not merely commenced to make, but completed--and God considered his creature "*very good*," that is, perfect; for in God's sight nothing short of perfection is *very good*, in his intelligent creatures.

The perfection of man, as created, is expressed in *Psa. 8:5-8*: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea,

the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea." It has been suggested by some who would make the Bible conform to a theory of evolution, that the statement, "a little," in *Heb. 2:7*, might be understood to mean a little *while* lower, and not a little *degree* lower than the angels. There is, however, neither authority nor reason for such an interpretation. This is a quotation from *Psa. 8:5*, and a critical comparison of the Hebrew and Greek texts can leave no doubt as to the import. The idea, clearly expressed, is a little lower in degree than angels.

David, in the psalm, refers to man in his original estate, and prophetically intimates that God has not abandoned his original plan to have man in his own image and the king of earth, and that he will *remember* him, redeem him and restore him to the same again. The Apostle (*Heb. 2:7*) calls attention to the same fact--that God's original purpose has not been abandoned; that man, originally grand and perfect, the king of earth, is to be remembered, and visited, and restored. He then adds, We see not this promised restitution yet, but we do see the first step God is taking toward its accomplishment. We see Jesus crowned with this glory and honor of perfect manhood, that he, as a fitting ransom or substitute might by God's favor taste death for every man, and thus prepare the way for the restitution of man to all that was lost. Rotherham, one of the most scrupulous translators, renders this passage as follows:

"What is man, that thou rememberest him;  
Or man's son, that thou visitest him?  
Thou madest him *less some little* than messengers:  
With glory and honor thou crownedst him,  
And didst appoint him over the works of thy hands."

Nor should it be inferred that a little lower in degree means a little less perfect. A creature may be perfect, yet on a lower plane of being than another; thus, a perfect horse

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would be lower than a perfect man, etc. There are various natures, animate and inanimate. To illustrate, we arrange the following table:

Grades of Heavenly Spiritual Being	Grades of Earthly or Animal Being	Grades in the Vegetable Domain	Grades in the Mineral Domain
Divine	Human	Trees	Gold
-----	Brute	Shrubs	Silver
-----	Fowl	Grasses	Copper
Angelic	Fish	Mosses	Iron

Each of the minerals mentioned may be pure, yet gold ranks the highest. Though each of the orders of plants should be brought to perfection, they would still differ in nature and rank. Likewise with animals: if each species should be brought to perfection, there would still be variety; for perfecting a nature does not change a nature.\* The grades of spiritual being, also, though perfect, stand related to each other as higher and lower in nature or kind. The divine nature is the highest and the superior of all spiritual natures. Christ at his resurrection was made "*so much better*" than perfect angels as the divine is superior to the angelic nature. **Heb. 1:3-5**

Note carefully that while the classes named in the above table are distinct and separate, yet a comparison between them may be instituted, thus: The highest grade of mineral is inferior to, or *a little lower* than, the lowest grade of vegetable,

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\*The word *nature* is sometimes used in an accommodated sense, as, for instance, when it is said that a dog has a *savage nature*, or that a horse has a *gentle nature*, or is *bad natured*. But in using the word thus it signifies merely the *disposition* of the one described as compared with others, and does not, strictly speaking, relate to nature.

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because in vegetation there is life. So the highest grade of vegetable is *a little lower* than the lowest grade of animal life, because animal life, even in its lowest forms, has intelligence enough to be conscious of existence. Likewise man, though the highest of animal or earthly beings, is "a little lower than the angels," because angels are spiritual or heavenly beings.

There is a wonderful contrast between man as we now see

him, degraded by sin, and the perfect man that God made in his image. Sin has gradually changed his features, as well as his character. Multiplied generations, by ignorance, licentiousness and general depravity, have so blurred and marred humanity that in the large majority of the race the likeness of God is almost obliterated. The moral and intellectual qualities are dwarfed; and the animal instincts, unduly developed, are no longer balanced by the higher. Man has lost physical strength to such an extent that, with all the aid of medical science, his average length of life is now about thirty years, whereas at first he survived nine hundred and thirty years under the same penalty. But though thus defiled and degraded by sin and its penalty, death, working in him, man is to be restored to his original perfection of mind and body, and to glory, honor and dominion, during and by the Millennial reign of Christ. The things to be restored by and through Christ are those things which were lost through Adam's transgression. (**Rom. 5:18,19**) Man did not lose a heavenly but an earthly paradise. Under the death penalty, he did not lose a spiritual but a human existence; and all that was lost was purchased back by his Redeemer, who declared that he came to seek and to save that which was lost. **Luke 19:10**

In addition to the above, we have proof that the perfect man is not a spiritual being. We are told that our Lord, before he left his glory to become a man, was "in a form of

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God"--a spiritual form, a spirit being; but since to be a ransom for mankind he had to be a man, of the same nature as the sinner whose substitute in death he was to become, it was necessary that his nature be changed. And Paul tells us that he took not the nature of angels, one step lower than his own, but that he came down two steps and took the nature of men--he became a man; he was "made flesh." **Heb. 2:16; Phil. 2:7,8; John 1:14**

Notice that this teaches not only that angelic nature is not the only order of spirit being, but that it is a lower nature than that of our Lord before he became a man; and he was not then so high as he is now, for "God hath highly exalted him," because of his obedience in becoming man's willing ransom. (**Phil. 2:8,9**) He is now of the highest order of spirit being, a partaker of the divine (Jehovah's) nature.

But not only do we thus find proof that the divine, angelic and human natures are separate and distinct, but this proves that to be a perfect man is not to be an angel, any

more than the perfection of angelic nature implies that angels are divine and equal with Jehovah; for Jesus took *not* the *nature of angels*, but a different nature--the *nature of men*; not the imperfect human nature as we now possess it, but the *perfect* human nature. He became *a man*; not a depraved and nearly dead being such as men are now, but a man in the full vigor of perfection.

Again, Jesus must have been a perfect man else he could not have kept a perfect law, which is the full measure of a *perfect man's ability*. And he must have been a perfect man else he could not have given a ransom (a corresponding price--**1 Tim. 2:6**) for the forfeited life of the perfect man Adam; "For since by *man* came death, by *man* came also the resurrection of the dead." (**1 Cor. 15:21**) Had he been in the least degree imperfect, it would have proved that he was under condemnation, and therefore he could not have been

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an acceptable sacrifice; neither could he have kept perfectly the law of God. A perfect man was tried, and failed, and was condemned; and only a perfect man could give the *corresponding price* as the Redeemer.

Now we have the question fairly before us in another form, viz.: If Jesus in the flesh was a perfect man, as the Scriptures thus show, does it not prove that a perfect man is a human, fleshly being--not an angel, but a little lower than the angels? The logical conclusion is unmistakable; and in addition we have the inspired statement of the Psalmist (**Psa. 8:5-8**) and Paul's reference to it in **Heb. 2:7-9**.

Neither was Jesus a combination of the two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of two natures produces neither the one nor the other, but an imperfect, hybrid thing, which is obnoxious to the divine arrangement. When Jesus was in the flesh he was a perfect human being; previous to that time he was a perfect spiritual being; and since his resurrection he is a perfect spiritual being of the highest or divine order. It was not until the time of his consecration even unto death, as typified in his baptism--at thirty years of age (manhood, according to the Law, and therefore the right time to consecrate himself as *a man*)--that he received the earnest of his inheritance of the divine nature. (**Matt. 3:16,17**) The human nature had to be *consecrated to death* before he could receive even the *pledge* of the divine nature. And not until that consecration was actually carried out and he had actually sacrificed the human nature, even unto

death, did our Lord Jesus become a full partaker of the divine nature. After becoming a man he became obedient unto death; *wherefore*, God hath highly exalted him to the divine nature. (*Phil. 2:8,9*) If this scripture is true, it follows that he was not exalted to the divine nature until the human nature was actually sacrificed--dead.

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Thus we see that in Jesus there was no mixture of natures, but that twice he experienced a change of nature; first, from spiritual to human; afterward, from human to the highest order of spiritual nature, the divine; and in each case the one was given up for the other.

In this grand example of perfect humanity, which stood unblemished before the world until sacrificed for the world's redemption, we see the perfection from which our race fell in Adam, and to which it is to be restored. In becoming man's ransom, our Lord Jesus gave the *equivalent* for that which man lost; and therefore all mankind may receive again, through faith in Christ, and obedience to his requirements, not a spiritual, but a glorious, perfect *human* nature--"that which was lost."

The perfect faculties and powers of the perfect human being may be exercised indefinitely, and upon new and varied objects of interest, and knowledge and skill may be vastly increased; but no such increase of knowledge or power will effect a change of nature, or make it more than perfect. It will be only the expanding and developing of the perfect human powers. Increase of knowledge and skill will doubtless be man's blessed privilege to all eternity; yet he will still be man, and will be merely learning to use more fully the powers of human nature already possessed. Beyond its wide limits he cannot hope, nor will he desire, to advance, his desires being limited to the scope of his powers.

While Jesus as a man was an illustration of perfect human nature, to which the mass of mankind will be restored, yet since his resurrection he is the illustration of the glorious divine nature which the overcoming Church will, at resurrection, share with him.

Because the present age is devoted mainly to the development of this class which is offered a *change* of nature, and because the apostolic epistles are devoted to the instruction

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of this "little flock," it should not be inferred that God's

plans end with the completion of this chosen company. Nor, on the other hand, should we go to the opposite extreme, and suppose that the special promises of the divine nature, spirit bodies, etc., made to these, are God's design for all mankind. To these are the "exceeding great and precious promises," over and above the other precious promises made to all mankind. To rightly divide the Word of truth, we should observe that the Scriptures recognize the perfection of the divine nature in the "little flock," and the perfection of the human nature in the restored world, as two separate things.

Let us now inquire more particularly, What are spirit beings? what powers are theirs? and by what laws are they governed? Many seem to think, because they do not understand the nature of a spirit being, that it must be a mere myth, and on this subject much superstition prevails. But Paul does not appear to have such an idea. Though he intimates that a human being is incapable of understanding the higher, spiritual nature (*1 Cor. 2:14*), yet he plainly states, as if to guard against any mythical or superstitious notions, that there is a spiritual body, as well as a natural (human) body, a celestial as well as a terrestrial, and a glory of the earthly as well as of the heavenly. The glory of the earthly, as we have seen, was lost by the first Adam's sin, and is to be restored to the race by the Lord Jesus and his Bride (the Christ, Head and body) during the Millennial reign. The glory of the heavenly is as yet unseen except as revealed to the eye of faith by the Spirit through the Word. These glories are distinct and separate. (*1 Cor. 15:38-49*) We know to some extent what the natural, earthly, terrestrial body is, for we now have such, though we can only approximately estimate the glory of its perfection. It is flesh, blood and bones; for "that which is born of the flesh is

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flesh." And since there are two distinct kinds of bodies, we know that the spiritual, whatever it may be, is not composed of flesh, blood and bones: it is heavenly, celestial, spiritual--"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." But what a spirit body is, we know not, for "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but...we shall be like him"--like our Lord Jesus. *John 3:6; 1 John 3:2*

We have no record of any being, either spiritual or human, ever having been changed from one nature to another, except the Son of God; and this was an exceptional case, for an exceptional purpose. When God made angels

he doubtless intended them to remain angels forever, and so with men, each being perfect on his own plane. At least the Scriptures give no intimation of any different purpose. As in the inanimate creation there is a pleasing and almost endless variety, so in the living and intelligent creation the same variety in perfection is possible. Every creature in its perfection is glorious; but, as Paul says, the glory of the celestial (heavenly) is one kind of glory, and the glory of the terrestrial (earthly) is another and a different glory.

By examining the facts recorded of our Lord Jesus after his resurrection, and of angels, who are also spirit beings, thus "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (*1 Cor. 2:13*), we may gain some general information with regard to spirit beings. First, then, angels can be and frequently are present, yet invisible. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him"; and "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (*Psa. 34:7; Heb. 1:14*) Have they ministered visibly or invisibly? Undoubtedly the latter. Elisha was surrounded by a host of Assyrians; his servant was fearful; Elisha prayed to the Lord, and the young man's eyes were opened, and he saw the mountains round

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about them full of chariots of fire and horsemen of fire (or like fire). Again, while to Balaam the angel was invisible, the ass, his eyes being opened, saw him.

Secondly, angels can assume human bodies and appear *as* men. The Lord and two angels so appeared to Abraham, who had a supper prepared for them, of which they ate. At first Abraham supposed them to be three men, and it was not until they were about to go that he discovered one of them to be the Lord, and the other two, angels, who afterward went down to Sodom and delivered Lot. (*Gen. 18:1,2*) An angel appeared to Gideon as a man, but afterward made himself known. An angel appeared to the father and mother of Samson, and they thought him a man until he ascended up to heaven in the flame of the altar.

### **Judges 6:11-22; 13:20**

Thirdly, spirit beings are glorious in their normal condition, and are frequently referred to as glorious and bright. The countenance of the angel who rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre was "as the lightning." Daniel caught a glimpse of a spiritual body, which he described, saying, His eyes were as lamps of fire, his countenance as the lightning, his arms and feet like in color to polished

brass, and his voice as the voice of a multitude. Before him Daniel fell as a dead man. (*Dan. 10:6,10,15,17*) Saul of Tarsus caught a similar glimpse of Christ's glorious body shining above the brightness of the sun at noonday. Saul lost his sight and fell to the ground.

Thus far we have found spirit beings truly glorious; yet, except by the opening of men's eyes to see them, or by their appearing *in flesh* as men, they are invisible to men. This conclusion is further confirmed when we examine the particular details of these manifestations. The Lord was seen of Saul alone, the men traveling with him hearing the voice,

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but seeing no one. (*Acts 9:7*) The men that were with Daniel did not see the glorious being he describes, but a great fear fell on them, and they ran and hid themselves. Again, this glorious being declared, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days." (*Dan. 10:13*) Did Daniel, the man greatly beloved of the Lord, fall as dead before this one whom Persia's prince withstood one and twenty days? How is this? Surely he did not appear in glory to the prince! No; either he was *invisibly* present with him, or else he appeared *as* a man.

Our Lord, since his resurrection, is a spirit being; consequently the same powers which we find illustrated in angels (spiritual beings) should also be possessed by him. And such is the case, as we shall see more fully in a succeeding chapter.

Thus we find that the Scriptures regard the spiritual and the human natures as separate and distinct, and furnish no evidence that the one will evolve or develop into the other; but, on the contrary, they do show that only a few will ever be changed from the human to the divine nature, to which Jesus, their head, has already been exalted. And this remarkable and special feature in Jehovah's plan is for the remarkable and special purpose of preparing these as God's agents for the great future work of restoring all things.

Let us now examine the terms

### **Mortality and Immortality.**

We shall find their true significance in exact harmony with what we have learned from our comparison of Bible statements concerning human and spiritual beings, and

earthly and heavenly promises. These words are usually given very uncertain meanings, and wrong ideas of their meanings produce erroneous views of subjects with which

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they stand connected, in general and in Scripture usage.

"*Mortality*" signifies a state or condition of *liability to death*; not a condition of death, but a condition in which death is a *possibility*.

"*Immortality*" signifies a state or condition *not liable to death*; not merely a condition of freedom from death, but a condition in which death is an *impossibility*.

The common but erroneous idea of *mortality* is, a state or condition in which death is unavoidable, while the common idea of the significance of *immortality* is more nearly correct.

The word *immortal* signifies *not mortal*; hence the very construction of the words indicates their true definitions. It is because of the prevalence of a wrong idea of the word *mortal* that so many are confused when trying to determine whether Adam was mortal or immortal before his transgression. They reason that if he had been *immortal* God would not have said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; because it is impossible for an immortal being to die. This is a logical conclusion. On the other hand, say they, Had he been *mortal*, wherein could have consisted the threat or penalty of the statement, "Thou shalt surely die"; since if mortal (according to their erroneous definition) he could not have avoided death anyhow?

The difficulty, it will be perceived, is in the false meaning given to the word *mortality*. Apply the correct definition, and all is clear. Adam was mortal--that is, in a condition in which death was a possibility. He had life in full and perfect measure, yet *not inherent life*. His was a life *sustained* by "every tree of the garden" save the one tree forbidden; and so long as he continued in obedience to and in harmony with his Maker, his life was secure--the sustaining elements would not be denied. Thus seen, Adam had life; and death

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was entirely avoidable, yet he was in such a condition that death was possible--he was *mortal*.

The question arises, then, If Adam was mortal and on trial, was he on trial for immortality? The general answer

would be, Yes. We answer, No. His trial was to see whether he was worthy or unworthy of a continuance of the life and blessings already possessed. Since it was nowhere promised that if obedient he would become immortal, we are bound to leave all such speculations out of the question. He was promised a *continuance of the blessings then enjoyed* so long as obedient, and threatened with the loss of all--death--if disobedient. It is the false idea of the meaning of the word *mortal* that leads people in general to conclude that all beings who do not die are immortal. In this class they therefore include our heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus, the angels, and all mankind. This, however, is an error: the great mass of mankind saved from the fall, as well as the angels of heaven, will always be mortal; though in a condition of perfection and bliss, they will always be of that mortal nature which could suffer death, the wages of sin, if they would commit sin. The security of their existence will be conditioned, as it was with Adam, upon obedience to the all-wise God, whose justice, love and wisdom, and whose power to cause all things to work together for good to those who love and serve him, will have been fully demonstrated by his dealings with sin in the present time.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is it stated that angels are immortal, nor that mankind restored will be immortal. On the contrary, immortality is ascribed only to the divine nature --originally to Jehovah only; subsequently to our Lord Jesus in his present highly exalted condition; and finally by promise to the Church, the body of Christ, when glorified with him. ***1 Tim. 6:16; John 5:26; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:53,54***

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Not only have we evidence that immortality pertains only to the divine nature, but we have proof that angels are mortal, in the fact that Satan, who was once a chief of their number, is to be destroyed. (***Heb. 2:14***) The fact that he can be destroyed proves that angels as a class are mortal.

Thus considered, we see that when incorrigible sinners are blotted out, both immortal and mortal beings will live forever in joy and happiness and love--the first class possessing a nature incapable of death, having inherent life--life in themselves (***John 5:26***); and the latter having a nature susceptible to death, yet, because of perfection of being and knowledge of the evil and sinfulness of sin, giving no cause for death. They, being approved of God's law, shall be everlastingly supplied with those elements necessary to

sustain them in perfection, and shall never die.

The proper recognition of the meaning of the terms *mortal* and *immortal*, and of their use in the Scriptures, destroys the very foundation of the doctrine of eternal torment. It is based upon the unscriptural theory that God created man immortal, that he cannot cease to exist, and that God cannot destroy him; hence the argument is that the incorrigible must *live on* somewhere and somehow, and the conclusion is that since they are out of harmony with God their eternity must be one of misery. But God's Word assures us that he has provided against such a perpetuation of sin and sinners: that man is mortal, and that the full penalty of wilful sin against full light and knowledge will not be a life in torment, but a second death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

### **"Who Art Thou that Repliest Against God?"**

#### ***Romans 9:20***

It is the mistaken idea of some that justice requires that God should make no difference in the bestowment of his favors

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among his creatures; that if he exalts one to a high position, *in justice* he must do the same for all, unless it can be shown that some have forfeited their *rights*, in which case such might justly be assigned to a lower position.

If this principle be a correct one, it would show that God had no right to create Jesus higher than the angels, and then further to exalt him to the divine nature, unless he intended to do the same for all the angels and for all men.

And to carry the principle still further, if some men are to be highly exalted and made partakers of the divine nature, all men must eventually be elevated to the same position. And why not carry the principle to its extreme limit, and apply the same law of progression to the brute and insect creation, and say that since they are all God's creatures they must all eventually attain to the very highest plane of existence --the divine nature? This is a manifest absurdity, but as reasonable as any other deduction from this assumed principle.

Perhaps none would be inclined to carry the erroneous assumption so far. Yet if it were a principle founded in simple justice, where could it stop short and still be just? And if such were indeed the plan of God, where would be

the pleasing variety in all his works? But such is not God's plan. All nature, both animate and inanimate, exhibits the glory and diversity of divine power and wisdom. And as "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" in wonderful variety and beauty, much more shall his intelligent creation exhibit in variety the superior glory of his power. We so conclude--from the express teaching of the Word of God, from reason and from the analogies of nature.

It is very important that we have right ideas of justice. A *favor* should never be esteemed as a justly merited recompense. An act of simple justice is no occasion for special

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gratitude, nor is it any proof of love; but God commendeth his great love to his creatures, in an endless train of unmerited favors, which should call forth their love and praise in return.

God had a right, if he chose, to make us merely the creatures of a brief space of time, even if we had never sinned. Thus he has made some of his lower creatures. He might have permitted us to enjoy his blessings for a season, and then, without injustice, might have blotted us all out of existence. In fact, even so brief an existence would be a favor. It is only of his favor that we have an existence at all. How much greater favor is the redemption of the existence once forfeited by sin! And further, it is of God's favor that we are men and not beasts; it is purely of God's favor that angels are by nature a little higher than men; and it is also of God's favor that the Lord Jesus and his bride become partakers of the divine nature. It becomes all his intelligent creatures, therefore, to receive with gratitude whatever God bestows. Any other spirit justly merits condemnation, and, if indulged, will end in abasement and destruction. A man has no right to aspire to be an angel, never having been invited to that position; nor has an angel any right to aspire to the divine nature, that never having been offered to him.

It was the aspiration of Satan's pride which brought his abasement, and will end in his destruction. (*Isa. 14:14*) "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (*Luke 14:11*), but not necessarily to the highest position.

Partly from false ideas of justice, and partly from other causes, the subject of election as taught in the Scriptures has been the occasion of much dispute and misunderstanding. That the Scriptures teach election few would deny, but on

just what principle the election or selection is based is a matter of considerable difference of opinion, some claiming

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that it is an arbitrary, unconditional election, and others that it is conditional. There is a measure of truth, we believe, in both of these views. An election on God's part is the expression of his choice for a certain purpose, office or condition. God has elected or chosen that some of his creatures should be angels, that some should be men, that some should be beasts, birds, insects, etc., and that some should be of his own divine nature. And though God selects according to certain *conditions* all who will be admitted to the divine nature, yet it cannot be said that these more than others *merit* it; for it is purely of favor that any creature has existence on any plane.

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy"--kindness or favor.

**(Rom. 9:16)** It is not because the chosen ones were better than others, that God gave them the invitation to the divine nature, for he passed by the angels who had not sinned and called some of the redeemed sinners to divine honors. God has a right to do as he pleases with his own; and he chooses to exercise this right for the accomplishment of his plans. Since, then, all we have is of divine favor, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor"--or less honor? **(Rom. 9:20,21)** All were created by the same divine power--some to have higher nature and greater honor, and some to have lower nature and less honor.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, his [man's] maker: *Ask* me of things to come. Concerning my children, and concerning the work of my hands, *command* ye me? I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded." "Thus saith the Lord that created the

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heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else." **(Isa. 45:11,12,18)** None have a right to dictate to God. If he established the earth, and if he formed it not in vain, but

made it to be inhabited by restored, perfect men, who are we that we should reply against God, and say that it is unjust not to change their nature and make them all partakers of a spiritual nature either like unto the angels, or like unto his own divine nature? How much more becoming to come humbly to God's Word and to "Ask" concerning things to come, than to "command" or to assert that he must carry out our ideas? Lord, keep back thy servants from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over us. None of God's children, we believe, would knowingly dictate to the Lord; yet how easily and almost unconsciously many fall into this error.

The human race are God's children by creation--the work of his hands--and his plan with reference to them is clearly revealed in his Word. Paul says that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy; and his posterity, with the exception of the Gospel Church, will in the resurrection still be earthy, human, adapted to the earth. (*1 Cor. 15:38,44*) David declares that man was made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory, honor, dominion, etc. (*Psa. 8:4-8*) And Peter, our Lord, and all the prophets since the world began, declare that the human race is to be restored to that glorious perfection, and is again to have dominion over earth, as its representative, Adam, had. *Acts 3:19-21*

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before

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your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay--not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete. *Rev. 21:4*

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was "made to be inhabited" by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briers, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but "the earth shall [easily and naturally] yield her increase." "The desert shall blossom as the rose"; the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety, will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in him. The restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection, and to our present unsatisfactory surroundings. It is not God-like restlessly to crave something new. Most things are old to God; and he rejoices most

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in those things which are old and perfect. So will it be with man when restored to the image of God. The perfect man will not know or appreciate fully, and hence will not prefer, the glory of spiritual being, because of a different nature, just as fishes and birds, for the same reason, prefer and enjoy each their own nature and element most. Man will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane that he will have no aspiration to, nor preference for, another nature or other conditions than those possessed. A glance at the present experience of the Church will illustrate this. "How hardly," with what difficulty, shall those who are rich in this world's goods enter into the kingdom of God. The few good things possessed, even under the present reign of evil and death, so captivate the human nature that we need special help from God to keep our eye and purpose fixed on the spiritual promises.

That the Christian Church, the body of Christ, is an exception to God's general plan for mankind, is evident from the statement that its selection was determined in the divine plan before the foundation of the world (*Eph. 1:4,5*), at which time God not only foresaw the fall of the race into sin, but also predetermined the justification, the sanctification and the glorification of this class, which, during the Gospel age, he has been calling out of the world to be conformed to the image of his Son, to be partakers of the divine nature and to be fellow-heirs with Christ Jesus of the Millennial

Kingdom for the establishment of universal righteousness and peace. **Rom. 8:28-31**

This shows that the election or choice of the Church was a predetermined thing on God's part; but mark, it is not an unconditional election of the *individual members* of the Church. Before the foundation of the world God determined that such a company should be selected for such a

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purpose within a specific time--the Gospel age. While we cannot doubt that God could have foreseen the action of each individual member of the Church, and could have foreknown just who would be worthy and therefore constitute the members of that "little flock," yet this is not the way in which God's Word presents the doctrine of election. It was not the thought of an individual predestination which the apostles sought to inculcate, but that *a class* was predetermined in God's purpose to fill the honorable position, the selection of which would be upon conditions of severe trials of faith and obedience and the sacrifice of earthly privileges, etc., even unto death. Thus by an individual trial, and by individually "overcoming," the individual members of the *predetermined class* are being chosen or accepted into all the blessings and benefits predetermined of God for this class.

The word "glorified" in **Rom. 8:30**, from the Greek *doxazo*, signifies *honored*. The position to which the Church is elected is one of great honor. No man could think of aspiring to so great an honor. Even our Lord Jesus was first invited before he aspired to it, as we read: "So also Christ glorified [*doxazo*--honored] not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.'" The heavenly Father thus honored our Lord Jesus; and all of the elect body who are to be joint-heirs with him will be thus honored by Jehovah's favor.

The Church, like its Head, experiences a beginning of the "honor" when *begotten* of God to spiritual nature through the word of truth (**James 1:18**), and will be fully ushered into the honor when *born* of the Spirit, spiritual beings--in the image of the glorified Head. Those whom God would thus honor must be perfect and pure; and since we were by inheritance sinners, he not only called or invited us to the

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honor, but also provided *justification* from sin through the

death of his Son, to enable us to receive the honor to which he calls us.

In selecting the little flock, God makes a very general call--"many are called." All are not called. The call was confined at first, during our Lord's ministry, to Israel after the flesh; but now, as many as the servants of God meet (**Luke 14:23**) are to be urged or constrained (not compelled) to come to this special feast of favor. But even of those who hear and come, all are not worthy. Wedding garments (the imputed righteousness of Christ) are provided, but some will not wear them, and must be rejected; and of those who do put on the robes of justification, and who receive the honor of being begotten to a new nature, some fail to make their calling and election sure by faithfulness to their covenant. Of those worthy to appear with the Lamb in glory, it is declared, "They are *called* and *chosen* and *faithful*." **Rev. 14:1; 17:14**

The call is true; the determination of God to select and exalt a Church is unchangeable; but who will be of this chosen class is conditional. All who would share the predestined honors must fulfil the conditions of the call. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (**Heb. 4:1**) While the great favor is not *of* him that willeth, nor *of* him that runneth, it is *to* him that willeth and *to* him that runneth, when called.

Having thus, we trust, clearly vindicated God's *absolute right and purpose* to do what he will with his own, we call attention to the fact that the principle which characterizes the bestowment of all God's favors is the general good of all.

While, then, on the authority of the Scriptures, we reckon it an established fact that the human and spiritual natures

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are separate and distinct--that the blending of the two natures is no part of God's design, but would be an imperfection, and that the change from one nature to another is not the rule, but the exception, in the single instance of the Christ--it becomes a matter of deep interest to learn how the change is to be accomplished, upon what conditions it may be attained and in what manner it will be effected.

The conditions on which the Church may be exalted with her Lord to the divine nature (**2 Pet. 1:4**) are precisely the same as the conditions on which he received it; even by following in his footprints (**1 Pet. 2:21**), presenting herself a living sacrifice, as he did, and then faithfully carrying out

that consecration vow until the sacrifice terminates in death. This change of nature from human to divine is given as a reward to those who, within the Gospel age, sacrifice the *human nature*, as did our Lord, with all *its* interests, hopes and aims, present and future--even unto death. In the resurrection such will awake, not to share with the rest of mankind in the blessed restitution to human perfection and all its accompanying blessings, but to share the likeness and glory and joy of the Lord, as partakers with him of the divine nature. **Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12**

The beginning and development of the new nature is likened to the beginning and development of human life. As in the one case there is a begetting and then a birth, so also in the other. The saints are said to be begotten of God through the Word of truth. (**1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 5:18; James 1:18**) That is, they receive the first impulse in the divine life from God through his Word. When, having been justified freely by faith in the ransom, they hear the call, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, [ransomed, justified --and therefore] acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (**Rom. 12:1**); and when, in obedience to

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that call, they fully consecrate their justified humanity to God, a living sacrifice, side by side with that of Jesus, it is accepted of God; and in that very act the spiritual life is begun. Such find themselves at once thinking and acting as the new [transformed] mind prompts, even to the crucifixion of the human desires. From the moment of consecration these are reckoned of God as "new creatures."

Thus to these *embryo* "new creatures" old things [human desires, hopes, plans, etc.] pass away, and all things become new. The embryo "new creature" continues to grow and develop, as the old human nature, with its hopes, aims, desires, etc., is crucified. These two processes progress simultaneously, from the time consecration begins until the death of the human and the birth of the spiritual result. As the Spirit of God continues to unfold, through his Word, more and more of his plans, he thus quickens even our mortal bodies (**Rom. 8:11**), enabling these mortal bodies to render him service; but in due time we will have new bodies--spiritual, heavenly, adapted in all respects to the new, divine mind.

The *birth* of the "new creature" is in the resurrection (**Col. 1:18**); and the resurrection of this class is designated the *first* (or choice) resurrection. (**Rev. 20:6**) It should be remembered

that we are not actually spirit beings until the resurrection, though from the time we receive the spirit of adoption we are reckoned as such. (**Rom. 8:23-25; Eph. 1:13,14; Rom. 6:10,11**) When we become spirit beings actually, that is, when we are born of the Spirit, we will no longer be fleshly beings; for "that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*."

This birth to the spiritual nature in the resurrection must be preceded by a begetting of the Spirit at consecration, just as surely as the birth of the flesh is preceded by a begetting of the flesh. All that are born of the flesh in the likeness

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of the first Adam, the earthly, were first begotten of the flesh; and some have been begotten *again*, by the Spirit of God through the word of truth, that in due time they may be born of the Spirit into the heavenly likeness, in the first resurrection: "As we have borne the image of the earthly, *we* [the Church] shall also bear the image of the heavenly"--unless there be a falling away. **1 Cor. 15:49; Heb. 6:6**

Though the acceptance of the heavenly call and our consecration in obedience to it be decided at one particular moment, the bringing of every thought into harmony with the mind of God is a gradual work; it is a gradual bending heavenward of that which naturally bends earthward. The Apostle terms this process a transforming work, saying, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed [to the heavenly nature] by the *renewing of your minds*, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." **Rom. 12:2**

It should be noticed that these words of the Apostle are not addressed to the unbelieving world, but to those whom he recognizes as brethren, as shown by the preceding verse--"I beseech you, therefore, *brethren*,...that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God."

It is commonly believed that when a man is converted or turned from sin to righteousness, and from unbelief and opposition to God to reliance upon him, that is the transforming which Paul meant. Truly that is a great change--*a* transformation, but not *the* transformation that Paul here refers to. That is a transformation of character; but Paul refers to a transformation of nature promised to believers during the Gospel age, on certain conditions, and he was urging *believers* to fulfil those conditions. Had not such a transformation of *character* already taken place in those

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whom he addressed, he could not have termed them brethren --brethren, too, who had something "holy and acceptable unto God" to offer in sacrifice; for only those who are justified by faith in the ransom are reckoned of God as holy and acceptable. Transformation of *nature* results to those who, during the Gospel age, present their justified humanity a living sacrifice, as Jesus presented his perfect humanity a sacrifice, laying down all right and claim to future *human* existence, as well as ignoring present human gratification, privileges, rights, etc. The first thing sacrificed is the human will; and thenceforth we may not be guided either by our own or by any other human will, but only by the divine will. The divine will becomes our will, and we reckon the human will as not ours, but as the will of another, to be ignored and sacrificed. The divine will having become our will, we begin to think, to reason and to judge from the divine standpoint: God's plan becomes our plan, and God's ways become our ways. None can fully understand this transformation who have not in good faith presented themselves as sacrifices, and in consequence come to experience it. Previously we might enjoy anything that was not actually sinful; for the world and all its good things were made for man's enjoyment, the only difficulty being to subdue the sinful propensities. But the consecrated, the transformed, in addition to the effort to subdue sin, must sacrifice the present good things and devote all their energies to the service of God. And those faithful in service and sacrifice will indeed realize daily that this world is not their resting place, and that here they have no continuing city. But their hearts and hopes will be turned to that "rest that remaineth for the people of God." And that blessed hope in turn will quicken and inspire to continued sacrifice.

Thus, through consecration, the mind is renewed or transformed, and the desires, hopes and aims begin to rise

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toward the spiritual and unseen things promised, while the human hopes, etc., die. Those thus transformed, or in process of change, are reckoned "new creatures," begotten of God, and partakers to that extent of the divine nature. Mark well the difference between these "new creatures" and those believers and "brethren" who are only justified. Those of the latter class are still of the earth, earthy, and,

aside from sinful desires, their hopes, ambitions, and aims are such as will be fully gratified in the promised restitution of all things. But those of the former class are not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world, and their hopes center in the things unseen, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The prospect of earthly glory, so enchanting to the natural man, would no longer be a satisfying portion to those begotten of this heavenly hope, to those who see the glories of the heavenly promises, and who appreciate the part assigned them in the divine plan. This new, divine mind is the earnest of our inheritance of the complete divine nature--mind and body. Some may be a little startled by this expression, a divine body; but we are told that Jesus is now the express image of his Father's person, and that the overcomers will "be *like* him and see him as he *is*." (**1 John 3:2**) "There is a natural [human] body, and there is a spiritual body." (**1 Cor. 15:44**) We could not imagine either our divine Father or our Lord Jesus as merely great minds without bodies. Theirs are glorious spiritual bodies, though it doth not yet appear how great is the glory, and it shall not, until we also shall share the divine nature.

While this transforming of the *mind* from human to spiritual is a gradual work, the change from a human to a spiritual *body* will not be gradual, but instantaneous. (**1 Cor. 15:52**) Now, as Paul says, we have this treasure (the divine mind) in earthen vessels, but in due time the treasure will be

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in a glorious vessel appropriate to it--the spiritual body.

We have seen that the human nature is a likeness of the spiritual. (**Gen. 5:1**) For instance, God has a will, so have men and angels; God has reason and memory, so have his intelligent creatures--angels and men. The character of the mental operations of each is the same. With the same data for reasoning, and under similar conditions, these different natures are able to arrive at the same conclusions. Though the mental faculties of the divine, the angelic and the human natures are similar, yet we know that the spiritual natures have powers beyond and above the human--powers which result, we think, not from different faculties, but from the wider range of the same faculties and the different circumstances under which they operate. The human nature is a perfect earthly image of the spiritual nature, having the same faculties, but confined to the earthly sphere, and with ability and disposition to discern only so much beyond it as God sees fit to reveal for man's benefit

and happiness.

The divine is the highest order of the spiritual nature; and how immeasurable is the distance between God and his creatures! We are able to catch only glimpses of the glory of the divine wisdom, power and goodness as in panoramic view he causes some of his mighty works to pass before us. But we may measure and comprehend the glory of perfect humanity.

With these thoughts clearly in mind, we are able to appreciate how the change from the human to the spiritual nature is effected, viz., by carrying the same mental powers over to higher conditions. When clothed with the heavenly body, we shall have the heavenly powers which belong to that glorious body; and we shall have the range of thought and scope of power which belong to it.

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The change or transformation of mind, from earthly to heavenly, which the consecrated experience here, is the beginning of that change of nature. It is not a change of brain, nor a miracle in its changed operation, but it is the will and the bent of mind that are changed. Our will and sentiments represent our individuality; hence we are transformed, and reckoned as actually belonging to the heavenly nature, when our wills and sentiments are thus changed. True, this is but a very small beginning; but a begetting, as this is termed, is always but a small beginning; yet it is the earnest or assurance of the finished work. *Eph. 1:13,14*

Some have asked, How shall we know ourselves when changed? How shall we then know that we are the same beings that lived and suffered and sacrificed that we might be partakers of this glory? Will *we* be the same conscious beings? Most assuredly, yes. If *we* be dead with Christ, *we* shall also live with him. (*Rom. 6:8*) Changes which daily occur to our human bodies do not cause us to forget the past, or to lose our identity.\*

These thoughts may help us to understand also how the Son, when changed from spiritual to human conditions--to human nature and earthly limitations--was a man; and though it was the same being in both cases, under the first conditions he was spiritual and under the second conditions he was human. Because the two natures are separate and

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\*Our human bodies are constantly changing. Science declares that each seven years witnesses a complete change in our component atoms. So the promised change from human to spiritual bodies will not destroy either

memory or identity, but will increase their power and range. The same divine mind that now is ours, with the same memory, the same reasoning powers, etc., will then find its powers expanded to immeasurable heights and depths, in harmony with its new spiritual body; and memory will trace all our career from earliest human infancy, and we will be able, by contrast, fully to realize the glorious reward of our sacrifice. But this could not be the case if the human were not an *image* of the spiritual.

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distinct, and yet the one a likeness of the other, therefore, the same mental faculties (memory, etc.) being common to both, Jesus could realize his former glory which he had before becoming a man, but which he had not when he had become a man, as his words prove--"Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I *had* with thee before the world was" (*John 17:5*)--the glory of the spiritual nature. And that prayer is more than answered in his present exaltation to the highest form of spirit being, the divine nature.

Referring again to Paul's words, we notice that he does not say, Do not conform yourselves to this world, but transform yourselves into the divine likeness; but he says, "*Be* not conformed,...but *be* ye transformed." This is well expressed; for we do not either conform or transform ourselves; but we do either submit ourselves to be conformed to the world by the worldly influences, the spirit of the world around us, or submit ourselves to the will of God, the holy will or Spirit, to be transformed by heavenly influences exercised through the Word of God. You that are consecrated, to which influences are you submitting? The transforming influences lead to present sacrifice and suffering, but the end is glorious. If you are developing under these transforming influences, you are proving daily what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Let such as have laid their all upon the altar of sacrifice continually bear in mind that, while the Word of God contains both earthly and heavenly promises, only the latter belong to us. Our treasure is in heaven: let our hearts continually be there. Our calling is not only to the spiritual nature, but to the highest order of the spiritual, the divine nature --"so much better than the angels." (*2 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 1:4*) This heavenly calling is confined to the Gospel age: it was never made before it, and it will cease with its close. An

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earthly calling was made, though imperfectly understood, before the heavenly calling, and we are told that it will be continued after the Gospel age. Life [for those restored as human beings] and immortality [the prize for which the body of Christ is running] have both been brought to light during this age. (*2 Tim. 1:10*) Both the human and spiritual natures will be glorious in their perfection, yet distinct and separate. No insignificant feature of the glory of God's finished work will be the beautiful variety, yet wonderful harmony, of all things, animate and inanimate--harmony with each other and harmony with God.

### **The Church of God**

"Zion, arise, break forth in songs  
Of everlasting joy;  
To God eternal praise belongs,  
Who doth thy foes destroy.  
Thou Church of God, awake! awake!  
For light beams from on high;  
From earth and dust thy garments shake,  
Thy glory's drawing nigh.

"To raise thee high above the earth,  
God will his power employ;  
He'll turn thy mourning into mirth,  
Thy sorrow into joy.  
In shining robes thyself array,  
Put on thy garments pure;  
Thy King shall lead thee in the way  
That's holy, safe and sure."