

HOUSE OF INTERPRETER



Christian
comes to the
house of the
Interpreter.

Chen he went on till he came at the house of the *Interpreter*¹, where he knocked over and over; at last one came to the door, and asked, Who was there?

2. **Chr.** Sir, here is a traveler, who was bid by an acquaintance of the good man of this house, to call here for my profit; I would therefore speak with the master of the house. So he called for the master of the house, who after a little time came to *Christian*, and asked him what he would have?

3. **Chr.** Sir, said *Christian*, I am a man that am come from the City of *Destruction*, and am going to *Mount Zion*; and I was told by the man that stands at the gate, at the head of this way, that if I called here, you would shew me excellent things, such as would be a help to me in my journey.

1st ROOM: THE PICTURE

He is enter-
tained.

4. **Inter.** Then said the *Interpreter*, Come in; I will shew thee

¹ By the Interpreter, the author seems to design the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit, of which all who come to Jesus are made partakers. The several lessons Christian receives in the Interpreter's house, are what all in some measure learn, who are taught of God, nor can a thriving profession be maintained without them.

that which will be profitable to thee. So he commanded his man to light the candle, and bid *Christian* follow him; so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door; the which when he had done, *Christian* saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it: It had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of Books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.²

Illumination.

Christian
sees a grave
picture.
The fashion
of the pic-
ture.

5. **Chr.** Then said *Christian*, What means this?

6. **Inter.** The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand. He can beget children, travel in birth with children, and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with eyes lift

I Cor. 4. 15.

Gal. 4. 19.

² A true minister has his eyes lifted up to God for sufficiency and access; he derives his knowledge and message from the Word; what he thus receives he faithfully delivers; his heart is in his work, so that he is not influenced either by the favor or frowns of the world; he pleads earnestly with men from a sense of the love of Christ, the worth of souls, and the importance of eternity: and the prospect of a crown of life sweetens and enlivens all his labor. Lord, send forth many such laborers into the harvest. Amen.

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The meaning of the picture.

Why he shewed him the picture first.

up to heaven, the best of Books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips; it is to shew thee, that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men. And whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head; that is to shew thee, that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, he is sure in the world that comes next, to have glory for his reward. Now, said the *Interpreter*, I have shewed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou may'st meet with in the way: wherefore take good heed to what I have shewed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death.

2nd ROOM: THE DUSTY PARLOR

7. Then he took him by the hand, and led him into a very large parlor that was full of dust, because never swept;³ the which after he had

³ The moralist and self righteous legalist are lulled up in a false peace, and see not the evil of their hearts, or the sinfulness of sin, till the law does its office, by working wrath in the conscience—This was the case with St. Paul, "*I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment*

reviewed a little while, the *Interpreter* called for a man to sweep. Now when he began to sweep, the dust began so abundantly to fly about, that *Christian* had almost therewith been choked. Then said the *Interpreter* to a damsel that stood by, Bring hither water, and sprinkle the room; the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure.

8. *Chr.* Then said *Christian*, What means this?

9. *Inter.* The *Interpreter* answered, This parlor is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel. The dust is his original sin, and inward corruption's that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep at first, is the law; but she that brought water, and did sprinkle it, is the gospel. Now, whereas thou sawest that so soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about, that the room by him could not be cleansed, but that thou wast almost choked therewith; this is to shew thee, that the law, instead of cleansing the heart by its working from sin, doth revive, put strength into, and increase it in the soul, even as it doth discover and forbid it, for it doth not give power to subdue.

came, sin revived and I died." Then the gospel steps into the relief of the guilty sinner; the record concerning Christ is brought home to the conscience, which experiences the blessed efficacy of the blood of Christ in cleansing from all sin.

Rom. 7. 6.
I Cor. 15. 56.
Rom 5. 20.

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10. Again, as thou sawest the damsel sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure; this is to shew thee, that when the gospel comes in, the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then, I say, even as thou sawest the damsel lay the dust by sprinkling the floor with water, so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through the faith of it, and consequently fit for the King of glory to inhabit.

John 15. 3.
Ephes. 5.26.
Acts 15.9.
Rom. 16. 25,
26.
1 John 5. 13.

3rd ROOM: THE TWO CHILDREN

11. I saw, moreover, in my dream, That the *Interpreter* took him by the hand, and had him into a little room, where sat two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was *Passion*, of the other *Patience*. *Passion* seemed to be much discontent, but *Patience* was very quiet. Then *Christian* asked, What is the reason of the discontent of *Passion*? The *Interpreter* answered, The governor of them would have him stay for his best things 'till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now. But *Patience* is willing to wait.

*He shewed
him Passion
and Patience.
Passion will
have it no.*

*Patience is
for waiting.*

*Passion hath
his desire.*

*And quickly
lavishes all
away.*

12. Then I saw that one came to *Passion*, and brought him a bag of treasure, and poured it down at his feet: the which he took up and rejoiced therein, and withal laughed *Patience* to scorn. But I beheld but a while, and he had lavished all away, and had nothing left him but rags.

13. **Chr.** Then said *Christian* to the *Interpreter*, Expound this matter more fully to me.

*The matter
expounded*

14. **Inter.** So he said, These two lads are figures; *Passion* of the men of this world, and *Patience* of the men of that which is to come: for as here thou seest, *Passion* will have all now, this year, that is to say, in this world; so are the men of this world; they must have all their good things now, they cannot stay till next year, that is, until the next world, for their portion of good. That proverb, *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*, is of more authority with them, than are all the divine testimonies of the good of the world to come. But as thou sawest, that he had quickly lavished all away, and had presently left him nothing but rags, so will it be with all such men at the end of this world.

*The worldly
man for a
bird in the
hand*

15. **Chr.** Then said *Christian*, Now I see that *Patience* has the best wisdom, and that upon many accounts. **1.** Because he stays for the best things. **2.** And also because he will have the glory of his, when the other has nothing but rags.

*Patience had
the best
wisdom.*

16. **Inter.** Nay, you may add another, to wit, the glory of the next world will never wear out; but these are suddenly gone. Therefore *Passion* had not so much reason to laugh at *Patience*, because he had his good things first, as *Patience* will have to laugh at *Passion*, because he had his best things last; for first must

*Things that
are first must
give place,
but things
that are last
are lasting.*

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give place to last, because last must have its time to come; but last gives place to nothing; for there is not another to succeed; he therefore that hath his portion first, must needs have a time to spend it; but he that has his portion last, must have it lastingly; therefore it is said of *Dives*, In thy Lifetime thou receivedst thy good things, and likewise *Lazarus* evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou I art tormented.

17. **Chr.** Then I perceive it is not best to covet things that are now, but to wait for things to come.

18. **Inter.** You say truth: For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. But though this be so, yet since things present, and our fleshly appetite are such near neighbors one to another; and again, because things to come, and carnal sense, are such strangers one to another; therefore it is, that the first of these so suddenly fall into amity, and that distance is so continued between the second.

4th ROOM: THE FIRE BY THE WALL

19. Then I saw in my dream, that the *Interpreter* took *Christian* by the hand, and led him into a place where was a *Fire burning against a wall*, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it, to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.

20. Then said *Christian*, What means this?

21. The *Interpreter* answered; This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it, to extinguish and put it out, is the *Devil*: but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that. So he had him about to the back side of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of which he did also continually cast (but secretly) into the fire.

22. Then said *Christian*, What means this?

23. The *Interpreter* answered, This is *Christ*, who continually with the oil of his grace maintains the work already begun in the heart; by the means of which, notwithstanding what the *Devil* can do, the souls of his people prove gracious still.⁴ And in that thou sawest, that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire; this is to teach thee, that it is

2 Cor. 12. 9.

⁴ The wisdom, love, and faithfulness of God towards his people, and their fidelity to him, are much more signally displayed, by their being supported under, and brought through various temptations than they could be if their path was always smooth. It is a cause of wonder, not to others only, but to themselves. Could they have a view of what they were to meet with beforehand, they would think it impossible to endure; but the event proves, that though he sometimes hides his face, he never withdraws his supporting arm.

2 Cor. 4. 18.
The first things are but temporal.

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hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul.

5th ROOM: THE STATELY PALACE

24. I saw also, that the *Interpreter* took him again by the hand, and led him into a pleasant place, where was builded a stately *Palace*, beautiful to behold; at the sight of which, *Christian* was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold.

25. Then said *Christian*, May we go in thither?

26. Then the *Interpreter* took him and led him up toward the door of the *Palace*; and behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table side, with a book, and his inkhorn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein: He saw also, that in the doorway stood many men in armor to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter, what hurt and mischief they could. Now was *Christian* somewhat in a maze. At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, *Christian* saw a man of a very stout countenance, come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, *Set down my name, Sir*; the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put an helmet upon his head, and rush toward the

door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace; at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying,

*Come in, Come in;
Eternal Glory thou shalt win.*

27. So he went in, and was clothed with such garments as they. Then *Christian* smiled, and said, I think verily I know the meaning of this.

28. Now, said *Christian*, let me go hence. Nay, stay (said the *Interpreter*) till I have shewed thee a little more, and after that thou shalt go on thy way.

6th ROOM: THE MAN IN THE IRON CAGE

29. So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where there sat a *man in an Iron Cage*.

*Despair like an
iron cage.*

30. Now the man, to look on, seemed very sad; he sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, his hands folded together, and he sighed as if he would break his heart. Then said *Christian*, What means this? At

*The
Valiant
Man.*

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which the *Interpreter* bid him talk with the man.

31. Then said *Christian* to the man, What art thou? The man answered, I am what I was not once.⁵

32. **Chr.** What wast thou once?

Luke 8. 13.

33. **Man.** The man said, I was once a fair and flourishing professor, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others: I once was, as I thought, fair for the Celestial City, and had then even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither.

34. **Chr.** Well, but what art thou now?

35. **Man.** I am now a man of *Despair*, and am shut up in it, as in this Iron Cage. I cannot get out; Oh, now I cannot.

36. **Chr.** But how camest thou in this condition?

⁵ Let us beware of backsliding. Man knows the beginning of sin, but God only knows the end of it. Yet many have been released from this iron cage. The language here used only intimates the judgment a person in such a condition forms of his own state. And many of God's dear children [not chargeable with any signal declension] through lowness of spirits, and stress of temptation, has thought their case for a season desperate, who have afterwards rejoiced with joy unspeakable. By the account this man gives of himself, it appears that he had been a very great offender.

37. **Man.** I left off to watch, and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the Word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me; I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent.

38. Then said *Christian* to the *Interpreter*, But is there no hope for such a man as this? Ask him, said the *Interpreter*.

39. **Chr.** Then said *Christian*, Is there no hope, but you must be kept in the *Iron Cage of Despair*?

40. **Man.** No, none at all.

41. **Chr.** Why? The Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.

42. **Man.** I have crucified him to myself afresh; I have despised his person, I have despised his righteousness; I have counted his blood an unholy thing; I have done despite to the Spirit of grace; therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains to me nothing but threatnings, dreadful threatnings, fearful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour as an adversary.

Heb. 6. 6.

Luke 19. 14.

Heb. 10. 28, 29

43. **Chr.** For what did you bring yourself into this condition?

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44. **Man.** For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which, I did then promise myself much delight: but now every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me, like a burning worm.

45. **Chr.** But canst thou not now repent and turn?

46. **Man.** God hath denied me repentance. His word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, Himself hath shut me up in this *Iron Cage*: nor can all the men in the world let me out. O eternity! Eternity! How shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity!

47. **Inter.** Then said the *Interpreter* to *Christian*, Let this man's misery be remembered by thee, and be an everlasting caution to thee.

48. **Chr.** Well, said *Christian*, this is fearful! God help me to watch and be sober, and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man's misery. Sir, is it not time for me to go on my way now?

7th ROOM: THE MAN THAT TREMBLED

49. **Inter.** Tarry till I shall show thee one thing more, and thou shalt go on thy way.

50. So he took *Christian* by the hand again, and led him into a chamber, where there was one rising out

of bed; and as he put on his raiment, he shook and trembled. Then said *Christian*, Why doth this man thus tremble? The *Interpreter* then bid him tell to *Christian* the reason of his so doing. So he began and said, This night as I was in my sleep, I dreamed, and behold the heavens grew exceeding black: also it thundered and lightened in most fearful wise, that it put me into an agony. So I looked up in my dream, and saw the clouds rack at an unusual rate upon which I heard a great sound of a trumpet, and saw also a man sit upon a cloud, attended with the thousands of heaven; they were all in flaming fire; also the heavens were in a burning flame. I, heard then a voice, saying, *Arise ye dead, and come to judgment*; and with that the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the dead, that were therein, came forth; some of them were exceeding glad, and looked upward; and some sought to hide themselves under the mountains. Then I saw the man that sat upon the cloud, open the book, and bid the world draw near.⁶ Yet there was, by reason of a fierce flame which issued out and came before him a convenient distance betwixt him and them, as

1 Cor. 15.
52.
1 Thess. 4.
Jude 15.
John 3. 28.
2 Thess. 1. 8.
Rev. 20. 11,
12, 13, 14.
Isa. 26. 21.
Mich. 7. 16,
17.
Psalm 5. 1,
2, 3.
Dan. 10. 7.

⁶ A frequent meditation of the solemnity, terror, and certainty of the last day's account, is one of the best means of preparing us for it. It is said of St. Jerome, that for many years of his life, whatever he was doing, he thought this voice was sounding in his ears: *Surgite mortui, et venite ad judicium*; "*Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.*"

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Mal. 3. 2, 3.
Dan. 7. 9, 10.

Mat. 3. 12.
Chap. 13. 30.
Mal. 4. 1.

Luke 3. 17.

I Thess. 4. 16,
17.

Rom. 2. 14,
15.

betwixt the judge and the prisoners at the bar. I heard it also proclaimed to them that attended on the man that sat on the cloud, *Gather together the tares, the chaff and stubble, and cast them into the burning lake*; and with that the bottomless pit opened, just whereabouts I stood; out of the mouth of which there came, in an abundant manner, smoke, and coals of fire, with hideous noises. It was also said to the same persons, *Gather my wheat into the garner*. And with that I saw many caught up and carried away into the clouds, but I was left behind. I also sought to hide myself, but I could not, for the man that sat upon the cloud still kept his eye upon me: my sins also came into my mind; and my conscience did accuse me on every side. Upon this I awaked from my sleep.

51. **Chr.** But what was it that made you so afraid of this sight?

52. **Man.** Why, I thought that the day of judgment was come, and that I was not ready for it: but this frightened me most, that the angels gathered up several, and left me behind; also the pit of hell opened her mouth just where I stood. My conscience too afflicted me; and, as I thought, the judge had always his eye upon me, shewing indignation in his countenance.

53. Then said the *Interpreter* to *Christian*, Hast thou considered all these things?

54. **Chr.** Yes, and they put me in *hope* and *fear*.⁷

55. **Int.** Well, keep all things so in thy mind, that they may be as a *goad* in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go. Then *Christian* began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his journey. Then said the *Interpreter*, The *Comforter* be always with thee, good *Christian*, to guide thee in the way that leads to the City.

56. So *Christian* went on his way, saying,

*Here I have seen things
rare and profitable,
Things pleasant, dreadful,
things to make me stable
In what I have begun
to take in hand;
Then let me think on them,
and understand
Wherefore they shewed me were,
and let me be
Thankful, O good Interpreter,
to thee. †*

⁷ Hope and fear have each their proper place in a Christian's experience. The promises of God in Christ, afford a strong and unshaken foundation for a lively hope; and they who know the deceitfulness of their hearts, the strength and subtlety of their enemies, the snares they are exposed to from their situation in this world, will see just cause for continual jealousy and fear. Without such a fear, formality and carelessness will take place. Therefore it is said, "*Blessed is the man that feareth always.*"