BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 12

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 12, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

213 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 12

Chapter 1

“Absent From the Body—Present With the Lord.” 2 Cor. 5:8

Two things go together for us as saints; the certainty of the Lord's coming, and the uncertainty whether or not we shall fall asleep before He come. Known to God only is it whether I shall have put off the tabernacle of the body, or be found in occupation of it when Christ returns in the cloud: but in presence of the certainty of His coming, the uncertainty whether I shall then be in the body, or out of the body, however much it may interest, does not disturb, me. In either case a blessedness is assured to us richly surpassing our present blessing, and we can happily entrust to His sovereignty the disposal of our earthly house of tabernacle! It is good to be for Him here; it is “far better” to fall asleep and go to Him; but best of all to awake in His likeness if I have slept, or, if living when He comes, to see Him as He is! This, the superlative thing, and not the comparative, though that also be blessed, is what the Lord always puts before us as the object of our hope; nothing short of this is the “mark for the prize,” or the desired consummation when He and we are glorified together! The fact that in scripture the Holy Ghost uniformly connects our hearts' aspirations with the return of Christ should suffice to satisfy every saint of God that the superlative thing, that which is the subject of “that blessed hope,” is His coming, and that if we substitute anything else, it only indicates that we are out of the mind and current of the Spirit of God. But while that be incontestable, and cannot be too emphatically maintained, the fact that so many saints have fallen asleep since the assembly of God first acquired “that blessed hope,” and that one after another around us is over and anon retiring to rest, necessitates to our souls a very deep and ever renewed interest in the character of their blessing.

The thief in whom grace wrought on the cross, blessed as was the new-born desire of his heart, got help on three points, each of exceeding interest. He asked (1) to be remembered by the Lord, (2) at His coming, (3) in His kingdom. The Lord both corrected and surpassed each feature of his request, for He promised (1) that he should be with Him (2) that day (3) in paradise! This affords the fullest scripture teaching as to the blessedness of those who put off this tabernacle, and connecting it with Paul's testimony, that “absent from the body,” the saint is “present with the Lord;” that “to depart and to be with Christ is far better;” and that “to die is gain,” clearly establishes that the emancipated spirit enjoys (1) the blessedness of being with Christ, which is far better than any blessing enjoyed below, (2) that such blessedness is immediate, and (3) it is in the elysium of His own presence, a locality otherwise undefined.

But if this summarizes the direct instruction which the Holy Ghost has given us in the word, yet may we safely and soberly predicate a variety of aspects of the blessedness involved in that momentous change of condition into which the spirit is introduced when the earthly house of its tabernacle is vacated. Disencumbered of the body, it is at once relieved from the drag or resistance which a sinful body, however well adapted for the exercises of faith, and as an instrument for service to the Lord in a sinful world, must inevitably impose upon its freedom. With what new gladness shall we reflect that we can never grieve His blessed heart any more, nor ever again bring dishonor upon His peerless name; that sin and sorrow, toil and trouble, care and conflict, and all that tends to weaken our love and attachment to the Lord, or hinder its outflow,

with every other thing that tells of the fall and the curse, are left behind forever I Whether it be the needs and weakness of humanity as created, or its sick and suffering condition as fallen, or as the vehicle in which my will would work, that abode in which the flesh dwells—all this I am freed from on leaving the body: no more can I know want or weariness; no more pain and anguish; no more workings of a perverse will, of a carnal mind, of a heart at enmity with God! By vacating the body I have broken every link with the flesh and its activities, with the world and its elements; I have parted company, never to be resumed, with the first man and the Adamic creation, with man's world and the world's god. What a release from Satan's hostility and subtlety; what an escape from every snare of the fowler; from the world, too, Satan's usurped empire; no further exposure to its hydra-headed opposition to Christ and to those who are His; the wilderness past, with all its painful experiences of battlings and buffetings, and the haven reached where all evil is excluded, and all toil ceases in the eternal calm and sublimity of His presence!

It is a happy and a refreshing thought that my body, being a member of Christ, is assured of resurrection, because of His Spirit who dwelleth in me, and this secures the body for that day; while being “one spirit” with the Lord, one with Him in living, eternal union, whether in or out of the body, my spirit, in returning to God, finds that eternal haven in the presence of Christ which secures it for reunion with the body at His coming!

Save the Lord Himself, no one was ever more superior to circumstances than Paul, he who could say, “I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation. I have strength for all things in him that gives me power;” yet he says, I have “a desire to depart.” No one had a more important service to detain him below, and no one was more singularly qualified, and more thoroughly devoted, as a servant. It is summed up—this remarkable identification of himself with Christ's interests on earth—in the words, “For me to live is Christ,” and yet he adds, “to die is gain!”

There are three aspects in which the departed saint may be regarded; as to what he escapes or resigns, as to what he retains, and as to what he acquires. What he escapes has been already sufficiently touched upon. What he resigns is equally apparent, though not, perhaps, sufficiently recognized, otherwise we should value and turn to account more than we do the present unique period of the soul's history! Each of us has doubtless looked back to the days of his youth, never to be recalled, and found occasion to mourn over days of evil that cannot now be corrected, and opportunities for good that can never return: as that spring-time of life has left its stamp on all after-years, so surely will the soul's spring-time bear its mark for eternity, for I learn now, and I gather here, that which, missing the present opportunity, I shall never learn or gather at all; in fact, this is the time of the soul's pupilage in the place where it takes its degree! All this we resign when we leave the body; surely, were saints sufficiently alive to the fact, we should not find so many droning away the precious spring-time, unmindful of the word, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.” (Eph. 5:14.) But, further, I forego, if I leave the body, the outward and visible fellowship of saints, the table of the Lord, with its rich and endearing associations, the endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the exercises of brotherly love, of prayer, of sympathy, of generosity and hospitality, of practical separation from evil, what James calls “Pure religion, and undefiled” —all these exercises, in fine all that is demonstrative in Its character, I have passed out of for the time being, while such principles as faith, patience, dependence, and obedience, if in exercise, are in exercise under

such new conditions as constitute, or at least imply, a generic change!

In respect to the second point—that which we retain—I content myself with suggesting that I retain all that which divine grace has conferred upon me for eternity; I carry with me, and shall continue to enjoy, the eternal life, the new creation blessing, union with Christ, the peace which surpasseth understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and the relationships into which grace has introduced me, which can never be weakened or annulled!

Lastly, as to the “gain,” it is clear that I have finally entered into rest—a rest never to be disturbed, a full and deep repose, never to be broken! What a wonderful expansion will my spirit experience as it emerges from the density of an atmosphere so oppressive as this into that of His presence, and how sweet the conviction that steals over me, that I have passed into that blissful presence forever; that I am at length in that new region of unruffled peace characterized by the presence of my Savior and my Lord:

“There shall all clouds depart,

The wilderness shall cease,

And sweetly shall each gladdened hear

Enjoy eternal peace.”

But though with Himself in the profound quietude of an eternal calm, and enjoying an unalloyed happiness with Him, I wait for His coming on that cloudless morning, when He shall bring forth from the grave, to the joy of His own heart, the bodies which, in all ages and in every clime, He had hushed to sleep! In the scene of His rejection I had once waited for Him, but sleep overtook my body, my heart was still wakeful, my spirit passed into His presence, and I waited on—my waiting became more like His, I kept vigil with Him It was not enough to be in His presence, I wanted to see Him as He is; it was not enough to be with Him, I wanted to be like Him, for this would give peculiar joy to His heart; for this I needed a glorified body, and I waited still! It was not enough that He should be crowned with glory and with honor upon the Father's throne, I longed for His manifested glories in heaven and on earth: I longed to see His brow bedecked with many crowns, and I longed to swell the harmony of the new song which should extol His worth; I longed to see Him in the Father's house, to be there at home with Himself; I longed to see Him express, as there only He fully can, the fervor of His faithful love to His bride, and to set forth in blessed array the untold joy and delight that will thrill His heart when He shall have things all His own way, and make everything around in the heaven of His own presence subserve the object of that heart from eternity!

All these blessed longings of spirit, which have Himself for their object, I can now unhinderedly and undistractedly indulge, and thus the superlative thing, the glory itself, is blissfully and powerfully anticipated. All that, if absent from the body, my heart will but the more ardently long for and watch for in the patience of Christ, and as to which cannot be fully satisfied short of its consummation; all to which my heart aspires now, and would aspire then, whether in these circumstances or in those, only His coming in the cloud can possibly supply an answer to!

Then shall we resume the functions of worship in the conditions alone compatible with it; then shall we sing as redeemed saints, and in the body, only are said to do! Then only will He see of the

travail of His soul and be satisfied; then only will He present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; then only will He make us to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve us; then only will He satisfy for us every desire which our knowledge of Himself has inspired in our hearts! Upon this, then, the superlative thing, His own heart is set, as well as that of the Spirit and the bride, saying, “Come;” and He who loves to be thus greeted, loves too to reply “Surely I come quickly,” adding His own “Amen;” and, if we, like the beloved disciple, have pillowed our heads upon His bosom, though in another way, we shall love to respond, whether in the body or out of the body, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” R.

1 Corinthians 5

Q. 1 Cor. 5 In an excommunicable case, that is, one of grave or gross wickedness, can rebuke or withdrawal be substituted for “putting out?” If insisted on by leaders and accepted by an assembly, spite of the strongest protest, in what position does it involve that assembly? Is it really proved “clear"?

A. If a person gave just occasion for public discipline, and there was good ground to fear worse, of which no adequate evidence to convict appeared, it would be godly order to rebuke one thus sinning; and, if he withdrew, it would in the actual state be not only a relief to all, but a more proper course for the assembly to accept his withdrawal by announcing it formally before all, than to put him out without full proof of guilt.

But if the guilt were grave and palpable, so that the common conscience of the saints rejects such offenders, merely to rebuke the person is not to “purge out the old leaven,” nor is it to be a new lump but a leavened one. And if further and heinous evil came to light, it would still more show the state, not of the, offender only but of that assembly, if they then let him withdraw by announcing it, instead of distinctly refusing such a wish at such a time, and forthwith putting out the wicked person from among themselves. We have no such custom, nor the assemblies of God, as to treat rebuke and withdrawal under such circumstances as tantamount to putting out, or allowable to God's assembly; nor does scripture warrant it. No doubt the assembly cannot put out a man if they have accepted his going out; but who has ever known the acceptance and announcement of withdrawal where the assembly had before it the proof of guilt demanding excision? Such a course would give a premium to the wicked in evading solemn judgment, and the command to put out would soon become a dead letter. It has been often tried but always refused hitherto. And no wonder; for it would hinder all adequate clearing of themselves among the saints; it would annul the Lord's authority by His word in the last resort of the church's responsibility; and it would lower a professing assembly of God (yea, in principle the assembly as a whole if acquiesced in) beneath a decent club of the world, which assuredly would not deal so lightly with flagrant offenses against public law or common morality. No special pleading, no detraction of others, can extenuate so plain a dereliction of a holy duty on the part of those who are unleavened. Such an assembly, to its own ease, may have got rid of the offender, as well as of those whose consciences protested against such ways as ungodly; but it has never vindicated the Lord in thorough hatred of the manifest evil, nor so much as mourned that the evildoer might be taken away from among them, still less sorrowed to repentance after a godly sort with diligence, clearing of themselves, indignation, fear, longing desire, zeal or revenge. In no way therefore has it proved itself to be pure in the matter, but the contrary. Till it does, it should not by my judgment be owned as God's assembly by all who would obey Him rather than man.

Thoughts on 1 John

I. “That which was from the beginning.” (Ver. 1.) The moment Christ appeared in the world, we find a beginning of accomplishment for all the purposes God had in view before the foundation of the world. These purposes had not been revealed before the gospel; they are only so fully after the death and resurrection of Christ. The first Adam, put to the proof without law and tinder law, failed; Christ came, and we have in Him the beginning of the counsels of God in the sense of their accomplishment. In order that we should have part in these things, redemption is needed; and therefore I do not say that it was the beginning of Christianity.

When Christ comes, He is the expression of our position before God and before Satan. Up to Christ God finds nowhere an object on the earth that He can own positively. His person was the beginning. Once there is a Man, the Son, on the earth, we have the first revelation of the Trinity: the voice of the Father makes itself heard, the Holy Spirit descends, the Son is there and on the earth. Christ on the earth, such is the beginning; but the history of man under responsibility is the link between the beginning and the counsels of God which preceded. Angels are holy creatures knowing good and evil, and are the proof that God could keep His creature; but we are the proof that God could redeem His creature.

“Eternal life” (ver. 2) and immortality are not the same thing. As a Christian I have eternal life; and yet I am as mortal as before.

“Fellowship” (ver. 3) is association of heart, of thoughts, of affections, and of joy.

The “joy full” (ver. 4) is from fellowship with the Father and with the Son in the possession of life. God is blessed in Himself. In having fellowship with Him I enjoy this blessedness as well as the manifestation of His grace in Christ.

Thus far (vers. 1-4) is grace and privilege connected with the Father and the Son.; from verse 5 is our responsibility connected with God's nature.

Three things connect themselves with the message that God is light. (Vers. 5-7.)

1st, we walk in the light as He is in the light;

2nd, we have fellowship one with another;

3rd, we are cleansed from all (or, every) sin.

To walk in the light belongs to every Christian. It is more than simply the position: it is a matter of life and walk. The thing is considered here in an abstract manner. Farther on it is a question of practice when it is said, “If any man sin.” (Chap. 2:1.) Were it a question of practice in taking account of inconsistencies, one could not say of anyone, “we walk in the light as he is in the light.” Israel could not endure a single ray of this light. God manifests Himself to us without veil. The cross has rent the veil. My eyes are opened, and I walk in the light. If one cannot walk there, one must flee away; but can one? and whither?

To walk in the light is another thing from walking according to the light. It is to walk in full day, in the clearness of the full revelation of what God is. To walk in darkness is to walk without the knowledge of God.

As verses 5, 6 test profession by the divine nature, viewed as light revealing itself and detecting everything, in contrast with reality in the true knowledge of God (ver. 7), verse 8 is a question of truth in us which cannot he if I am not conscious of sin. For Christ as the truth in us would judge another principle and nature in me, as in verse 9. But if we say that we have not sinned (ver. 10), we make God a liar, whose word declares that all have: His word is not in us.

These three things, cleansing, forgiveness, and justification, answer to the defilement, offense, and guilt. In this passage it is a question not of justification and acceptance, but of fellowship as in all the epistle; not of the state of a conscience which is under the sense of the imputation of sin, but of the restoration of interrupted communion. If I have sinned, I am defiled and have offended God, and communion is interrupted. If I confess my sins, the offense is pardoned, and I am cleansed. God would reach the root of the evil. Peter is an example of it. Jesus does not say to him, Why deniedst thou Me? but He touched the root of the evil: “Lovest thou me more than these?” And we find this result: not that the root is gone, but that all confidence in the flesh has vanished. Peter learned that he had no strength in himself. Then the Lord confides to him His sheep, and he is made capable of strengthening his brethren.

II. The “Advocate” (ver. 1) comes in to maintain or restore communion, the priest to draw near to God as in Hebrews.

We must remember that in John it is a question of communion. “If one have sinned,” communion is interrupted, and we have here the resource, the means of restoring it, not that of being justified.

The function of the Advocate is established on the double foundation of righteousness and of propitiation. (Vers. 1, 2.) There is in the person of “Jesus Christ the righteous” a permanent righteousness before God and a propitiation for our sins (a propitiation which is not only for the Jews but for the whole world). The Advocate comes in on that footing to restore the interrupted communion.

“We” in scripture signifies sometimes the Jews, sometimes men, or the apostles, or believers. Every “we” (or “us") must be taken according to the sense of the passage.

The two grand proofs of the reality of Christian life are obedience, and the love of the brethren. (Vers. 8-11.)

The effect produced for whosoever keeps His word is that in him verily is the love of God perfected. (Ver. 5.) “The love of God” is the infinite of divine love, and “in him... perfected” is the infinite of confidence in an infinite love.

What is the “new commandment?” (Ver. 8.) Love one another. And the “old commandment?” (Ver. 7). Love one another. But in the first case the thing is realized by the divine nature in the disciples, and not only imposed as a commandment. God has many attributes, righteousness, holiness, majesty, almightiness, &c.; but the word employs only two words to tell us what God is as to His. nature. He is light, He is love. And it is remarkable to see how the person of Jesus is before the eyes of John, and how the apostle speaks sometimes of His deity, sometimes of His humanity, in

the same passage, according to the relations with which he is occupied.

Then follows a parenthetical address to Christians, showing us the position according to grace, and in their several degrees of maturity, which are three (vers. 12-27), verses 28, 29 returning to the general exhortation of all.

The knowledge of Christ is the result of all Christian progress. (Vers. 13, 14.) We have that which was from the beginning, and also for the last time. (Vers. 18, 24.) It is important to remark that the apostasy was already there in the time of the apostles. The mystery of lawlessness had been at work (the mystery ceases, when the lawless one is manifested). The patience of God continued; but as to man, it was all over with him from the outset. It was the last hour already in the time of the apostle.

In John it is a question of apostasy, in Jude of corruption; in John the antichrists go out, in Jude the false brethren come in and with them corruption. In Jude those who separate are like the Pharisees who took the first places. The ungodly are still seen in the midst of the faithful. (Jude 4, 15.) Cain, Balsam, and Korah are the three characters of the evil within. In John it is apostasy; they go out. Such is the character of these antichrists. They deny that Jesus is the Christ: it is Jewish unbelief. They deny too the Father and the Son: it is unbelief as to Christian truth. The evil of John and that of Jude, anti-Christianism and corruption, can co-exist, just as we may see it in prophecy.

To abide in Him (ver. 28) is profession with reality.

III. In verses 1-3 we see Christ God and man; and in this passage we are associated with Him, we have the same position as He, who is God but man: the same position as to the world, for we are unknown to the world which knew Him not; and the same thing as to the glory. See also chapter 5:20: we are in Him, who is God.

The apostle avoids saying that the flesh sins (vers. 4-9); he will not have dualism. It is no doubt the flesh, but I. John looks at the man simply as Christian, without the modification produced in the result by the presence of the flesh. It is the character of the thing which occupies him. He says, “he cannot sin” (not, he ought not to sin). He speaks of the new man, not in taking account of the old, but as being the true “I.” If I sin, it is entirely my fault; for the temptation is never beyond what we are able to bear. “The seed of God” (ver. 9) is the life of Christ in us, the new nature.

Having spoken of righteousness, the apostle turns to love, verses 10 to 12 being the transition, and Cain the example of the reverse in both respects, which are indeed naturally connected in the world, Christ being the contrast in love as in purity and righteousness. Christians were to love in deed and in truth as they knew it in Christ; whilst the world hated them.

Thence the apostle comes in verses 18-22 to the conscience (a very important subject in practice). From a conscience entirely pure flows practical confidence. The existence of the flesh in us does not give a bad conscience; but if I let the flesh act, then my heart condemns me; I do not doubt the love of God, but my heart is not free. The heart is the inner man entirely. This practical confidence is of high importance. The presence of God unveils to me the state of my soul. I am ill at ease if I have walked ill. God wills that we should walk before Him without the least cloud, and in order to this we must be continually with Him. If I am with God, He is light, and He discovers to me that

which otherwise would remain ignored and hidden.

He who obeys dwells in God and God in him, the proof that He dwells in us being the Spirit given. (Ver. 24.)

IV. But here danger lurks from spirits not of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The first mark of His Spirit is the confession of Jesus Christ come in flesh; the second, hearing the apostles. (Vers. 1-6.) “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” It is a question of the presence of the Holy Spirit in us and of the presence of Satan in the world.

The doctrine of the false prophets suits the world, and the world hears them. “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us.” If one does not heed the apostles, one is not of God. There is a very simple direction to know if anyone is of God. The great question is if we desire to cleave to the authority of the apostles as to the word which comes directly from God. A teacher of error is under the positive action of Satan; a Christian, if he does not keep fast to the word, may be led away, which is another thing. A heretic is a man who teaches an error as a matter of fact. If two parties are made in the church, without quitting the church, it is a schism, which had in general happened at Corinth. You will never find a heretic who is a sincere man.

In exhorting to mutual love, from verse 7, the apostle brings in the great facts which deliver from mysticism in man, as they flow from love in God and reproduce it by the Spirit in His children. (Vers. 9, 10.) Man is dead: God sends His Son that we might live through Him. Man is guilty: God sends His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

One is not sealed of the Holy Spirit before having received the testimony of God as to the work of Christ for the remission of sins. The leper was first washed with water, which is the word applied in power, then sprinkled with blood, which is the application to the conscience of the value of the blood of Christ; lastly anointed with oil, figure of the unction and seal of the Spirit. Nor is there true holiness for me if I am not perfectly sure of my salvation.

From verses 9 to 17 the love of God is presented to us in three manners: 1st, love toward poor sinners, dead and guilty (vers. 9, 10); 2nd, the love of God in us, or the enjoyment of love in the Christian (ver. 12); 3rd, love with us, perfect or perfected with us even to the day of judgment. The apostle places himself in the judgment and says to himself, See how Christ has thought of use in view of that: as He is, I am in this world. God is holy. Can I speak of love when I think of judgment? Ah, yes, says the apostle; it is precisely there that I know it, because I am as the Judge already here below. From one end to the other God has thought of everything. Love begins with the sinner, continues with the saint, and goes on to the day of judgment.

It is striking to see how the nature of God is put forward here. If this love is in us, there is the nature of God; consequently we know God. (Ver. 7.) But more, God is in us, and since we share thus in the fullness of His nature, we abide in love. (Ver. 16.) But this would be mysticism, if there was not the testimony of verses 9, 10, to the actual substantial facts. The love of God is only a quality among all mystics. But God has loved us, who is love. That also puts the law aside; for it is not, We ought to love God, but, God has loved us.

If we love one another, it is the divine nature, God Himself in us. (Ver. 12.) If one love not his brother, he is not a Christian at all. There are without doubt degrees of realization for him who is a

Christian; and these degrees depend on the measure he holds the flesh as dead, because the flesh is always selfish. The world can be united for common interests, but there is no love in that.

No one has ever seen God. How can He be known? The Gospel of John answers, The Only-begotten hath declared Him; here the word, If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. This renders Him visible; it is the proof He is there.

I find a poor soul without a spring. Do you confess, I say to him, that Jesus is the Son of God? Yes. Well then, God dwells in you. (Ver. 15.) What consolation! On the other side, what powerful action this verse exercises on the conscience! Do you confess that Jesus is the Son of God? Yes. Well then, is it that God dwells in you, and you have not thought of it once throughout all the day? If you treated a friend as you treat God who dwells in you, there would soon be an end between you. That which makes the difference in the state of souls lies in the measure in which one thinks of the presence of God in us.

We love Him. (Ver. 19.) It is a fact. It is not said that we ought to love Him. Does a child say, I ought to love my mother, and I believe that I love her enough? Then you do not love her truly. Another says, I am so miserable, but if you knew my mother—what goodness! what tenderness!... but I do not love her enough. Ah! this one knows what love is, and he loves.

V. The cause for which we love the children of God is that we love, the lather. (Ver. 18.) The counter-proof is that I love truly the children of God when it is in obedience. Without this it would be only clannishness, and not loving them for the love of the Father. If I love the children of anyone because I love their father, I will not accompany them in disobedience to their father. If I accompanied them there, I should not love them for the love of God, for the love of the Father is shown in obedience. And if I love not all the children of God, it is not God that I love. If I love but two or three children of a family, I love them by particular sympathy, and not because of their father. A Christian says to me, Let us walk together: come with me, and I will go with you. Ah! would you that I should walk in your disobedience for you to walk in obedience with me?

Obedience toward God should be full and absolute. I do not belong to myself; I have not the right nor desire to do my will in anything whatever. The motive of all that Christ did was the will of His Father; and if there was no will of the Father, He did nothing at all. What is it that hinders Christians from obeying? At bottom, the world. Some things are of faith, others of knowledge; in this sense there are secondary things. But must one obey in the walk?

Whatever is born of God overcometh the world (ver. 4), but not by the sole fact of a divine nature, but because this nature has an object. (Ver. 5.) A creature cannot suffice for itself; it must have an object. God alone suffices Himself; if I have this object, Jesus the Son of God, the flesh, Satan, and the world have nothing for me. If one is not nourished by the Lord Jesus, life remains shut up and feeble. Law does not give life nor force nor object; Christ gives me life and force, and in Him I have an object. Liberty is to be freed from sin, from Satan, from the world and from myself.

From verse 6 we have now the witnesses that life, this new life which is the portion of believers, is not of Adam. There is nothing for the old man but death. The testimony rendered is that life is in the Son. The natural man has not life. Life is not only that the spirit, soul and body are by the action of the Holy Spirit in a good state. No part of myself is quickened: Christ becomes my life.

The apostle cites the three witnesses to show that the old man is entirely condemned. There must be three things, cleansing, expiation, and the Holy Spirit. For cleansing water is needed, and it comes from a dead Christ; for expiation blood, which comes from a dead Christ; and the Holy Spirit is needed, who comes from Christ dead and risen on high. I have life only on the complete rupture between God and the first Adam. When death is proved (John 19:34), then life comes. It is a new thing which puts aside the old.

The blood cleanses in the sense of expiation, the water in the moral sense. But it is not the old man that is cleansed, but “I;” and how? By being delivered from the old man. (Rom. 6; 7) The foundation of Christianity is that I pass through death. If I hold myself always for dead, eaten should have no hold over me. Why have you sinned? You have let the flesh act; you have behaved as a child of Adam. A child of God does not sin. It is a thing completely false metaphysically or morally that responsibility depends on power. It depends on the will. A child to whom his father says, Come, answers, I won't; the father goes away alone and returns to punish him. Ah! I was tied to the table. This is not the question: I know well that you were tied; but I had a knife, and you would not. It is then at bottom the will that is in question, and it is enmity against God. The unbeliever is guilty, because God has given sufficient testimonies. When He comes as Judge, He will tell you whether He did not give you proofs enough.

After thus unfolding the matter of life to confirm believers in presence of seducers, he turns to confidence in God in our petitions, which might take up among other things a fallen brother, but not always. For there is sin to death, as there is sin not so. (Vers. 13-17.) The Christian who walks in a sort of see-saw, sometimes well, sometimes ill, is not according to the word, so that the wicked one should not touch him. The world just wishes morality in the things which touch its own interests; but the truth not one wishes; and the truth is Christ, and we know it. (Vers. 13-21.)

Chapter 4

Notes on 2 Corinthians: Introduction

Very distinct in tone from the first Epistle, yet not less distinctly from the same mind and heart, is the second Epistle to the Corinthians. No writing of the apostle bears more unequivocally the marks of all which characterized him; none more corresponding with the state of those whom he addressed; but this in rich restorative grace and deep triumphant feeling before God. Of all the epistles none abounds in more rapid transitions; as indeed it flowed from profound exercises of soul. The circumstances through which he had passed evidently fitted him for the work in hand, which forbids any division of orderly treatment of subjects. This however is just what should be; nor does any epistle afford a finer example of what is suitable.

Personal experience, and this used for the help of others in their trials; the work of the Lord in all its varieties, with the action of the Holy Ghost answering to it; the truth of God in its distinctive shape and highest forms, or the glory of Christ in contrast with the spirit, in former days hidden under the letter; the walk and service which befit such revelations of grace; the affections called into action by all this in the midst of sorrow and suffering, with evil abounding and grace much more abounding; the trials and wants of saints, calling out the loving remembrance of others; the opposition of self-seeking men, employed of the enemy to hinder the blessing of saints and to lower the glory of Christ, to distract the weak and give scope for unscrupulous activity; but on the other hand the energy of the Holy Ghost working not only to give heavenly visions, and so give faith its object, but to manifest Christ in weakness and suffering where the power of Christ may rest, are all brought out with remarkable fullness.

Hence the expression of feeling is far more frequent and pronounced in the second Epistle than the first. Not that the first fails in showing that the apostle loved the Corinthians, and still hoped all things. But the second brings out still more manifestly how he bore all, believed all, endured all. Here therefore he speaks with far more confidence of his sure reward, in a love which sought not his own things but theirs. Here he explains his motives with much greater openness. Their subjection to the rebukes of his first epistle, their obedience to the word of the Lord which he had charged on their consciences, left him free now to explain himself. But even so he speaks with the greatest delicacy, lest he might seem careful to vindicate himself instead of cherishing jealousy for the Lord alone. Their edification was the nearest object of his heart, next to the glory of the Lord, if indeed we may even thus far sever what faith knows to be inseparable. More than once he takes up the case of the soul under discipline (as in the first epistle he had urged them to act in holy jealousy for Christ), first to show grace in restoring him who was surcharged with grief; and secondly to own how they in every way had proved themselves pure in the matter.

We may in a general way regard the epistle as consisting of the following divisions. The first seven chapters present a sketch of his ministry in its trials and dangers and the conflicts of soul which the state of the saints, of the Corinthian saints themselves above all, occasioned, in the mighty power, glorious character and blessed result of the service of Christ, triumphing over all opposition, even death itself, in love to its objects; and this not only in those ministering but also in those ministered

to, as being the working of the Holy Ghost in the life of Christ; and hence superior to all that could oppose, even to death and judgment; but exercised in suffering and in holiness; yet having to do with the judgment of unholiness which grace turns to a deeper repentance on the part, not only of the guilty, but of all who have to do with them, so as to bring glory to the Lord in Satan's defeat, as well as in quickened and strengthened divine affections.

Next, in chapters 8 and 9 we have an admirable exposition of the divine principle in giving and receiving among Christians, combined with his call to the Corinthian saints, whom he could now freely exhort, as brought back by grace, to abound in grace towards the poor saints in Judea: a constant and most grave duty, and a blessed privilege of the church towards the poor saints at all times, when they take it up in faith of the Lord's grace, and in love towards His own, as the apostle here lays down.

Lastly, from chapter 10 we have an apologetic discourse, in which the truest humility goes hand in hand with burning indignation against those whom Satan employs to oppose the glory of Christ and destroy the blessing of the saints under cover of exposing the imaginary faults of His servants. Nothing can exceed the propriety, as well as profound feeling with which the apostle handles this difficult and delicate theme; nothing more withering to the adversaries of grace, whatever their pretension to light and righteousness. To a spirit so disinterested, loving, and lowly as Paul's it was a very great pain to speak of himself; and he calls it his folly, as he calls on them to bear with it. Vanity loves to speak of itself and its little doings; true greatness, while it delights in that which is its own source—the all-surpassing One in whom it loses thoughts of self, can for the sake of others afford to speak of labors and sufferings for that loved object and for all that He loves, so as to refute these heartless detractions and calumnies. And as the unworthy insinuation of levity of purpose was dispelled by the first chapter, so in the last those who had undermined his apostleship he warns of the just severity which must befall them if they persevere in a course as dishonoring to the Lord as it was destructive of their own souls.

Chapter 5

Notes on 2 Corinthians 1:1-7

Restorative grace, according to the character and power of life in Christ, is the key-note of this epistle, and that accompanied by the deepest exercise of the heart under the disciplinary ways of God. If the Corinthians had to learn in a manner suited to their state, the apostle too, far more profoundly, that he might be enabled fittingly to carry on and complete the gracious work of humbling and self-judgment begun in them by his first epistle. The Lord called him to pass through the severest personal trial and suffering in order the more effectively to serve and sympathize with them, now that their state interpreted by love admitted of unreserved affection and its free expression to them. The influence of all this, as we may see, is very considerable on the style of his second letter, which abounds in the most rapid transitions and abrupt allusions, as he tells out for their profit his own affliction, and the faithfulness of God, intermingling experience, doctrine, comfort, and warning, most intimately; yet so far from confusion that all helps on the great aim of bringing home the lessons of grace to the annihilation of self-confidence or glorying in man.

“Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, and Timothy the brother to the assembly that is in Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia; grace to you and peace from God our Father and [our] Lord Jesus Christ.”

The opening words of the second epistle naturally resemble those of the first, yet with well defined marks of difference. There is no repetition here of his calling to the apostolate, nor is the assembly at Corinth qualified as sanctified in Christ Jesus, and saints by the analogous calling of God, which one cannot but judge intrinsically calculated and intended by grace to exercise their consciences in the then state of things in that city. Sosthenes was there graciously associated with the apostle, as one known to and probably of themselves, whom he could honor if they did not; as here we find Timothy from elsewhere, as to whose worthy reception by them the first epistle shows him solicitous. But in the first the apostle had joined the Corinthian church “with all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours,” here “with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia.” It is clear that the first gives a far wider extension than the second, and leaves room for a profession which might not be real, as indeed the apostle evidently feared as to the Corinthians themselves in both epistles, especially the first. But the direct force seems to be to embrace, in the express address, saints here or there in Achaia who might not be gathered into assemblies, or such as called on the Lord's name everywhere. As it was of moment that all these should know their heritage in the privileges given and revealed, and be kept from the snare of unbelief which denies their catholicity and continuance, so it was of moment that all the saints throughout Achaia should know and rejoice in the grace that had wrought restoratively in the Corinthian assembly, whatever might remain to be desired from the Lord. It was their common interest and profit for others as well as those immediately concerned. If one member suffer, all the members with it; and if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. In both Epistles he could not but wish them characterized by “grace” the spring and “peace” the effect of love above evil and need, flowing richly and freely “from God our Father and [our] Lord Jesus Christ,” the source and the channel of every blessing, but here again characterizing the desired grace and

peace.

“Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, that comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those that are in any tribulation through the comfort into which we are comforted ourselves by God, because even as the sufferings of the Christ abound toward us, so through the Christ aboundeth also our comfort. But, whether we are in tribulation, [it is] for your comfort and salvation, that worketh in endurance of the same sufferings which we also suffer (and our hope [is] steadfast for you); or whether we are comforted, [it is] for your comfort and salvation, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also of the comfort.” (Vers. 3-7.)

How striking the difference as compared with the opening of the first epistle! There he thanked his God, not indeed for the spiritual state of the Corinthian saints—very far from it, whatever some might but most unintelligently have inferred—but for their rich endowments. Now he can bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the grace which turns to account all our tribulation, designating Him the Father of compassions, and the God of all comfort. And surely if one adore such a God, that adoration is enhanced when one thus comes in contact with a heart (once how far from it till purified by faith!) which could thus welcome any and every trouble, be it the sorest, comforted by God so as to comfort those that were in any conceivable trouble through the comfort with which He had already comforted itself. It is well to look at the operation of grace in a man of like passions, and not only in the fullness and perfection of all, even in Christ Himself. And certainly, if Paul was remarkable for an energy of loving labor beyond every other, he was yet more so for the variety and greatness of what he suffered for Christ's name. So here he can speak of what he had just proved afresh. The sufferings of the Christ abounded towards us, as he says; so through Him did our comfort, he adds. His faith laid hold of the Lord's way and end, and applied it to his own circumstances, and the working of grace in the face of all. As love never fails, so all things work together for good. And whether we are in tribulation, it is for your comfort and salvation. Love interprets boldly and liberally. He had heard enough to cheer his spirit: “whether we are comforted, it is for your comfort and salvation, that worketh in endurance of the same sufferings which we also suffer.” Far other were the sufferings of the Corinthian saints from his own. But grace delights in sharing all it can; and faith gives the highest character to whatever it can discern to be of God. In this spirit the apostle seems here to regard the sufferings of the saints at Corinth, and to hope the best results, “Knowing that as ye are partakers of the suffering, so also of the comfort.”

Chapter 6

Notes on 2 Corinthians 1:8-14

The apostle now refers to the afflicting circumstances into which God had been pleased to bring him, in order the more deeply to teach, not merely him, but the Corinthians, and indeed all saints, His ways. The process is painful, no doubt, the profit immense, to others, as well as the soul itself, and this to God's glory. How good is the God we adore!

“For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, as to our tribulation that came to pass in Asia, that we were excessively pressed beyond power, so as to despair even of our living. But we ourselves have had in ourselves the sentence of death, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth [or will] deliver, in whom we have hope that he will also yet deliver, ye also laboring together by supplication for us that from many persons the gift toward us may by many be matter of thanksgiving for us. For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and sincerity before God, not in carnal wisdom but in God's grace, we conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly towards you. For no other thing we write to you than what ye read, or even recognize, and I hope that ye will recognize unto the end, even as also ye recognized us in part that we are your boast, just as ye also are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus.” (Vers. 8-14.)

Thus does God prove Himself rich in mercy, and this, not in conferring objective favor only in Christ, but in rendering His tried ones superior to all trouble, not by exempting those He loves from suffering and sorrow, but by giving the faith that accepts all at His hands with confidence in His love. Here we see, not the Holy One of God, who suffered as He was tempted to the uttermost, sin apart, and on the cross knew not sin indeed, but what it was for God to make Him sin; here we see a man of like passions with ourselves, strengthened with might in the inner man, and the outer crushed in every way, yet out of the eater meat coming forth, and out of the strong sweetness. Nor is this all. But he had to do, as we too, with One who knows how to order the tribulation so that its fruit, in divine consolation, should come out just at the right moment for the saints that needed succor and comfort. The apostle's mouth is opened to the Corinthians; his heart, which had been repelled by their evil and hardness, has expanded. He can now speak freely of deliverance, that they too, humbled, if not humble, may hear and be glad, with him magnify the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, and exalt His name together. By the trouble that happened in proconsular Asia he had been pressed excessively beyond his power, so as to despair, as he says, even of living, but grace, as suits God always, wrought unfailingly. It was not by a providential intervention to screen the apostle from suffering, still less by a miracle which might confound the adversaries, but because he had abidingly the sentence of death in himself. This Job had not, and so his long struggle, as he writhed under his sorrows from without and within; to it, as far as could be, he was brought at the last before his deliverance and blessing came. The apostle bowed to it all along, and hence was above all that Satan could do, for he has no power beyond death, and was utterly baffled by the faith which accepted such a sentence, and this “in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth, or will, deliver, in whom we have our hope that he will deliver.” It is the power of

the resurrection brought into the present, so as not to shrink from, but to retain, the sentence of death in himself. If Abraham learned this in his last lesson of faith in Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19), the apostle declares that he had it in himself. Such was to him the power of life in Christ, not ascetically, so as to exalt self after all, but finding strength in faith, giving glory to God, the perfect and unlimited deliverer. But his unburdened heart brings them in also as laboring together by supplication on his behalf that the gift of grace towards him by many persons may be matters of thanksgiving from many on his behalf. Thus would he by grace bind together, at whatever cost to self, the hearts of saints in thanksgiving for him, once in danger of wanton and utter alienation through the levity which exposed them to Satan's wiles. How far from Christ is independence, whether personal or ecclesiastical!

Yet is there nothing good, loving, or holy without God, to whom conscience, as well as the heart, purified by faith, and free, ever refers. Therefore does the apostle next turn to the ground and proof of spiritual integrity, though he writes for their sakes rather than his own. “For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience that in (simplicity or rather) holiness and sincerity (literally of God, but in sense) before God, not in carnal wisdom, but in God's grace, we conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you.” He could the more boldly ask and count on their prayers from the persuasion that he had a good conscience as to his general conversation in the world, as before God, and especially as towards themselves. (See Heb. 13) He did not seek to conciliate men to and for himself, but as bent on pleasing God, he did not doubt that a conscience cleared in them would acknowledge a conscience void of offense in himself. Activity of self blinds the person, and genders bitter thoughts, especially of the one whose course morally condemns others; if the eye be single, on the contrary, the whole body is full of light, and love flows freely. “For no other things we write to you than what ye (well know or) read, or even recognize, and I hope that ye will recognize unto the end, even as also ye recognized us in part that we are your boast, as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Now that self-judgment had begun to work in the saints at Corinth, they would not fail to see the folly of taxing him with inconstancy, whose life as a saint and servant of God had been one of unmovable firmness and unbending truth. There is much difference as to the force here of ■ναγιν■σκετε. Elsewhere in the New Testament the meaning, beyond controversy; is to “read,” which very many hold to, like the Authorized translation; others, like Calvin, contend for “well know,” which is rarely, if ever, found, save in poets. It is a question between what they might gather from his presence in their midst, or from his epistle. But he writes with the calm confidence of one before God which fails not to tell on, the conscience of saints wherever they feel freely, apart from the heat and bias of party; and as he had ground to trust that they had thus recognized him in part at least, so also he hoped that they would to the end own that he was their boast, even as they were his in the day of our Lord Jesus. It was good for all to anticipate that day.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 1:15-20

The apostle now explains circumstances which some in Corinth were as quick to misunderstand as ready to turn to his advantage. He is free to explain now as things are, but he is more anxious to turn all to the account of Christ and the truth, and this in the truest interests of the saints.

“And with this confidence I was intending previously to come unto you, that ye might have a second favor, and through you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you, and by you to be sent forward into Judea. Having, then, this intention, did I, pray, use lightness? Or what I purpose do I purpose according to flesh, that with me may be the yea yea and the nay nay? Now God [is] faithful that our word that [was] unto you is not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, that was preached among you by us, by me, and Silvanus, and Timothy, became not yea and nay, but is become yea in Him. For as many as [are] God's promises, in him [is] the yea; wherefore also by him [is] the amen for glory to God by us.” (Vers. 15-20.)

The injurious impression, and even charge, of some at Corinth against the apostle was based on the slenderest appearances, and these severed from the action in him of power and love and a sound mind. How opposed to the Spirit were not such thoughts in them! The modification of his plans in not going before to visit them was as distinctly in subjection to the Lord, as his actual desire to see and help them. It was not dread of any there, still less was it from lack of moral purpose in himself. His heart was toward them in the large and holy activity of divine love. Blessed before to them, he sought that they might be favored of the Lord again, on his way to and from Macedonia for Judea; and their affectionate care in sending him on to the East he valued and counted on. His true motives he let them know afterward. Those who yielded to such surmisings proved both their own bad state, and their ignorance of the apostle; for character and state are according to the object before the man. If it be Christ in love to His own, and even to man generally, the result follows in a walk according to God. This is to imitate God, and serve the Lord. If there be an absence of purpose on the one hand, or on the other a planning according to flesh, in either way self governs, and there could be for others no just ground of confidence. The man is as he loves, or loves not. He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. He that lacks an object, lacks character, and can only be frivolous and inconstant; he that seeks personal influence, power, honor, money, &c., is degraded according to what his heart is set on. What is of the flesh is worthless, and its purpose untrustworthy. In God only is continuance, and His Spirit alone works it in the heart and ways, where Christ displaces self as the object. For man otherwise is incapable of walking or serving according to God. He is either and evidently fickle, or his planning, however positive, is without God's guidance and strength.

Beautifully does he turn, in a spirit of grace, from their insinuations against himself to the doctrine he preached. “Now God [is] faithful, that our word that [was] unto you is not yea and nay.” There is no shift of purpose, no uncertainty, in the gospel, whatever may be thought of the man. God Himself is pledged to, and concerned in, it. His glory and His grace are not more concerned in it than His truth and righteousness. In the mighty work of redemption, all that God is shone out as

nowhere else in past or future. There He vindicated His own nature in everlasting hatred of sin; there He demonstrated His love, rising above the worst evil of the creature. Did He compromise His word? He accomplished it, letter and spirit, to the full. Did He abandon His holiness? Never was His absolute separation from it so manifested, nor His righteous judgment of it ever so seen as then; yet then it was that every obstacle to the outflow of all-overcoming grace toward sinners, whatever and wherever they might be, fell before the efficacy of the one offering and sacrifice of Christ. And as in the work which is its ground, so in the preaching, there is no inconsistency. On the contrary, every fact and thought, otherwise irreconcilable, are there brought into harmony. Our only absolute consistency is in Christ and His cross.

Here it will be observed that the apostle associates others with himself. For the grace and truth that Game through Jesus Christ over enlarges the heart, and gives enduring fellowship; and this appears still more clearly in what follows. “For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, that was preached among you by us, by me, and Silvanus, and Timothy, became not yea and nay, but is become yea in him.” The glory of the person proclaimed answers to the certainty guaranteed. Doubt, difficulty, hesitation, or inconsistency can have no place in the Son of God, now the glorified Man, who suffered on the cross for the annulling of sin; and the apostle and his companions knew and preached no other doctrine. As the truth is one, and they believed, so is the doctrine the same which they preached. Others might seek novelties, and it is natural to the active, restless, spirit of man. They could not so deal with such a person, such a work, or such a message. That divine person, in His infinite grace, governed their minds and filled their hearts; and out of the abundance of their hearts they preached the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and this as consistently each with himself, as all with each other.

Thus he declares most unequivocally that the preaching of him and his companions had none of the vacillation or conflict common to the schools of human opinion, and this because all truth is verified in Christ's person. It is become yea in Him. It abode the same. Perfection is come in Him, and also as available for others. This is far more than the witness's agreement with themselves and one another, which is eclipsed by Christ, who is personally the truth, and all is become verified in Him. Nothing more distant from the subdued, hesitating, style of Greek thought and expression, where even what was not doubted they put as opinion. Here all is sure, and unclouded, and peremptory. The gospel, as Paul preached it, admits of no doubtful answer, any more than doable dealing; and this, because it is revealed in the Second man, who has set aside the first, with his darkness and doubt, no less than with his guilt and corruption.

More than this: “For how many soever [are] God's promises, in him is the yea; wherefore also through him [is] the amen to God for glory, by us.” Hence it is not only that there is the affirmation of all promised of God in Christ, and therefore in the highest way, before the fulfillment in others, as the effect, and the outward display before every eye in the universe, but there is a present application of the surest character, through apostolic ministration, to God's glory. God is glorified in the Son of man, as the Son of man is glorified; but there are results of the deepest sort which God vouchsafes now to faith, in the administration of which (not the kingdom merely, as Peter) our apostle had the chief place, and the Christian is entitled to reap the blessing, as heartily and in the Holy Spirit assenting to the truth. So Bengel, long ago, said tersely enough, “Nae respectu Dei promittentis, Amen respectu oredentium.” But to bring the believer into the enjoyment of what God has wrought in Christ more has to be said, and immediately follows. Here it is the firm foundation,

not God's promises as of old, still less the law, which proved that man could not make them good, but all accomplished in Christ, but also as surely verified through Him, for glory to God by us.

Chapter 8

Notes on 2 Corinthians 1:21-24

The apostle refutes yet more the insinuation of uncertainty in his preaching, by the drawing out, not merely of the verification of the truth, and accomplishment of all God's promises in Christ, but of our firm association with it all in Him.

“Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us is [God], who also sealed us, and gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (Ver. 21.) It is not man's own will or effort that is able to secure us Christward, nor, consequently, is it a mere question of his fickleness, feebleness, or failure in any way. He that binds us fast to Christ is God; and the emphasis is all the greater, because God is expressed, not objectively, but as a predicate. It is truly surprising, then, that a professed commentator, and a distinguished scholar, should have said that ■ δ■ βεβ....■μ■ς is the (prefixed) predicate, and θε■ς the subject; for this is to reverse all that is certain in the language, and to lose the true force of what is here insisted on. Had ■ δ■ β.....■μ■ς been affixed to θε■ς, instead of prefixed, the sense had been the same, the order of the words in a sentence affecting it only as a matter of emphasis, and in no way disturbing the relation of the subject to the predicate, which it is the chief function of the article to distinguish. Compare chapter 5:5, where a precisely similar construction occurs. Nor is this a casual mistake, for it re-appears no less distinctly in the comment on Heb. 3:4, where θε■ς is said to be the subject, and ■ π■ντα κατασκευ■σας the predicate, though it is allowed that the ancient expositors, almost without exception, take θ. as predicate, and ■ π. κ. as a designation of Christ, thus making the passage a proof of His deity. It ought not to be disputed that in all these, or the like, instances, the object before the mind, or subject of each proposition, designated as operating in the way described, as to either the saints or the universe, is declared to be God. Man is excluded by the nature of the case, as in Hebrews; or he that is said so to act is affirmed to be God, for the confirmation of the saints, as here. Had it been ■ θ. in these cases, the propositions would have been reciprocal, and either might have been viewed as subject or as predicate. But the effect of the absence of the article is to characterize Him who works as is described in each instance. He as divine is God: a very different statement from saying that God so works.

Here, then, it is laid down that He who firmly attaches us to Christ is God, as elsewhere we are declared to be in Him. Man is weak and vacillating, and yet more in deed than in word; but He who binds fast unto Christ is God, and this, not the strong only, but the weakest, as needing most such securing grace and power. Hence, in a love that rises above all that wounds the spirit, the apostle adds, as coupling the saints in Corinth with himself and Timothy, “He that establisheth us with you.” Christ for both was the impregnable fortress, the rock that never can be moved.

But more than this follows: we are anointed as believers, we receive the unction from the Holy One, whereby, as John says, we know all things. God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good and healing that were oppressed by the devil. (See Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27, 28.) To us who believe it is rather energy of communion with His revealed mind; still the Spirit given is of power, and love, and a sound mind; and He that anointed us is not

man, but God. Hence, as the apostle with the last hour before his eyes says, the unction as surely abides as it teaches us of all things. It is no transient display of power over Satan outwardly, no qualification of apostles only, as some have thought. It is the permanent privilege of the Christian for his own soul's entrance into the revealed mind of God; and “the babes” (τ■ παιδ■α) have it as truly, if not so manifestly, as the most mature. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament received, of course, gift or energy for their work; but they are never said to be “anointed” as such.

But our apostle tells us that God also “sealed us, and gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” Not as if the Spirit were given in so many distinct epochs according to the difference of His operation. The gift of the Spirit to us, as believing in Christ and resting on His redemption, is really the powerful source of all. He that establishes us in Christ, and anointed no, as we had seen, also sealed us, and gave us the earnest. The Father, even God, sealed the Son of man. This, we can easily understand, was only meet, for He was not only from eternity but as man His Son, the constant and perfect object of His delight. But how could we be sealed who were in sin and wretchedness, the marked contrast of the Lord Jesus? His redemption completely delivers us from Satan's thraldom, and we are not only born of God and His eons, but washed from our sins in His blood, and sin in the flesh is condemned in His death as a sacrifice, as truly as ourselves forgiven. Hence, in virtue of that work, God also sealed us, and gave the “earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” The Holy Spirit is not only the seal of redemption, but the pledge of the inheritance. The meaning is in no way the Spirit given in measure as the earnest of more. He is the witness of what has been done and accepted on our behalf; He is also the foretaste of the glory that is assuredly to follow. And all things are of God, who sent first His Son, that every promise should be verified, and then His Spirit, that we who believe should be brought into the security, knowledge, and enjoyment of all this blessedness, past, present, or to come, in Christ our Lord.

Having thus turned in grace the Corinthian disparagement of his own word to the praise of the gospel, the apostle next passes, with great solemnity, to explain his real motive for not coming before to their city. “But I call God as witness upon my soul, that to spare you I did not yet come unto Corinth; not that we rule over your faith, but are fellow-workers of your joy, for by faith ye stand.” (Vers. 23, 24.) Had he come before, it must have been with a rod. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4:21.) Desirous of uniting them in love, and in a spirit of meekness, he had deferred his coming till grace had wrought self-judgment among them. The delay, and turning elsewhere meanwhile, furnished the occasion for unworthy insinuations, already touched on. It was really as sparing them he did not come; but he carefully guards against the charge of assuming undue authority; “not that we rule over your faith, but are fellow-workers of your joy.” Nothing is truly done that is not in the soul before God. Even an apostle like Paul or John sought not for a moment to step between the faithful and God. The apostles communicated His mind, that the saints might have the same assurance of it as themselves, and so their joy be full. “For by faith ye stand.” So it must be in order to please God. Without faith it is impossible. It is not by the fear or favor of men, however blessed, that the saints stand, but by faith. A fellow helper of their joy, he would rather expose himself to the charge of changing his mind, if any were low enough so to think and speak of him, than to deal harshly with them, as he in faithfulness must, had he come as he first purposed. He waited, that the word of God might work its salutary aim, mixed with faith in those who heard it. He wished to do his work with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for them. Was this to lord it over them, as proud men might allege? It was to further their joy of faith, as their servant

for Jesus' sake.

Chapter 9

Notes on 2 Corinthians 2:1-4

The apostle now explains more fully his motive for not going before to Corinth. They ought, from 1 Cor. 4, to have gathered plainly enough why it was. But the flesh never appreciates motives of the Spirit; and the enemy takes pleasure in embroiling the saints, if he fail with those that serve them for Jesus' sake. Now, however, that grace had begun to work in the Corinthians, the language is modified accordingly. The apostle had then asked if he was to come with a rod, or in love and a spirit of meekness. Here, as he had already stated that it was to spare them he had not as yet come to Corinth, he follows up with words that show how far from him it was to lord it over their faith, as some might have drawn from his threat of a rod.

“But I judged this for myself not to come again [or back] unto you in grief. For if I grieve you, who then [is] he that gladdeneth me, if not he that is grieved by me? And I wrote this very thing, that I might not on coming have grief from those from whom I ought to have joy, having trust in you all that my joy is [that] of you all. For out of much tribulation and distress of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye may know the love that I have very [lit. more] abundantly unto you.” (Vers. 1-4.)

It is a mistake that these words imply a former visit in grief; and therefore a second intermediate and unrecorded one, distinct from the first. The work began, as described in Acts 18. The next visit of which scripture speaks was in Acts 20:2, 8, after both epistles were written—the first from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8), the second from Macedonia—but whether from Philippi (as is the traditional idea), or from some other place, as Thessalonica, does not appear. Tradition is certainly wrong in asserting that the first also issued from Philippi, as it may be about the second. 2 Cor. 12:14, 21; 13:1, in no way indicate the fact, but the intention of a second visit, put off because of their state, and in the hope that the delay might give occasion to the intervention of grace, and thus the need of judicial severity be spared, on the apostle's part, toward many in the assembly. Indeed chapter 13: 2 seems plainly to indicate that he had not really been a second time: “I have declared beforehand, and say beforehand, as present the second time, and now absent,” &c.

There is no evidence, in my judgment, that he had gone once to correct abuses, and to exercise discipline. He was anxious to avoid any such necessity; and therefore, instead of going as intended, he went to meet Titus, spite of work most attractive to him, that he might know how his first letter had fared at Corinth.

Actually he had not been; this was the third time he had the purpose of going; and it was the putting off the visit when intended which gave rise to the charge of light-mindedness. The change was due to their failure, and in no sense to his. On the contrary, he preferred in love to them to be grossly misconstrued, and so, instead of explaining to others, he decided this for or with himself, not to come back to them in grief.

At that time his visit would have been sorrow all round—to him certainly—at the sight of the saints, divided by party zeal, entangled by fleshly lusts, dabbling with the world, tampering with idolatry,

un-worthily communicating, disorderly in the assembly, and denying—implicitly at least—fundamental doctrine, and not less surely to them, if he convicted their consciences, and dealt with their state as it deserved. Graciously, therefore, had he deferred his visit till the issue of his first letter appeared, wherein he had brought the light of God to bear on all these evils and more, of which report mainly, not a fresh visit, had apprised him. The good news he had received of the effect produced by his letters opened his heart, and let out the deep affection he had for them, spite of their grievous faults. For he is convinced that their grief was his, as also that his joy was theirs. What a wondrous power there is in Christ to produce communion in grief over evil, in the joy of grace, above self and its divisive character and consequences! His desire was the happiness of the saints. No wonder, then, he shrank from going where and when his visit must be one of grief. “For if I grieve you, who then is it that is to gladden me, if not he that is grieved by me?” That is, none but they could satisfy his heart. What love, and delicacy too! He individualizes the saints in this phrase: “And I wrote this very thing, that I might not on coming have grief from those from whom I ought to have joy: having trust in you all that my joy is [that] of you all.”

It is clear thence that it is not only inflicting, but receiving; grief of which the apostle speaks, as indeed it is always according to God in His church, whatever it be in the world. His motive in writing was the removal of what ought to pain them as it did him, that he and they might at his coming rejoice together, Christ being the spring, who can tolerate nothing offensive to God in His temple, which the saints are. And the circumstances, as well as inward feelings of the apostle, were eminently adapted to bring about the result. “For out of much tribulation and distress of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye may know the love which I have very abundantly unto you.” It was very abundant love, but hardly more than to others, as some conceive.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

There is, perhaps, no place where the delicacy, as well as faithfulness, of the apostle appears, than in dealing with the case which had so deeply pained his heart, in view of the dishonor done to the Lord at Corinth. For if it betrayed how low the unjudged flesh of a Christian might carry him, it had also discovered the low state of the assembly, and made it a special trial to him who loved them, and a special danger for those who were otherwise alienated. Nevertheless, the grace and truth which came in Christ wrought so mightily by the Holy Spirit in this blessed servant, that even the light-minded Corinthians were roused to repentance quite as decidedly, as to disciplinary activity; and so far communion was restored between them and the apostle. It ought to be doubted that, as he commanded them to put away the wicked person from among themselves, they could not but bow, purging out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump, as they were unleavened. The paschal sacrifice of Christ is inseparable from the feast of unleavened we have to celebrate here below. We cannot shirk the responsibility, if we enjoy the privilege. Sincerity and truth must characterize the believer.

But if the saints in Corinth were only of late awakened to feel and act with honor and holy resentment at such an outrage in God's temple, there was danger now of a strong reaction. Severity is as little according to Christ as laxity or indifference; and those who needed such a powerful appeal to arouse them to vindicate the injured name of the Lord, were now disposed to an extremely judicial sternness, as far from the grace of the apostle, as before from his care for holiness. Thus fellowship of heart was imperiled from the opposite side.

The apostle, however, seizes on what was good, through the action of the Spirit in them, to labor for still more and better. Recovery from a low state is rarely immediate. Correction is needed there, as well as here; and the very fact that the call to righteousness is again heard, may, for the time, so pre-occupy the soul, that love cannot yet act freely. So it was at Corinth, till he who so blessedly represented the Master laid his hands again upon their eyes, which as yet saw men like trees walking, that, restored fully, they might look on all clearly. He had written out of much tribulation and distress of heart to them, with many tears, which refuted the charge of either levity or self exaltation; not that they might be grieved, but that they might know his very abundant love toward them. Now he turns to the one in question, who had grieved him from the first tidings of the sin, than since his epistle had been used to put his and their sin in the light of God before their consciences.

“But if any one hath grieved, he hath grieved not me, but in part (that I may not press heavily) all of you. Sufficient to such an one [is] this rebuke, which [is] by the many; so that, on the contrary, ye should rather forgive and comfort, lest somehow such an one be swallowed up with excessive grief. Wherefore I exhort you to ratify love toward him. For I wrote also for this, and that I might know the proof of you, whether as to all things ye are obedient. But to whom ye forgive anything, I also; for I too, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [do so] for your sake, in Christ's person, that we might not be overreached by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (Vers.

5-11.)

The sorrow which had filled the apostle's heart had, more or less, overspread the assembly; and such is the feeling which becomes it. If the godly Israelite so took up and confessed the sins of the people, how much more those in a far nearer relation to the Lord? Yet we see it deeply in Moses and Joshua, in Hezekiah and Josiah, in Daniel and Ezra. So now grace had communicated to the saints, in measure, the apostle's grief at the Corinthian scandal: not that they, if any; felt so deeply as he, but that he could speak of them all as affected similarly with himself. Thus the hearts of all would be conciliated, and even he that had caused the grief would feel that there was in the apostle anything but the wish to overwhelm him. He adds that the rebuke or punishment already inflicted of the many was enough. This would not have been so if the sentence of excision had not been carried out. Not a word intimates that a mere reproof short of it had arrested the evil, and brought the evil-doer to repentance. The notion, therefore, of the French Reformers (Calvin, Beza, &c.), or others, to this effect is not only unfounded, but unworthy also; for as the first epistle had peremptorily insisted on putting away the offender, the second is equally plain that mutual confidence was in measure restored by their decision and self-judgment in this very case. Verse 9, in particular, is inconsistent with anything less, not to speak of verses 7, 8, and indeed others elsewhere. Nor does verse 6 fairly bear the meaning that he is distinguishing another sort of censure which the Corinthians had administered from the excommunication he had himself enjoined; but that what was already done in accordance with inspired injunctions had effected its purpose, and should not last longer. This is entirely confirmed by the call that follows, rather to forgive and comfort, lest, perhaps, if he continued under so terrible a sentence, broken down as he was, he should be swallowed up with excessive grief. Wherefore he beseeches the saints to ratify love, as they had already testified abhorrence of his sin, by a formal act of the assembly. Thus, too, would the saints prove their obedience in all respects, in gracious restoration of the penitent, as before in solemn judgment of his heinous sin; and the apostle, also, had all this in view when he wrote both epistles.

But it is of deep moment to mark and learn that, though he has to awaken the assembly, both to judge and to restore—for they had failed in both respects—he will have them to feel and act aright, joining them in their acts, and in no way acting for them. Hence he does not at all speak as a spiritual dictator, however real and great the authority given him of the Lord, as he takes pains to allege in both doctrine and discipline. “But to whom ye forgive anything, I also [forgive]; for also I, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [do so] for your sake in Christ's person, that we should not be overreached by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his thoughts.” It would have been no adequate healing of the assembly to have forgiven the Corinthian offender because the apostle had done so, and commanded it. When the flagrant evil was not judged, he did command excommunication; but when grace had wrought all round in estimating as well as dealing with what was so humbling, he will have them to forgive, and go with them in it. It is not, therefore, “whom I forgive, ye also,” but “to whom ye forgive anything, I also.” He is most careful to press their own place of ratifying love, even when apostolically laying down their duty, that he might have fellowship with them throughout. In the prerogative of mercy he would follow, and what he had forgiven, if he had forgiven aught, would do on their account in Christ's person. How blessed the seal of authority, and how gracious the sanction! May we cherish such a flow of divine affections in presence of good and of evil. Our weakness is immense, the difficulty as various as humanly

insuperable, the danger from Satan's wiles constant; but greater is He that is in the saints than he that is in the world; and we know that the enemy's thoughts and designs are leveled pre-eminently at God's assembly, the only divine society on earth.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

The apostle resumes for a moment the account of his course, but the aim is to testify his affectionate concern for the Corinthian saints who misjudged him, and, failing in love themselves, saw not his love which spared them, as much as it sought their blessing to the Lord's glory.

“Now when I came unto the Troad for the gospel of Christ, a door being opened to me in [the] Lord, I had no rest in my spirit at not finding Titus, my brother; but having taken leave of them, I went forth unto Macedonia. But thanks [be] to God that always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the odor of his knowledge through us in every place. Because we are a sweet odor of Christ to God in those to be saved, and in those that perish: to the one an odor from death unto death, but to the others an odor from life unto life; and who [is] sufficient for these things? For we are not as the many, retailing the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, we speak in Christ.” (Vers. 12-17.)

We see two things here: the apostle's deep value for the gospel; his still deeper value for the saints as in danger of compromising Christ. Hence, whatever his purpose in coming into a new region, and in the face of a distinct opening for the work of reaching souls outside, he could not rest without hearing of those souls, so dear to him for the Lord's sake, and so exposed to Satan's wiles. He had hoped to have heard news of Corinth through Titus; but Titus he did not find; and so, turning his back on those on the eastern side, where he then was, he repairs to Macedonia. His heart was on the saints. Anxiety for the assembly decided him to abandon for the time even so promising a field for the gospel. The church has the nearest claim, and the apostle acts on it. It was not only that the letter he had written bore witness of his love for them, and grief over the grave circumstances of the Corinthian assembly, but also his relinquishment of the gospel work in the word he so valued, and this spite of an opening in the Lord. His heart was tried greatly, as he thought of the saints and of his own letter. Would they accept it as of God, and judge themselves by the light? Would they resent his plain and searching, but deeply affectionate, appeals? The situation was most critical. Taking leave, then, of the saints in Troas, he goes forth where he hoped to hear the most speedy and authentic tidings of their state, and the effect of his own letter.

But, instead of stopping to describe the intelligence conveyed by Titus, the apostle breaks forth into a burst of praise and thanksgiving. It was, no doubt, characteristic of his deep feeling and immediate appreciation that he should thus turn from the human instrument to His grace who had wrought such a happy result, where things were so painful and perilous; but no means can be conceived more admirably adapted to express at once what grace had effected in the Corinthian saints, nor any more becoming a servant of Christ. There is thus the most complete absence of self-vindication, there is no credit taken for superior wisdom. The gracious power of God is celebrated immediately as His victory. Not merely is every means attributed to Him, and the blessing from Him, which piety would always feel and utter gladly, but he speaks in the most forcible way of God always leading us in triumph in the Christ. The best proof of this is the fact that so many commentators, Protestant and Catholic alike, pare down and alter the meaning. Among

the rest, our own Authorized translation was so affected by this impression, that they rendered θριαμβε■ειν, “to cause to triumph,” instead of lead in triumph, as they should. This it has been attempted to be sustained by the Hellenistic causative usage of μαθητε■ειν, βασιλε■ειν, καπηλε■ειν, and χορε■ειν, even in classical Greek. But the usage of the apostle in Col. 2:5 is adverse, nor am I aware of a single instance in which it can be proved to be ever thus employed. Besides, it really weakens, if it does not destroy, the beauty of the apostle's image, and makes it to be his triumph rather than God's. The one would be a rather unseasonable, and perhaps galling, reminder to the Corinthians that he was as right as they were wrong; the other, a singularly beautiful, though bold, predication of a divine victory, in which he had part as a willing captive, or part of the train. There is no over-coloring of the figure, no representation of himself as humbled and conquered, still less any reference to their fighting against God or His servant. But he turns his joy over their being brought to repentance, and a recognition of his apostolic authority, as well as of his loving services, into a thanksgiving to God, who, instead of letting him feel his abandonment of evangelistic work, always leads us in triumph in the Christ, and makes manifest the odor of his knowledge through us in every place. The allusion is to a Roman triumph, where aromatics were burnt profusely; and on this, too, he seizes to illustrate the going forth everywhere around of his testimony to Christ in the gospel. But the sweet perfumes in a triumphal procession were accompanied by life to some of the captives, and by death to others; and this is naturally turned to point the twofold issues of the gospel.

The unbelieving Jew or Gentile saw no more in Jesus crucified than a dead man; the message founded on Him could not be powerless to such. They could not deny the gracious words of it, any more than of Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth, where He announced His mission in the wondrous citation from Isa. 61

But they saw not, heard not, God in either. But as God delighted in His Son, a Savior, so He pronounced beautiful the feet of those that announced glad tidings of peace, of those that announce glad tidings of good things; and so, too, He smells a savor of rest sweeter than that of Noah's offering, or any other. “Because,” says the apostle, “we are a sweet odor of Christ to God in those to be saved, and in those that perish;” and this be explains carefully: “to the one an odor from death unto death,” which we have seen; “but to the other an odor from life unto life.” Such is the message where it is mixed with faith, for faith sees and hears Him as the Son of God, yet Son of man, who died for man, for sins, but rose in the power of an endless life, that we might live also, and live of His life, where sin can never enter, nor death have dominion more.

No wonder, as the apostle weighs the responsibility of a service so blessed on the one side, so tremendous on the other, that he exclaims, “And who [is] sufficient for these things?” For if the gospel is a word of delivering grace, it causes the truth to shine out so as to intensify the servant's estimate of responsibility. This is just what should be—full liberty imparted, instead of bondage; but solemn responsibility, realized as it never was before, and could not be, in any other way. But here the mass of the Corinthians sadly fell short, not the apostle, whom they had slighted in their self-sufficient folly. “For we are not, as the many, retailing (or adulterating) the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, we speak in Christ.” He did not, like the many, traffic in the word of God; but as of transparency, not this only, but as of God, and this, too, with a present sense of having to do with Him, as all must later, “before God,” “we speak in Christ,” which is far more intimate and forcible than merely of Him.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

From this the apostle turns in a peculiarly touching way to the saints at Corinth. His spirit felt that his last allusions to a triumph, in contrast with those who trafficked in truth (never then given out with genuine purity), might expose to unkind personality. He therefore, in disclaiming the need of human commendation, in any form, lets out what grace forms in the heart before contrasting the law with the gospel.

“Begin we again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some, recommendatory epistles unto you or from you? Ye are our epistle inscribed in our hearts, known and read by all men, being manifested that ye are Christ's epistle ministered by us, having been inscribed, not with ink, but [the] Spirit of [the] living God, not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of [the] heart (or, hearts). And such confidence have we through the Christ toward God; not that we are competent from ourselves to reckon anything as of ourselves, but our, competency [is] of God, who also made us competent [as] servants of [the] new covenant, not of letter but of spirit, for the letter killeth but the spirit quickeneth.” (Vers. 1-6.)

It is plain that there was then, as now, the practice of giving and receiving letters in commending stranger brethren to the assemblies. And a valuable means of introduction as well as guard it is, provided we hold it in spirit, not in letter: otherwise we might fail doubly, in refusing those who ought to be received, where circumstances have hindered the requisite voucher, and in receiving those who, being deceivers, can supply themselves with any letter which may the more effectually mislead. The aim of all such provisions is to afford adequate testimony to the assembly of God, which is in no way bound to a form however excellent, if wanting, provided perchance other means of godly satisfaction leave no reasonable hesitation to those who judge fairly and in love. It is mischievous when that which God uses for our mutual comfort is perverted by legalism into an instrument of spiritual torture, as may be sometimes the lack of a commendatory note, or some kindred informality.

But the apostle turns, from the supposed imputation of seeking to commend himself, to foster in the Corinthian saints somewhat of the love which burned so warmly in his own bosom. If he, if an apostle, could be supposed to need a commendatory epistle, surely not Paul to or from the assembly in Corinth! As he adds, with as much beauty as affection, “Ye are our epistle,” not in process of being “written,” but this already done, and abidingly (■γγεγραμμ■νη) “in our hearts,” whereas it was but becoming “known and read by all men,” as was also their manifestation that they were Christ's epistle, “ministered” as a past fact (διακονηθε■σα) by us, “written” as it has been and was (■γγεγραμμ■νη) “not with ink, but the living God's Spirit,” not on tablets of stone, but on fleshy tablets—hearts, or of the heart.

It was a wonderful thing to call any company of saints in this world Paul's epistle, that which set forth his mind and heart, the fruit of his testimony in the Spirit to the world. Such he declares the Corinthian assembly to be, no mere tongue-work this, but “written in our hearts,” yet without doubt intended for men generally to learn by, as he says, “known and read by all men.” Such is the

church, not a thing of creedism, or a subscription to paper-and-ink articles, however pure in their place, but an epistle to set forth livingly what the apostle taught and felt. Here he goes farther still; for even of those saints, who had caused him such shame and pain, but now consolation and joy, he does not hesitate to say that they were manifestly showing that they were Christ's epistle ministered by him. Paul might be the means, but Christ was the end; and just as God wrote the law on stone for Israel, so now does the Spirit grave Christ on the fleshy tablets of the Christian's heart, that the world may read Christ in the church. It will be noticed too, that this epistle says they are; it is no mere question of a duty, but of a positive relationship which is the ground of the duty. If we are Christ's epistle, as the apostle declares to the Corinthians, we should assuredly convey His mind and affections truly and without blot. The truth abides for us, which wrought on them; and so does the Spirit of the living God; and thus we are inexcusable in our failure. At least may we own and feel it, that grace may work in us as in those who had fallen so short!

“And such confidence have we through the Christ toward God.” Christianity not only excludes despair but gives assurance, and this on the firmest ground with God, even Christ, whose work puts the believer into the same acceptance, nearness, and favor as our Lord enjoyed through His own personal relationship and perfection as man. This is the meaning, aim, and effect of a Savior such as He is: less than this would be to slight Him and His work, and the new creation and relationships which are the fruit of it. But here the apostle speaks of confidence as regards his ministry, which is no less true and flows from the same grace. For it is all the expression of God's love in Christ to us and to Christ in the delight of His glorification of God; and in the power of one so able to give it effect as the Holy Spirit. Therefore the apostle could not doubt, but cherishes a confidence, measured by God's estimate of what was due to Christ whom He had sent to testify and prove His love, and now had glorified on high in witness of the perfection of His work, But along with it goes the most earnest disclaimer of any intrinsic competency, while owning it given of God to serve in new covenant order, but even here of spirit, not of letter. For literally it remains to be applied to the house of Israel and of Judah, though the blood is shed and accepted, on which its efficacy rests. But this only the more suits the genius of Christianity, where the principles stand out in the light, and the truth is told plainly as here: “for the letter killeth, but the spirit [that is, the mind of God couched under the forms which unbelief never seizes] quickeneth.” And this is universally true; for if the letter were more glaringly perilous of old, there is always the danger of deserting the spirit for it, even under the gospel.

Chapter 13

Notes on 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

The apostle proceeds next, in a long parenthesis (7-16) to contrast the respective services of the law and of the gospel, the ever rising debate wherever Christ is named and known. And no wonder, for sovereign grace is not natural to the heart, though it alone reveals God fully. The believer himself never keeps grace fresh, pure, or even true, save as consciously in God's presence, with Christ before him. As in Christ thus, it is simple and appreciated as the one principle and power which snits either God on the one hand, or those He saves on the other. Grace alone puts each in the place which befits them. But the effect or assumption of the mind even in the believer to take up grace and reason it out, apart from present dependence, is as bad or worse than its use of the law; for conscience answers to the law when it condemns every evil way, but faith is needed for grace. Outside God's presence it is but allowance of sin. In His presence it deals with sin far more overwhelmingly than law, as is evident in the cross of Christ. Only there can the believer enjoy grace safely, happily, and holily: and there is no possibility of having peace in His presence but through grace—grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

“But if the ministry of death in letter, graven on stones, came in with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently toward the face of Moses for the glory of his face, that was to be done away, how shall not the ministry of the Spirit more be in glory? For if the ministry of condemnation [have] glory, much more doth the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For even that which hath been glorified, hath not been glorified in this respect on account of the surpassing glory. For if that to be done away [was] with glory, much more what abideth [is] in glory?”

It is of moment to notice that the apostle reasons here on Ex. 34, not on Ex. 20 as in Heb. 12. It is a question, not of law pure and simple, when God's voice shook the earth, with a sight of terror which caused even Moses to be full of trembling; but of law when given the second time, accompanied by the mercy which not only forgave but accepted mediation. It was a mixture of law with grace, and precisely what people now conceive to be Christianity. But this is what is designated the ministry of death in letter, engraven on stones. For the second time, not the first, was it introduced with glory (■γεν■θη ■ν δ■ξ■), and then, not before, was there any difficulty for the sons of Israel steadily to gaze at his face. Only then are we told that the skin of the face of Moses shone (Ex. 34), and that the Israelites were afraid to come nigh him. It was the glory of Jehovah which caused his face thus to shine, an effect entirely peculiar to the second occasion, Nevertheless this is styled “the ministry of death.” The mercy which had spared Israel did not alter its character, nor did the glory which shone in the Mediator's face. How different is that which the Spirit now ministers in a dead, risen, and glorified Christ! The reflection of glory in Moses' case was but a passing thing: it was neither intrinsic nor permanent, but to be done away. Not so Christ's. Here all that is the fruit of His work abides. It has everlasting value. It is no question of letter, nor of graving on stones, but of a divine Savior yet a man, who has glorified God atoningly as to sin, not in living obedience only, but up to death, the death of the cross, and is thereon glorified in heaven, yea, in God Himself, and gives the believer, once a wretched, guilty, and lost

ginner, now washed, sanctified and justified, a righteous title to stand in perfect grace, to be with Him in glory, one with Him even now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. This is the gospel, this the ministry of the Spirit which abides and is assuredly in glory.

But the law requires righteousness, and man being a sinner cannot yield it. Such is necessarily, therefore, a ministry of death (ver. 7), and the more brightly God's goodness shines, the worse it is for the sinner, for he is only the more proved worthless and guilty. In the gospel righteousness is revealed to faith, not required: for Christ Himself is the righteousness of the believer, and the work was done and accepted before God sent out the gospel of His grace to man. The Spirit, therefore, testifies to a Man at God's right hand, Who suffered once for sins on the cross, and declared that by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Hence the Holy Spirit as He sealed Christ the righteous One without blood when on earth, now seals us when washed from our sins in His blood, and rests on us as the Spirit of glory and of God. (Ver. 8.) We are put, therefore, in association with Christ on high and await His coming to bring us there. The law, on the contrary, not only kills but condemns; it brings sense of guilt on the conscience, and God as a judge of the evil actually done. Hence it can only be a ministry of condemnation (ver. 9), as well as death, whatever the glory that marked its enactment; whereas the gospel is the ministry of righteousness already accomplished in Christ and the portion of the believer; and that righteousness abides unchanged and glorious in Christ above. Hence the ministry of the Spirit is also that of righteousness. As the righteousness is a fact of free grace in One who loves us perfectly, so has the glory the same attraction, unlike the glory which alarmed Israel, even in the face of Moses. The light which shines from Christ glorified speaks of the efficacy of His sacrifice; the brighter the light, the clearer the proof that our every sin is cleansed away by His blood. It is the light of divine glory, doubtless, but flowing from, redemption. His title to be in heaven is not His person, but the work which God His Father gave Him to do, that as surely as we know Him in the Father, we should also know that we are in Him and He in us. Most wondrous yet the simple truth of Christ and the Christian. But what is so wonderful as the truth? Yet Christ accounts for it all, and His work brings us who believe into it all. Such is grace in the ministry of the Spirit by righteousness.

And as the glory of God's grace in Christ completely dims by excess of brightness His glory in the law, (ver. 10), so also does the transitory or temporary character of the latter proclaim its incomparable inferiority to the former which abides, (ver. 15), as indeed it ought, inasmuch as it flows from and expresses the will of God, while the other only condemns and executes sentence on the evil of man.

A few details may be useful in helping the reader to appreciate the remarkably compressed phraseology of these verses. ■γεν■θη ■ν δ■ξ■ means that the law was introduced in or with glory, rather than it existed in glory. The verb is changed when we come to the Spirit and His ministry, subsisting in glory. It is an error, however, to suppose that the future ■σται is one of time, but rather of inference. There is no allusion here to the coming glory. The apostle points emphatically to what the Spirit is ministering now. It is hard to express, but important to bear in mind, the abstract nature of the contrast, τ■ καταργο■μενον and τ■ μ■νον, the present participle of character, apart from time, not of actual fact. Lastly, it is at best oversight to affirm that δι■ δ■ξης and ■ν δ■ξ■ present a mere variation, of expressions without a difference of meaning. Never does scripture thus change words without a fresh thought and a distinct purpose. ■ν δ is

admirably adapted when connected (not with ■γεν■θη, but) with μ■νον, to set forth permanence of glory, δι■ δ. a mere accompanying condition of what was to pass away. Rom. 3:30; 5:10, prove difference, not sameness, of force, whatever Winer may say (Moulton's edition, pp. 458, 512), or the commentators misled by such laxity, as Alford, Hodge, &c.

Notes on 2 Corinthians: 3:12-16

This leads the apostle in the Spirit to apply the incident of Moses with and without a veil, as before of the glory of his face. He glories that in the gospel all is open. It is no longer the unhappy though wholesome detection of sin in man, but the plain revelation of good from God in Christ, and this righteously through His cross, yea, gloriously in His place at God's right hand in heaven: the ground of our association with heaven now, and of glory there not in spirit only but in body at His coming. In Judaism man could not bear to hear the truth, which was the sentence of death to flesh; in Gentilism all was doubt or deception. In the gospel we can speak plainly: it is God's good news of His Son. There is no reason or motive for reserve, but just the contrary. We cannot be too open. So the love of God who gave such a treasure would have it. Leave darkness to Rabbis and philosophers, who love it rather than light.

“Having then such hope we use much openness of speech: and not as Moses used to put a veil on his own face, that the sons of Israel should not look steadfastly unto the end of that to be done away. But their thoughts were darkened [lit, hardened]; for until this very day the same veil at the reading of the old covenant abideth unremoved [lit. unveiled], which in Christ is done away. But unto this day when Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. But whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken off.” (Ver. 12-16.)

Christianity is no system of restraint as evil in the first man, with ordinances suited to the flesh in the world, and God afar off in the dark, but founded on the grace of Christ, who, after establishing righteousness by the cross, is gone up into heavenly glory, and is ministered by the Holy Ghost in power. Hence, the unseen, the future, and the everlasting converge on the believer now; and having such a hope one can be thoroughly outspoken: there are the strongest motives for openness in every way, in contrast with the dimness, distance and reserve of the law. Not only did God in Christ come down to man, but, now that his evil has been judicially and conclusively dealt with in the cross, man can go up—nay, has already sat down at His right hand—in the person of our Savior and head. The accomplishment of redemption, as it closed the ministry of death, opened the way and became the basis of the ministry of the Spirit, to abide in glory. The previous state of concealment, where man had such reason to dread the sight of glory according to the law, is set forth in Moses putting a veil on his face when he spoke with the children of Israel outside, whereas he invariably put it off whenever he went in before Jehovah.

The Christian position is in the fullest contrast with that of Israel, to which tradition and human thoughts of unbelief would ever in principle reduce us. It suits reason and conscience guided by it, and our estimate of self as well as of God, where Christ and His work have no distinctive and commanding place. Hence not only do the utmost extremes meet here, popish and puritanical, but also that via media, which pleases the moderate men of all parties, rationalist or nonconformist, who on the one hand rightly venerate the law, as clothed with God's authority, but on the other, see not the wholly new position grace has placed us in by redemption, answering to Christ glorified on high, who has sent down the Spirit that we might enjoy it to the full, and walk accordingly. For

we find our privilege Godward typified in Moses unveiled, not with the veil on. We behold Christ and His work in the ritualistic system, which conveyed to the Israelite only precepts to kill a lamb, a goat, or a bullock, with the blood brought in before God, and to sprinkle themselves with the water of separation, or the like. The law made nothing perfect. It (and not the speculative thought of the Greek, nor the political wisdom of Rome) was the true nursery of man in his nonage, the divine pro-paedeutic, shutting up to the faith about to be revealed.

Israel through unbelief slighted grace when shown to them abundantly, and forgot the promises which God had made to the fathers, which faith would have remembered and felt the need of. They therefore doubted not for a moment their ability to keep His law, and so maintain their place with Him. Granted that this was their deepest ignorance, both of God as a judge according to law, and of themselves as guilty and powerless sinners; and that scripture reveals their ruin under law, that the Gentile should avoid the snare and find their resource, strength, and blessing, all and only in Christ by God's sovereign grace. How awful then the darkness which has deliberately put Christendom back into the self-same position of law, as the rule of people to live by, after the proclamation of God's mercy! This is what not only the multitude believe, but the doctors have taught, Protestant no less than popish; this is the prevalent doctrine, alike Presbyterian and Prelatical, Methodist or Congregational. It is the mind active and exercised on what God used as a probationary system, but as unable to look to the end of it as the Jew of old, as rebellious against its transitory character, as blind to the surpassing glory of what is now revealed in Christ.

It is solemn to reflect on those once the people of God, now Lo-Ammi, in zeal for their forms rejecting Christ who gives them their real meaning and chief, if not only, value. But so it is and must be. How could the infinite gift of the Son of God, and then the witness of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, in virtue of redemption, have any other consequence? It is the rejection of God's fullest grace and heavenly glory, not merely of the law which demanded and defined a man's duty. God would be a partner to His own utter dishonor if He passed by the refusal of His Son dying in love for man's sin, or despite to the Spirit of grace who testifies of it and Him. This the Jew, did formally, before God swept them from their land by the Romans, not because the scriptures are not express as to Christ and His work, but because of their own unbelief. “But unto this day, when Moses is being read, a veil lieth upon their heart.” (Ver. 13.)

It is humbling however to know that their hardening is but the shadow of a guiltier and incomparably wider unbelief which is settling down on Christendom, not profane only but even religious after the flesh, into more and more dense delusion and self-complacency in resistance of the Holy Spirit and an ignorant contempt of Christ's glory as of our own portion in and with Him. So proceeded the Jew with his darkened thoughts till divine judgment fell on their temple and capital. Their (it was no longer God's) house was left to them desolate; yet do they persist in their most ruinous infatuation, to be punished with a yet more awful tribulation, not (thank God) forever but till they say, as they will ere long, Blessed He that cometh in the name of Jehovah, and own in their rejected Messiah their Lord and their God. “Whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken off." (Ver. 16.) Alas! it is not so with Babylon as with Jerusalem. For the Gentile city of confusion there will be exterminating judgment without hope of recovery. It behooves then all the faithful to beware of the evils which end in such strokes from God; it becomes them to inquire whether they may not have fellowship with her sins, which dishonor the excellent name which He called upon them. To the law and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light

in (or morning for) them.

“Until this very day,” says the apostle, “the same veil at the reading of the old covenant abideth unremoved, which in Christ is done away.” (Ver. 14.) So it was and so it is; but it is graver still and no less sure, that the same veil rests on the hearts of the baptized at the reading of the latest revelation of God, when they refuse to submit to the righteousness of God, and their eyes and hearts are turned away to self, or to the church so called, from the only true Light. They do not truly acknowledge the Son, nor own the present efficacy of His work. The veil will envelop the heart for them (perhaps we may say) no less than for Israel; and what greater danger can there be than that such darkness should prevail where Paul is read no less, yea, far more, than Moses? Is it not that, though it be for the Gentile the day of grace, their thoughts are increasingly darkened? Those born of God will no doubt come out of Babylon; for His grace will work, and it may be in ways we little anticipate, to extricate souls that they may await His Son from heaven. But there is no revival, no restoration, for corrupted Christendom. It is salt that has lost its savor, fit neither for land nor for dunghill, only to be cast out, or burnt with fire, recompensed at last as the great city recompensed during her unrighteous career. For strong is the Lord God that judges her.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

The central portion of the chapter, from verse 7, contains not only the remarkable allusion to Moses veiled and unveiled, but the contrast between the ministry of letter in the law with that of the Spirit. The parenthesis being closed, he forthwith recurs to that contrast of letter and spirit which preceded it. “Now the Lord is the spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty.” (Ver. 17.) Scarce any scripture shows more instructively than this the necessity of understanding the mind of God, in order even to present it correctly in form. For it is an utter mistake to give “the spirit” in the first clause a capital letter, which would imply the Holy Ghost to be meant; and whore would be the sense, where so much as the orthodoxy, of identifying the Lord with the Holy Ghost? To me the meaning, without doubt, is that the Lord Jesus constitutes the spirit of the forms and figures and other communications of the old covenant. These, if taken in the letter, killed; if in the spirit, quickened. “The Lord” was their real scope; and now this comes out into the fullest evidence. Faith sees in Him contrast with Adam, analogy with Abel; the light of which shines even on Cain and Lamech. Yet more manifestly do we see types of Him in Joseph and Moses, and in that vast system of sacrifice and priesthood which, coming in by Moses, furnished those shadows so abundantly. Unbelief never laid hold of the coming One, faith always did; though it might not apprehend the bearing of all, nor perhaps fully of anything, till He actually died and rose. But “the Lord is the spirit,” and the new testimony is so precise, that there is no excuse for misapprehending the old longer. “The true Light now shineth,” and “we who were once darkness are now light in the Lord.” In the light we walk, and we ought to walk as children of it; and an immense help it is to our souls intelligently to apprehend the Lord in every part of the word. It is this which gives the deepest interest, and truest solemnity, and living power, to every part of the Old Testament. Thus only have we communion with the mind of God with positive and growing blessing to our own souls. Now that He is revealed, all is plain.

But there is more than this, for “where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty.” Here the truth requires that there should be a capital, for the apostle means not merely the true inner bearing of what was communicated of old, but the presence and power of the Holy Ghost now; and He is not a spirit of bondage unto fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; not a spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of the Son, whom God had sent into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Hence the effect is liberty, not alone because it, is the Son that makes us free, but the Spirit of life in Him risen from the dead, after the mighty work in which God, sending Jesus in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Thus all was condemned that could be condemned, and we by grace are delivered—free indeed. “Where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty,” as opposed to Gentile license as to Jewish bondage.

It is liberty to do the will of God, “for sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace.” Yet do we yield ourselves slaves for obedience; and having got our freedom from sin, and become slaves to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life. We are no longer in the flesh, and are clear from the law, so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter. “Where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty.” It is not yet the liberty

of the glory of the children of God; it is the liberty of grace before glory dawns at Christ's coming.

But we are creatures, though a new creation in Christ, and we need an object that we may be kept and grow, and be formed and fashioned spiritually according to God, while here below. Without the cross of Christ all this were vain; yet are we not called simply to be at the foot of the cross, or to behold no object but Jesus Christ crucified, as men misuse the passage. Not so; “but we all beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from [the] Lord [the] Spirit.” Such is the present business, we may say, of the Christian. It is alike the duty and the privilege of all Christians, not the perquisite of a favored few who attain to it. It is not a state reached in a moment by an act of faith, but a gradual process, which ought to characterize every Christian all the way through. At the coming of Christ we shall be conformed to His image—that of the Son, the First-born among many brethren. Meanwhile thus does “the Lord the Spirit” (for such, I suppose, is the meaning in the last clause) work in us from glory to glory, as all that Christ is glorified on high becomes more familiar and real to our souls by faith. We need, most assuredly, the lowly grace which came down as a servant, obeying to the uttermost, even to the death of the cross, if we would have the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. But, blessed and indispensable as it is thus to know His love, faith in the Christian does not rest there, nor ought it, but, holding all this fast, to look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and thus be changed, according to the same image, from glory to glory. For the Spirit, though Lord equally with the Father and the Son, does not work independently of Christ, but by presenting Him to us, from first to last.

It is scarcely needful to add, that one rejects the translation of the closing phrase, which pleases Olahausen, De Wette, Meyer, &c., “Lord of the Spirit,” as being clearly against the truth of scripture—a serious fault in a subject of this kind. So Macknight, who paraphrases it, “the Lord of the covenant of the Spirit!” but those who expect either spiritual intelligence or sound scholarship from that divine, must be bitterly disappointed, if not deceived. Dr. Thomas F. Middleton, in his able “Doctrine of the Greek Article,” mistakes the margin of the Authorized Version, which agrees with my view, against its own text. So Luther, Beza, &c., had rendered it. The reader may compare ■π■ θεο■ πατρ■ς (Gal. 1:2; Eph. 6:23), and analogous phrases in many other passages.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 4:1-4

The apostle returns to the manner and spirit of his service in the gospel. Such a hope, such glory, demands and by grace inspires good courage, as well as conduct, of a divine sort. “On this account, having this ministry, according as we obtained mercy, we faint not, but refused the hidden things of shame, not walking in deceit, nor guilefully using the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men in the sight of God. But if even our gospel is veiled, in those that perish it is veiled, in whom the god of this age blinded the minds [or thoughts] of the faithless, that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is [the] image of God, should not shine forth.” (Vers. 1-4.)

It was not only the surpassing and abiding excellence of this ministry, but the possession of it, which touched the heart with the sense of divine mercy, and took away all disposition to be craven-hearted in presence of the gravest difficulties, and the keenest and constant sufferings. It is true that the Corinthians knew but little of such experience, but therefore was it the more needful that the apostle, who knew little else here below, should bring it out clearly. On the other hand, men admire cleverness in baffling adversaries, and in evading dangers or difficulties, alas! too often in glossing over what cannot bear the light, and in turning aside the edge of what exposes and condemns. Here also the saints at Corinth were not without the contagion of their city and its schools. Could they, like the apostle, say that they refused the secret things of shame?—that they did not walk in trickery?—that they did not falsify the word of God? Some among them certainly gave too much appearance of being thus lacking in the faith that counts on God, and declines secret influence, and shrewd, if not unscrupulous, plans after the flesh. The ways of the servant should harmonize with His blessed service, as they did in Paul's case, leaving to the children of darkness all that shrinks from the light, which it does not suit, no less than evil surmisings of the good they cannot sympathize with. It is not only what is scandalous, but all cunning, which is abhorrent to Christ, who needs nothing that is not of the Spirit. And if Satan lures us to the path of self-seeking, the desire to win others soon slips from hesitation into a guileful handling of that word which breathes only light and love, like its source.

The apostle, far from uncertainty in his own soul, acted and spoke in the consciousness of divine authority, as he says, “by the manifestation of the truth” (what a blessing in a world of darkness!) “commending ourselves to every conscience of men in the sight of God.” Activity of mind, which likes to propagate its ideas, and to produce common action, was not wanting at Corinth; but where was this conscious possession of truth which formed the ways in accordance with it, and sought no other influence, but only thus in love to appeal to conscience in God's sight? To shine before men, to gain applause, to have a party, are snares to avoid, unworthy of Christ's servants. To seek, or even to receive, glory one of another, instead of seeking the glory which is from the only God, is the ruin of faith, and wrought not in the Jewish unbeliever, but in many a Corinthian believer. The apostle, in unwearied love, and unquailing before difficulties, and unflinching in candor, pressed the truth in season, out of season, whether men heard or forbore, fissured that, while he preached as in God's presence, every conscience bowed inwardly, even if the will were

set on its own way in defiance of God.

Moreover, the vividness of the heavenly vision, to which he was nut disobedient, reproduced itself by the Spirit in his evangelizing. All was out, without disguise, radiant with the light of heaven and the glory of the Christ he had seen on high. Hence he could add, that even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in the perishing, in whose case the god of this age blinded the minds of the faithless. He had no veil like Moses: the gospel effectually repudiates it—at least the gospel as he and his fellows preached it. As he believed, so he preached. There was for him no affectation of depth or sublimity. The truth needs no arts to set it off. Nothing else is so lofty, nothing else so deep. It is Christ, the Word, who was God and yet was made flesh, life eternal yet dying for sinners, who descended into the lower parts of the earth, and also ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. If such glad tidings were veiled, they were veiled in the lost, not by those that preached the truth. In their ease, the god of this age blinded the thoughts, or understandings, of the unbelieving. It was no defect in the truth, no obscurity in the message from God, nor insincerity in the messenger, who gave it out as purely as he received it.

Alas! there is a subtle and energetic adversary of God and man; there are men who have not faith, but passions and lusts, which expose them to his influence in blinding them to the truth. And such are all nature since sin ruined mankind, till grace work repentance to acknowledgment of the truth. But men who are feeble in owning the power of the Spirit are apt to be slow to perceive Satan's workings; and controversial zeal increases this unscriptural bias. Hence we see that the fathers in general, early and late, Greek and Latin, misapplied this simple and weighty statement of scripture, and denied the devil to be meant here, construing it as God blinding the minds of the unbelievers of this age! (See Cramer's Cat. Patr. Gr. v., 878, 874, Oxon. 1844; Iren. Haer. iv. 892; Tert. advers. Mare. L, Aug. c. adv. Leg. iii., vii. 29.) Hilary, in his zeal against the Arians, and among the Greeks, Chrysostom, would not allow Satan to be called god of this age, lest it might tell against the deity of Christ; and so Ecumenius and Theodoret, &c., down to Theophylact; as others, like Origen, against other early heretics, Marcionites, Manicheans, &c. It is instructive as a plain proof of patristic shallowness, where they agreed, as they rarely did, on an interpretation. They failed to distinguish between “God” used absolutely, and “God” with a distinct and restricted qualification. And as the Lord, in view of His own rejection unto death, spoke of the devil as the prince of this world (John 12; 14), so the apostle here designates him, with striking propriety, as “god of this age.” During the new age, when the Lord takes the sovereignty of the world (Rev. 11), it will not be so; he will be bound, and thereby kept from his old deceits. Now he takes advantage of all truth to dishonor God and destroy men, his wretched slaves, who, in doing their own will, serve him effectually. Thus are they blinded, that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth.

Here also it is well to notice that “the glorious gospel,” as in the Authorized Version, is not only inadequate, but incorrect. For “the glory” is definitely of Christ exalted to God's right hand, in virtue of not His person only but redemption, that we who now believe might see Him, and have our place in Him, there. What enlightenment can compare with this! It is part of what the apostle calls “my” and “our gospel.” Christ was, and is, God's image, alone fully representing Him; but the gospel, as Paul preached it, was not of His descent and life here only, nor of His death and resurrection, but of His glory in heaven also. Hence the appropriateness of the language, with which the reader may contrast the vague platitudes of the Cat. Patr. v. 374, 876.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 4:5-6

There is no defect, then, in “our gospel.” There is not only the firmest foundation of righteousness, but the brightest heavenly glory in the display of that righteousness. In Christ exalted love with us is made perfect. How could it, indeed, go farther? because as He is, so are we in this world. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God's image. We are not yet ourselves in possession of the glory as an actual fact, but we have it in Him in whom it shines most fully, and through whom it shines into our hearts. No greater proof, then, of the blinding power of Satan, than that men should be insensible to such glory. But an evil conscience cannot endure the light of God, whatever the love from which the light of that glory springs. For they cannot endure the discovery and judgment of their sins, even though the rejection of His testimony exposes them to everlasting ruin. They believe themselves, or really Satan, the god of this age, rather than the only true God; they are lost. This is what the gospel supposes, though it fully provides for it. But the blessing is inseparable from faith; for God is not saving only, but making the saved vessels on earth to reflect the glory of Christ in heaven.

Such pre-eminently was the apostle. He himself, the stoutest of combatants against the name of Jesus, was struck down in mid-career by the glory of Jesus shining from heaven. He therefore knew, if any soul ever did, the gospel of the glory of Christ. Lost, spite of all that law could give or boast of; saved by sovereign grace, spite of all that the strongest enmity could breathe against the Lord and His own, he became the milted witness of a Savior and Lord on high. Where was self now in his eyes? and what the worth of religions authority in Israel, any more than of that philosophy which leaves men groping in the dark, whatever the vauntings of its several schools? The worthlessness of all here below he had proved; for him henceforward Christ was all, as indeed He is all, and in all.

“For not ourselves do we preach, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your bondmen, for Jesus' sake, because it is the God that bid light shine out of darkness, who shone in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (Vers. 6, 6.) Others might preach themselves; the apostle, Christ Jesus as Lord. He was content to be servant of Christ, and, for that very reason, of the saints, for the sake of Jesus. This alone is true service; anything else a snare, both to him who serves, and to those who are served, who, in such circumstances, alike serve themselves to His dishonor.

But as Christ Jesus is Lord, and the believer owns and proclaims it according to his measure, so is He the one true and safe motive for the ready service of His saints. Personal interest, or honor, vanishes before His name. And such a servant was the apostle to the Corinthians. What a change, from the prejudiced, law-bound, yet impassioned Jew of Tarsus! How came so complete and sudden a revolution to be brought about in the heart of one naturally most averse to change? It was, it is always, the effect of God's power in grace. The Creator-God is the Savior-God, through His Son.

It was as truly light spiritual from God, as that which shone at God's bidding where darkness had reigned before the earth was prepared for man. “Because God, that bid light to shine out of darkness, [is he] who shone in our hearts for [the] illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Thus, for faith does the first man give instant place to the second; and we, who were once darkness, become light in the Lord. The apostle, no doubt, had vividly before him the never to be forgotten circumstances of his own conversion, suggestive of the light at mid-day, above the brightness of the sun shining from heaven. With this he brings in the allusion to Gen. 1:3, so as the better to contrast the light with the previous darkness, and connect all with the power, as well as the word, of God. But he gives both references the precision requisite to the case in hand.

It was a question here, not of an external miracle, but of God's shining “in our hearts” —a thing, after all, far more blessed than even the light of old which answered the bidding of God to dispel the world's deep gloom. If the enemy blinds the thoughts of the unbelieving, grace shines in the believer's heart for the shining forth of the knowledge of His glory in the face, or person, of Christ. So had God operated in the apostle's heart, not merely for his own enjoyment of that heavenly light (though this primarily), but also that it might shine on others, as a testimony to them and for Christ. Grace thus identifies the two things, as Christ gave Himself up “for us,” an offering and sacrifice “to God,” for an odor of sweet savor. The energy of the Holy Spirit alone can effect so mighty a work in any heart, as it did most abundantly in him for a pattern of those about to believe on Him to life everlasting. So, when taken out from among the people and the Gentiles, he could say that the Lord sent him to the last, with a view to open their eyes, that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

There is, therefore, in the gospel, as it reached the apostle, a wondrous double action: not only an in-shining of God in his own heart, but this also with a view to giving forth the light of the knowledge of God's glory in Christ's face. If the law was addressed to a people already formed, and in a definite relationship with God, the gospel, especially as Paul knew and preached it, went out to any, to all, to the lost. It was not requirement of man's duty, it was the communication of the knowledge of God's glory, a glory which shone in Christ's face, consequent on the infinite work of redemption, whereby God could justify man in free grace, instead of judging him for his iniquities. If men are inexcusable who reject the gospel, no wonder that the apostle should say, We preach such a Savior, blending as he does the glory of God with the salvation of sinners. But that glory of God which is thus bound up with salvation is seen not in the heavens, whatever they may declare, but in the face of Jesus Christ. The expanse shows His handy work; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared God Himself, the God whom no one has seen at any time; and so blessedly does He reveal the Father, that, as He said Himself, be that had seen Him had seen the Father.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 4:7-11

Such then is the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness in Christ, the revelation of God's glory in His face. This is the treasure which grace gives.

“But we have this treasure, in earthenware vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be God's, and not of us, in everything being afflicted, yet not straitened, sorely yet not utterly perplexed, persecuted yet not forsaken, cast down yet not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying [or, putting to death] of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we that live are ever being delivered up unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” (Vers. 7-11.)

Thus does the apostle meet the natural thought of men which the carnal mind among the Corinthians had taken up against himself, to their loss and his grief. In an apostle they had looked for a grand style of speech, for lofty speculation and subtle argument, as well as a dignified and attractive presence, backed up by such a display of power as would overawe all the world. They could not understand therefore that one who was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles should be with them in weakness and fear and much trembling, and that on principle he should forego every advantage of intellectual ability and acquired learning, of all that which is a matter of boast to the flesh; nay more, that he should glory in infirmities, and treat as his foolishness all reference to his devoted service and mighty deeds, signs and wonders, with the vast and deep effects of his preaching. He was indeed the most remarkable of sufferers no less than of laborers; but he insists that, whim he was weak, then was he strong. What he gloried in was the Lord, and His strength made perfect in weakness. Doubtless, as the apostle surpassed all others in depth of heart and all-endurance for Christ and the church and the gospel, so in this also, the most abiding consciousness of weakness and insufficiency keeping him in dependence on the Lord.

Here he lays down the general principle. “We have this treasure in earthenware vessels,” and this “that the surpassingness of the power may be God's, and not of us.” The deposit was none the less precious because laid up in the coarsest ware. The very object is to make evident, by the contrast of man, weak and fragile and suffering, that the power is God's. On the one hand a revelation of grace, and truth which goes down into all depths of evil, and extricates so completely as to put those who were once slaves of Satan into the closest living association by the. Spirit with the Christ glorified in heaves; on the other, the vessels of this delivering power exposed not to an occasional assault of the enemy, but kept up by God in the face of constant pressure and excessive trial and extreme weakness, yet with blessing flowing out on every side: hard pressed, but not straitened; at a loss, but not absolutely so; pursued, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

What was it then that the Spirit set before those who thus held on their way? What gave patience in a path so strange to flesh and blood? “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.” Such was the habitual course of the apostle himself. He went about everywhere as one that realized Christ's portion, in the world,

at all times applying death to the body, keeping it down as dead. It is the power of the cross applied to that which otherwise craves present ease and enjoyment, in order “that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.” For the believer lives of the very same life as the Savior, in contrast with his old Adam life shared by all the race; and it is the activity of the natural life which hinders the working and manifestation of the life of Jesus. Hence the importance of ever applying by faith the putting to death (ω■κρωσιν) of Jesus, in its moral power, to the body, disallowing its energy by holding it for dead, that the life of Jesus also may be shown out.

And as this is the constant bent of those who are true to the cross practically, so God helps such souls in fact by continuous exposure to sorrow and suffering, difficulty, to danger, and death itself, for Jesus' sake, in order that the blessed end of manifesting the life of Jesus may be the more effectuated. “For we that live are ever being delivered up unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” A far weightier testimony, in such unwearied and unceasing trial, to God's power with His servant, than enduring a martyr's death through some sudden outburst of the world's hatred, however blessed and honorable such a death undoubtedly is.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 4:12-15

Verse 12 is the conclusion of this part of the subject, the service of Christ in divine love and self-abnegation which works death to the servant as surely as life to the saints he serves. This was true of the master in the fullest way; it is verified in those who follow Him in the labor of love, just so far as they are true to Him.

“So that death worketh in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed wherefore [also] I spake: we also believe, wherefore also we speak; knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present [us] with you. For all things [are] for your sakes, that the grace having multiplied through the greater number might make the thanksgiving abound unto the glory of God.” (Vers. 12-15.)

It is a total misapprehension of the opening words to suppose that the least approach to a withering rebuke lies hid here, as in 1 Cor. 4:8-14. Calvin and others have thought so, but there is no real ground to doubt that the apostle very simply states the present effect of serving Christ when His mind and grace govern in such a world and state as this. It is death to him who in the work shares the affections and thoughts of Christ. Continual exposure to trial, habitual experience of grief, ridicule, detraction, opposition, enmity on the one hand; on the other, hopes, fears and disappointments; a never ceasing succession of all that can draw out, and withal distress the spirit cannot fail to do their work in him who thus serves Christ and the saints for His sake. But in the face of all, in spite of evil, and in virtue of grace, the saints are helped, strengthened, cleared, comforted, and blessed. Death worketh in us, and life in you. The apostle habitually toiling and suffering was thoroughly content, and rejoiced in the gain of others: if he was wearing away bodily, those ministered to were being led on in what is imperishable. The service of Christ truly carried out costs all here below, but the blessing is commensurate even now; and what will be the result in glory? Not only was life in Christ given to those that believed, but it was fed, exercised, and developed by ministrations of truth, of which grace was the spring and character and power, in presence of the deepest shame and pain and all calculated to dishearten, yet ever rising above the obstacles and persevering, no matter what the weakness, not only in view of death, but death working already.

But in Christ is the power of resurrection, now to faith, by-and-by in fact, even as the Spirit of Christ gave the Psalmist of old to sing in days of sorrow, “But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed wherefore I spoke; we also believe, wherefore also we speak.” No trial or suffering, not death itself in view, can stop the believer's mouth: he confides in God, and can speak out and well of Him.

New Testament accomplishment also exceeds Old Testament promise, for we can read all in the light of Christ dead and risen. Such is our conscious knowledge, before we too are raised and glorified. And thus we are to be on a common principle with Jesus, in contrast with the wicked who refuse to believe on Him, and are only raised by divine power for judgment. It is not so with the righteous or saints, who live of His life, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in them since

redemption. They look to be changed at His coming, to enjoy His glory and love in perfection of their state, as now they do in His person. The resurrection of those who fall asleep meanwhile is from among the dead as His was. His resurrection declares that there is no judgment for the believer, as surely as it proclaims its certainty for the world, as the apostle teaches in Rom. 4:25, and Acts 17:31. But it is a mistake to use Eph. 2:6, or Col. 2 iii. 1, to illustrate the critical reading, σ■ν "with" against the more common δι■ "by" or "through." For these epistles, pre-eminently treating of our association with Christ, insist that we are already dead and risen with Christ, which our text speaks solely of the future: Perhaps the nearest to it is! Thessalonians v. 10, where it is taught that our Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. It is in one living the life of glory, as in the other raising us in order to it.

And it is added that He "will present us with you." All efforts of Meyer and others now, as of some in former times, to lower the meaning to extrication from dangers or difficulties, are vain. Here it is the presentation of all together in glory, whether the servants or those served in grace, all being raised on a common principle with their Master who is their life after dying for them. What are present trials in comparison of such a prospect! How blessed that as nothing shall be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ, so God will have together in glory those who on earth were exposed to all kinds of divisive and destructive influence.

"For all things [are] for your sakes, that the grace having multiplied through the greater number might make the thanksgiving abound unto the glory of God." (Ver. 15.) What an answer in the apostle to the affections of Christ! And certainly it was not in word or feeling only, but in deeds and sufferings which proved its reality and depth. It was endurance with joyfulness in a love like its source for the saints of God. And he looked for fruit accordingly, that if it fell to such as himself to suffer in the service of the many, the grace which so wrought might be the more diffused and cause thanksgiving to go up from all that reaped the blessing to the glory of God.

Chapter 20

Notes on 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

There are thus, along with the consciousness of utter weakness and exposure, spiritual forces of the most powerful kind, which sustain in the face of all trial and suffering the faith of what God has already wrought in Christ risen; the hope of what He will do for us who believe on Him; and the love which bears all for the blessing of those so precious to both the Father and the Son.

“Wherefore we fail not; but even if our outer man is consuming, yet the inner is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of our affliction worketh out for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory: while we have the eye not on the things that are seen, but on those not seen, for the things seen [are] temporary, but those not seen, eternal.” (Vers. 16-18.)

On each divine ground the apostle repudiates all thoughts of succumbing, and declares for moving on undauntedly. Enjoyment, ease, honor, are out of the question as a present thing; nay, pain, tribulation, detraction, contempt, opposition, all that can wear away the outer man as sure as the path of Christ is trodden. But in all these things is the life of the Spirit. Grace turns to our account by Christ, and this, even now, the things which seem most contrary to man's life in this world. Be it that it perishes, yet the inner man is renewed day by day. (Ver. 16.) It is not that the saint becomes more meet for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light, for this rests on Christ and His redemption; but there is growth spiritually, a new nature and sure judgment of things around us, there is less value for what once attracted, and a more undivided deepening joy in the Lord and His objects here as well as in heavenly things. The babe becomes not a young man only, but a father. (1 John 2) Christ is more unwaveringly the attraction and the standard of thought, feeling, conduct, everything; while flesh and world not only sink, but are judged unsparingly, as one passes through all that would otherwise disappoint and torture, now regarded with calm and even thanksgiving.

This is so true that the apostle does not hesitate to designate so withering and pitiless a storm of trial, ever repeating itself in fresh blows and continual grief, as “the momentary lightness of our affliction.” Yet who ever beheld, yea conceived, such suffering, save in the One with whom none can compare? And His grace it is that so works, and strengthens so to reckon. Lightness of affliction! in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death often, But why recite what no reader of feeling can have forgotten? Momentary! in him who scarce knew cessation of unexampled perils, inflictions, and labors. Yet was he full of good cheer. For the momentary lightness of our affliction worketh out for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory. (Ver. 17.) To this he looked onward, reaping withal no small return of blessing even now, and thus binding together what was spiritual along the way with the end in the presence of the Lord by-and-by, in words which labor for adequate expression of the truth.

We must not lay unfounded stress on the “while” which introduces the last verse in our tongue. It is not here the expression of time emphatically, as if the blessing were only going on during the soul's regard of the things set before our faith, however important it may be that our regard should go on unbrokenly. The apostle says no more than that such is the due object for our

contemplation, our heed paid not to the things that are seen, but to those that are not seen; with the explanation or reason assigned, for the things that are seen [are] temporary, but those that are not seen [are] eternal. (Ver. 18.) Who does not own, save the basest of skeptics, that deliverance from the present and fleeting is true power? Who feels as he ought the simplicity with which Christ, as now revealed to us, and revealing the unseen and eternal things, makes good this mighty work in those who believe? How ought not the Christian to appreciate the gospel of His glory!

Chapter 21

Notes on 2 Corinthians 5:1-3

This leads the apostle to open out the power of life we have in Christ, and its results. “For we know that if our earthly tabernacle-house be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, everlasting in the heavens. For also in this we groan, longing to clothe ourselves with our dwelling which is from heaven, if indeed also when clothed we shall not be found naked.” (Vers. 1-3.)

What calm and confident knowledge the apostle here predicates of Christians as such! And what a contrast with the dark uncertainty of unbelief, or with its impious audacity! The eternal things are none the less sure in hope because they are not seen. For we know that, if death destroy the earthly tent we live in, we have a building of God. The body in its present state he compares to a tabernacle to be taken down, in its future to a building from God as the source, and to a house not made with hands, and hence everlasting in the heavens, its suited and purposed sphere forever. As we already heard, God who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise up by Him those also who sleep, and then present us all together faultless before the throne of His glory: here details are entered into with clearness and discrimination. It is one of the few passages which treat of the intermediate state, as well as of the resurrection or change of the body for glory, and therefore of the deepest interest to the faithful personally and relatively. And in a few brief and plain words adequate light is given, without the smallest indulgence of irreverent curiosity, for all that concerns the family of God after death as well as the change at Christ's coming. One cannot conceive a communication more worthy of God, or more characteristic of His word generally, while it bears the deep impress of His blessed servant who was inspired to give it.

Of course theology is here little more than a Babel of discordant tongues; and even the more pious and learned seem unable to answer with precision what is meant by the building we have of God. Some will have it that this house not made with hands is heaven itself, but how then could it be said to be “in the heavens?” How could we be in this case said to be clothed with our house or “dwelling which is from heaven?” The house and heaven itself are carefully distinguished. Others again, with less error but with an imperfect view of the passage as a whole, think only of the resurrection body. But it does not follow that the passage throws no light on the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, or that it treats solely of what is to happen after Christ's second coming.

The lowest and most mischievous of these interpretations is that of Olshausen and others who admire petty philosophizing, and contend that the house entered at death is an ethereal corporeity adapted to the heavenly condition of the soul, either intermediate between death and the resurrection, or (as bolder spirits say) to the exclusion of the body which is not to be resuscitated and changed. The intermediate and glorified vehicle of the soul is directly at issue with the plain and decisive language of this very passage. The house is described not only as in the heavens, but as “everlasting.” Scripture shuts out therefore all notion of a temporary body, for the soul in heaven before the resurrection of the body we now have. And a man must be a skeptical

Sadducee who denies that He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by (or, by reason of) His Spirit that dwelleth in us. (Rom. 8:11.) There is intermediate blessedness for the believer apart from his body with Christ on high; but the resurrection from the dead awaits His coming.

In opposition to the true bearing it is argued (1) that heaven is often in scripture compared to a house in which there are many mansions (John 14:2); or to a city in which there are many houses (Heb. 11:10, 14; 13:14; Rev. 21:10); or more generally to everlasting habitations. (Luke 16:9.) But we have already seen that, whatever be the figures used of the portion of the glorified saints in other scriptures, the house in this passage cannot mean heaven, because it is said here to be from heaven and in the heavens.

2. Whatever the reasoning to show that, as the soul now dwells in the body, heaven will be its house after death, it is inconsistent with the thoughts and language of the context.

3. Again, the effort to press that the discipline given here of the house agrees with that of heaven elsewhere is vain, if it were only because the state on which the soul enters after death is so far from “everlasting,” the change we await is at Christ's coming. The body is not in heaven now, nor is it said to be brought down to us from heaven; but Christ is there and is coming thence when we shall have in power and actuality what we have now in faith.

4. And this is the true force of ■χομεν, not in the least as conveying that the house is one on which we enter immediately after death, but its certainty to faith. That it is synchronous with death is mere assumption, and would involve the idea, not of heaven, but of a new vehicle for the soul which we have already seen to be wholly inconsistent with this passage and all truth. Hence it is not said that when our tent-house, or the body is dissolved, but if it should be. This leaves it equally open when, as now, the building from God is entered, and only declares the certainty that such a house of permanence we have. The present in Greek, as in other languages and our own, is frequently used (when required) to express, not merely actual time, but a truth apart from time in its abstract character or certainty. This must be, from what we have observed, its force here. To give it the meaning of actual fact now going on introduces nothing but confusion and error. What the apostle expresses is certainty of possession. He speaks of incomparably better habitations supposing the dissolution of the present, but the time and way of entering on it had to be learned from other scriptures. He does speak of being absent from the body and present with the Lord a little farther on, but neither of being in a new body while absent from the body, nor of heaven being like a body meanwhile, which seems if possible, more absurd, as both thoughts are alike baseless. Matt. 22:32 speaks only of the resurrection. Luke 20:38 adds that the souls of the deceased live to God, though away from men, before they rise. Nor is there any doubt, if we believe Luke 16; 22 Cor. 5; and Phil. 1, that it is far better with the departed saints, and that they are in paradise, the brightest part of heaven, with Christ. (Cf. Heb. 12:28.)

If death come, the resurrection body, already fully described in 1 Cor. 15, is sure in all its contrast with tent or any other building of time or of this creation, crumbling to ruin as it is. And the blessedness of what we thus have in hope is such that only the more do “we groan in this, longing to have put on our house which is from heaven, if indeed also when clothed we shall not be found naked.” (Vers. 2, 8.) That is, the brightness of the life he now had in Christ was so hindered by the body as it is that he could but groan in his ardent desires after the glorified condition with which

Christ will invest him. It is the groaning not of a disappointed sinner nor of an undelivered saint, but of those who, assured of life and victory in Christ, feel the wretched contrast of the present with the glory in prospect. Only he adds the cautious proviso, that is, supposing we are really Christ's. The anxiety expressed more plainly at the close of 1 Cor. 9 is not quite gone from the beginning of 2 Cor. 5.

Hence, one must reject every attempt to tamper with the conditional rendering of verse 8. The ordinary text ε■ γε (or ε■γε) has excellent support, not only in the vast majority of the manuscripts, but in the antiquity and goodness of some, as the Sinaitic, Resaript of Paris, and others; and this is adhered to by most critics. But Lachmann and Tregelles prefer crimp with the Vatican, Cambridge, and a few other authorities. But the alleged distinction (of Hermann's notes on Tiger) is unfounded in the New Testament, as elsewhere also. It has been even remarked by one of remarkable penetration that the converse is true, and that the true difference is: ε■περ puts the case that a thing is; ε■γε the possibility that it is not. E■ γε, says Lightfoot, leaves a loophole for doubt; ε■περ is, if anything, more directly affirmative than ε■ γε. Assuredly this seems rather confirmed by their distinctive origin, for as περ is intensive, γε is restrictive. But the usage appears to indicate that the context must be taken into consideration in order to decide the true bearing. So Meyer and Ellicott confess that it is the sentence, and not the particle, which determines the rectitude of the assumption. It is utterly false that, either in or out of the New Testament, ε■γε as a matter of course means “since” any more than ε■περ always expresses doubt.

The various reading ■νδυσ■μενοι, “unclothed,” in the Clermont, Augian, and Bcemerian manuscripts, &a., accepted by many fathers, and even by a few critics, is a mere effort to get rid of difficulty. The sense may be plainer, but it is worthless. The true reading ■νδυσ■μενοι, is most pertinent and forcible, unless indeed we translate ε■γε “since,” which reduces the clause to a platitude: “since when clothed we shall not be found naked,” or “seeing that we shall verily be found clothed, not naked,” which is a poor tautology unworthy of scripture, and as far from Pauline as possible. Translate it, “if at least, even when clothed, we shall be found not naked,” and the propriety is as great as its strength. For the solemn fact is, that there is a resurrection of unjust no less than just. All therefore are to be clothed. An hour is coming when all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son, and shall go forth, those that have practiced good to a resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to a resurrection of judgment. The resurrection of the body for all will be the clothing of all, though not of all at the same time nor with like result, but with the most marked contrasts and unchanging issues. For when the wicked are raised, they may and shall be clothed indeed, but shall be found naked. They have not the wedding robe, they have no righteousness before God, they rejected, despised, or did without Christ; they have nothing but sins, and cannot escape everlasting judgment. Whilst in the body here, they might pass muster; when clothed with the resurrection body (for all must rise), those who here lived and died without Christ will be found naked. The apostle therefore solemnly warns, in this passage of the richest comfort for the true, that some might prove false. The everlasting and heavenly glory will be for us at the resurrection, if at least when clothed we shall be found not naked: a seeming paradox, but not more startling than true. Blessed they, and they only, who now have and have put on Christ.

The words “clothed” or “unclothed” refer to the being in or out of the body; “naked” to being destitute of Christ. This distinction was overlooked by Calvin, as it has been by others since. They conceive that the idea was to restrict the clothing to the righteous; and hence that the wicked are,

stript of their bodies, to appear naked before God; whereas believers, clothed with Christ's righteousness, are to be invested with a glorious nature of immortality. Had it been observed that “not naked” alone refers to the putting on Christ now with its everlasting consequences, the confusion would have been avoided. The apostle speaks of the common portion we have in Christ (in presence of death, as by-and-by of the judgment-seat), of the triumph assured in His life who died but is risen and alive again for evermore; but this in no way hinders a passing and grave caution to such as might boast of gifts without grace or conscience.

Other speculations, each as of Grains, are hardly worth a notice; and that of Meyer followed by Alford ("if, as is certain, we in fact shall be found clothed, not naked") demands no more words, having been disposed of already. Nor need we discuss at greater length Hodge's attempt from the same rendering to sustain his notion that the apostle here refers not to the risen body but to a mansion in heaven. The simple but profound truth of God delivers from every mist of error.

Chapter 22

Notes on 2 Corinthians: 5:4-5

Having given so solemn a word of warning for conscience, the apostle returns to the groaning and the longing spoken of in verse 2 in order to clear the truth more fully.

“For also we that are in the tabernacle groan, being burdened, because we desire not to be unclothed but clothed upon, that what is mortal should be swallowed up of life. Now he that wrought us for this very thing [is] God, that gave us the earnest of the Spirit.” (Vers. 4, 5.)

The true knowledge of the living possession of Christ, far from neutralizing one's sense of the groaning creation, deeply increases it. Peace and joy in believing there is most really and to the full; but it is in Him who suffered here and is glorified above the sorrow and death that He tasted and the sins which He bore in His own body on the tree. Our body is the tabernacle in which we are, a part itself of the creation made subject to vanity; and we who are in it groan under the oppressive sense of its utter ruin, not because we are not delivered in Christ, but the rather because we are and feel deeply therefore what is under the bondage of corruption. We know that deliverance is at hand, not merely for our body but for all that is now travailing in pain, and that Christ will have the glory, as all creation will have the joy in that day.

Difficulties have been made about the phrase, which opens the next clause; but it seems rather needlessly, for ■ϕ’ ■, the true reading, is not uncommon in our apostle, whose use of it quite falls in with its regular application in all correct Greek to express the condition, or occasion, under which a thing or person is characterized, and maybe rendered “for,” “seeing,” “in that,” or “because” —qualifying what precedes. Compare Rom. 5:12, Phil. 3:12; 4:10, with the clause before us, in all of which may be found a like sense substantially, though modified by a different context. “Wherefore,” or “in which,” seems as feeble as misleading. The fact is that it is but a special case of its general sense as the ground, condition, or occasion of anything—the term on which a thing is based.

Here the apostle qualifies our burdened groaning in the tabernacle, as no selfish desire to escape trial, however aggravated. Yet no man experienced this so deeply, variously, or unremittingly as himself; none therefore was so exposed to wish that such a path should be closed by departure to be with the Lord. But this he deprecates for the saints as well as himself, not for that we wish to be unclothed but clothed upon, that what is mortal should be swallowed up by life. He is contrasting the power of life in Christ at His coming with going to Him in the separate state. No doubt this is better, far better, for us than abiding here in sorrow and suffering. But the apostle thought of Christ's glory in this scripture, as of the need of souls in Phil. 1 Hence in the latter he recognized the value of his staying for their help, and that so it would be. Here he expresses the exceeding blessedness of bringing the body under the power of that life which he already knew for his inner man in Christ. Nothing less than this therefore could satisfy him.

To be “unclothed” is to be rid of the body by death when the believer goes to be with Christ. But this is expressly what he did not wish, however blessed in itself, for the very reason that the

blessing was only for himself in His presence. What he desired was fresh glory to Christ when He comes; for then and only then is the believer “clothed upon.” He resumes the body then, no longer like the first Adam, but like the Last, once having borne the image of the earthy, thenceforward bearing that of the Heavenly. We will have put on our house which is from heaven, according to our longing desire. For it is not even necessary to be “unclothed,” that is, to put off the body by dying. All turns on the coming of Christ who is our life in all its fullness. If He tarry and call us meanwhile to be with Him, we shall of course be “unclothed;” but if He come while we wait for Him here, we shall be “clothed” upon without the putting off of our tabernacle. For from the heavens we await Him as Savior, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory according to the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Hence it is said here “that what is mortal shall be swallowed up by life,” not merely raised up out of death, but the mortal in us yielding to the superior and all-transforming power of the life in Christ, the body no longer as it was in Adam, but as in the Second man coming again from heaven.

The New Testament apostle goes considerably and characteristically beyond the Old Testament prophet, though both statements be true and one writer be inspired as really as the other. Yet the truth is not quite the same; for Isaiah speaks of Jehovah swallowing up “death” in victory [or, forever], and this will be verified ex abundanti at Christ's coming, when there will be not only the raising of the dead in Christ but the arrest of mortality in the living saints, or, as it is here figuratively designated, the swallowing up of what is mortal by life, Even such a resurrection of the faithful would be a manifest triumph of gracious power over utter ruin: how much more that mortality should never work out into death, but be absorbed by the all-conquering power of life in Christ

Nor does the apostle allow the smallest uncertainty in the hope before the believer; nay, he affirms an actual and divine pledge which cannot fail. “Now he that wrought us for this very thing [is] God that gave us the earnest of the Spirit.” (Ver. 6.) How blessed to have come under the operation of His grace, even while here we groan in the tabernacle! But so it is. We have life in Christ, yea, everlasting life, and everlasting redemption. God, who cannot fail, does not begin to leave His work an unfinished thing. He that wrought us for this very thing, the swallowing up of the mortal by the life which triumphs forever, the self-same portion as Christ, is God, as indeed He only would have thought of it or could have so wrought; nor this only, for He gave us the earnest of the Spirit that we might taste the joy of coming glory, having its pledge even in our utter weakness. It is not the “anointing” us here as elsewhere, which has a larger force, not yet the “sealing” us, but that aspect of the Spirit given to us which is in relation to Christ's coming again, and our entering on the inheritance with Him. It is “the earnest of the Spirit” given in our hearts, that we might not rest here, vainly contenting ourselves with what is present, or groaning without a divine taste of that which we shall share with Christ, as even hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that was given to us.

It is instructive to notice how the coming of the Lord is not only urged continually in the scriptures as the constant and proximate expectation of the saints, but underlies all and accounts for much even where not a word is said about it directly or openly as here. It is the failure of the divines, and even of commentators, in perceiving this which has exposed them to such poverty (if not

perversity) of interpretation in speaking of this momentous passage, which ought not to present a difficulty to a single believer, but to be the cheer of every Christian heart, as evidently intended of God. Had the coming of the Lord been a practical truth living in the souls of good men like Dr. John Gum and the mass of even orthodox and godly Protestants, could they have applied these words to that which is immediately after their death, merely allowing that, as the happiness of the soul in heaven will be followed and completed by the resurrection of the body, the apostle might also have that in his ultimate view? No, it is not true, (whatever the happiness of the separate state with Christ, of which we shall hear anon,) that he is here treating of “the transcendent undefiled felicities of an immortal life, which the soul shall enter upon as soon as ever it is separated from the body,” but of the resurrection or change when Christ comes. Of this theology stops short; and hardly any other cause has produced wider or deeper effects on saints in Christendom than such habitual and systematic forgetfulness of our proper hope. On the other hand, nothing has contributed more than its recovery to awaken the faithful by self-judgment to their past low estate and their true posture of waiting for the Lord, yea, going out to meet Him, according to His own parabolic prediction.

Chapter 23

Notes on 2 Corinthians 5:6-9

Soon then is the power of life in Christ which we possess now. We look for glory even for the body if it were dissolved, for mortality to vanish before it if Christ came without any need of death, which was already vanquished. God has wrought us for this very thing, the same glory as Christ, and meanwhile has given us the earnest of the Spirit.

“Therefore being always confident, and knowing that, while present in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by appearance [or sight]), we are confident and well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore also we are zealous that, whether present or absent, we may be agreeable to him.” (Vers. 8-9.)

The good courage of the Christian is unbroken by death, though he looks not for death as a man does. His confidence is founded on Christ, he knows God for him, and he has the spirit as earnest of all he hopes for. All things are sure, and among them life or death: but Christ governs all, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Neither death nor life nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are courageous then at all times, whatever the way of God with us meanwhile, and know that, while at home in the body, we are abroad from the Lord. This is not our rest, it is polluted. He is not here but risen and in glory, and our hearts are with Him where He is, and we look for Him to be like Him as well as with Him. But this is not all. We know that, while sojourning in the body as now, we are away from the Lord. This is neither the ground of our confidence, as Calvin most strangely misconceived, nor is it an exception to it as Romanists and Rationalists have thought. It accompanies our good cheer and falls in with it as a part of our Christian knowledge, and it accounts for our readiness of mind to quit the body when summoned, and to go home with the Lord. The connection of ε■δοτες is both grammatically and logically with ε■δοκο■μεν, though afterward resumed in another shape.

The wisdom of God is apparent in this. For here we have one of the few scriptures which give us the light of God on the intermediate state of the Christian: and it is of great moment that the immense blessedness of the final victory should not cloud that state of bliss which intervenes.

There is on the one hand no excuse for the unbelief which makes everything of going to be with Christ after death and stops short of the only adequate answer in our resurrection and change at Christ's coming by the power of His resurrection. But on the other it is a real slight of God's grace and of Christ's redemption to darken the condition of the disembodied soul in order to heighten the splendor of the resurrection morn. It is not true that the apostle when looking to the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle was comforted only by the building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for in this very context he shows that we choose rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. And in fact inability to look at death or Satan in the face is a proof of weakness, not strength, of faith. The apostle does exactly the right thing in the Holy Ghost: for while he does present in the forefront the full triumph of life in Christ, he does not misrepresent departure to be with Him as bare and ghastly, or the state as airy, shadowy, or fantastical. It is of course unworldly, but not therefore inert; for it is to be with Christ which is far better than remaining

in the flesh, though far short of the triumph we shall share when He comes. Never does the apostle treat it as sepulchral gloom and pale moonlight, which is the mere depreciation of the human spirit vexed with the perversity of such as blot the glorious hope of resurrection from their Bibles. Again, leaving out Christ, death is a parting, not a meeting; but is it a sorrowful parting if we go to be with Him in paradise? No doubt it is not our one hope; but is it then the cheerless parting, the sorrow, without hope which unbelief makes it? Such exaggeration is mischievous, most of all in those who call on the saints to wait for Christ's coming; for what is false in their statements acts powerfully to discredit what is true, and thus to hinder souls instead of helping them. The balance of truth is lost, and such as on scripture warrant look for the blessedness of those with Christ who fell asleep are stumbled by the doubt cast on it and indisposed to receive what may be doubtless truly said of the triumphant result of His coming.

As death then will own itself vanquished in every saint, yea, mortality itself in the living saints be swallowed up of life when Christ comes, so even now death itself in no way hinders the saint from enjoying the presence of the Lord. Both truths are clearly revealed here and in this order. They are due to Him and the redemption He has accomplished for us; they are of the utmost moment for the heart of every saint. It is ignorance to overlook either; it is of the enemy to misuse one to destroy the other.

The parenthetic verse 7 has given much trouble to scholars, though the general sense is plain enough. But ε■δος in the New Testament, as in ordinary Greek authors, seems rarely if ever used ■ψις for sight, but for “appearance” (as in Luke 9:29), or, “form” (as in Luke 3:22; John 5:32, as also derivatively in an ethical sense in 1 Thess. 5:22). Every intelligent reader of Plato and Aristotle knows its philosophic bearing as modified by their respective theories. But “species,” or “sort,” or “form,” cannot be meant here. We are shut up therefore by New Testament usage to the alternative “appearance,” unless we admit the sense of “sight” with our authorized translators, though its occurrence in this subjective meaning seems doubtful in any author, sacred or profane. The substantial meaning however amounts to the same. We walk by faith, not by appearance, being absent from the Lord and heaven. If we look at the unseen and eternal, it is by faith, not on the things or persons themselves, as we shall when actually there.

Hence the apostle sums up with a somewhat irregular but all the more forcible emphasis, δ■ being used like our “well,” or “why,” or “nay.” “We are confident and well pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.” (Ver. 8.) Granted, that it is a state imperfect for man, and short of the glorious consummation according to the counsels of God. But grace has intervened even now; and as the God who spoke light to shine out of darkness, shone in our hearts here below for the shining forth of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, so our departure is, if we value His presence, incomparable accession of enjoyment. For we go to no abode of dimness unworthy of Him and His blood, but to the brightest realms of heaven where He is in everlasting joy and glory. The Lord Jesus receives our spirits; as it is to be with Him. No wonder we are pleased rather to go from our home in the body, and to come to our home with the Lord.

“Wherefore also we are, zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to him.” (Ver. 9.) The common version conveys an utterly misleading idea, which if fully received would destroy the gospel; and the more so as φιλοτιμο■μεθα is rendered “we labor” or “endeavor,” and ε■■ρεστοι

“accepted,” to the danger of insinuating salvation by works in the most barefaced manner. Already accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1) we aspire—it is our zealous aim—to serve Him well, whether present or absent. This is in His hands, and our confidence either way is unbroken; but our ambition, if we have any in the Holy Ghost, is to be agreeable to Him. As His favor is better than life, so would we devote ourselves to His pleasure who delights only in what is good, holy, true, lowly and loving.

Chapter 24

Notes on 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

The apostle now introduces the very solemn consideration, not exactly of judgment, but of the judgment-seat of Christ. Judgment of course is included, but the judgment-seat embraces more, as we shall see.

“For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things [done] in [literally, by] the body according to what he did, whether good or evil. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we have been manifested to God, and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences.” (Vers. 10, 11.)

Grace is not at variance with righteousness, but on the contrary reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Nor can any truth be more indisputable or universally applicable than the manifestation of every man, saint or sinner, before the Lord. There is the utmost precision in the language as always in scripture. Never is it written that we must all be judged. Indeed this would contradict the clear declaration of our Lord in John 5 that the believer has eternal life and does not come into judgment (ε■ν κρ■σιν ο■κ ■ρχεται). It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; whereas we, believers, are not all to die, but all to be changed: in fact, none of us alive when Christ comes shall fall asleep but be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven without passing through death, mortality being swallowed up of life. But if no believers shall be judged, all must be manifested, saint no less than sinner, that each may receive the things [done] by the body (or, as the Authorized Version says, done in it), according to what he did, whether good or bad.

Hence it may be noticed that the form of the phrase favors the universality of the manifestation. In 2 Cor. 3:18, where no more is meant than all of us Christians, it is ■με■ς δ■ π■ντες, whereas here it is το■ς γ■ρ παντας ■μ■ς, which lays greater stress on the totality, and makes it thus absolute. Accordingly the language suits the aim or comprehending Christians within an area which has no exception.

So again it is not a question of rewarding service as in 1 Cor. 3:8, 14, but of retribution in the righteous government of God according to what each did whether good or bad. This covers all, just or unjust. It is for the divine glory that every work done by man should appear as it really is before Him who is ordained by God Judge of living and dead. Only as the believer is by grace exempted from judgment both as a partaker of everlasting life and as having in Jesus a perfectly efficacious Savior, his standing before the judgment-seat assumes the character of manifestation, and in no way of a trial with the awful possibility of destruction. There is not the smallest compromise of the salvation he now enjoys by faith; and he is accordingly glorified before he stands there. He will give account of himself to God and be manifested; but there is no condemnation depending on the issue then, as there is none now to those that are in Christ. This may not be reasonable in man's eyes, but it suits the God of all grace and is due to the glory and suffering of the Son of God, and harmonizes with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, whose seal will not be broken or dishonored in that day. And as it is for God's glory, so it is for the perfect blessing of the believer that everything

should stand out in the light and he himself should know even as he is known.

Nothing will blind the eye then, no unsuspected motive warp the heart or mind before the judgment-seat of Christ. The merciful care, the overruling power, of God in all our ways will appear in their astonishing wisdom and goodness, no longer concealed by the mists of this life. We shall know perfectly what debtors we were to grace, and the resources and activity of that grace in our checkered history and experience even as saints, and the boundless patience of God to the last, as well as His rich mercy at the first. Even now what a comfort for us to have renounced the dishonesty of the natural heart, to judge ourselves unsparingly in presence of love that never fails, to be in the light of God, and have no guile in our spirit as those who know Him who by redemption can and will impute nothing to us! And this is true to faith now that we believe in Him who suffered once for us that He might bring us to God: not a cloud above, not a spot within. The blood of Jesus elitist His Son cleanses us from all sin. Perfect love casts out fear. We love Him who first loved us, and shirk not but welcome the light which makes everything manifest. “We have been—we are—manifested to God.” It is the mighty and abiding effect of Christ's work, which made us meet for sharing the inheritance of the saints in light. We no longer walk in darkness as once when we had true knowledge of God; we walk in the light as He is in the light.

Yet are there times when what is always true in principle is applied powerfully in fact to the Christian whom God gives in quiet retirement, often in a sick chamber, to review his ways and examine himself alone with God, when energy or self-love or flattery do not enfeeble a holy self-judgment; and all the more deeply, as he firmly holds to the assurance of God's changeless favor. What is thus verified in a high degree by the way will be complete and perfect at that day, when already caught up and glorified in the body we shall be manifested before the judgment-seat without a trace of the shame that either hides or confesses with pain. It is great gain to have such times on earth, though the process be but imperfect, greater still the more it approaches an habitual state. How full the blessing when all is absolutely out in love and light with Christ

But as we have seen the manifestation has an end here described, that each may receive the things [done] in [or, by] the body, good or bad. Even in the saints all had not been good; and all has its result, though not to jeopard the grace that saved by Christ. But as God is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and labor of love, so failure and wrong entail loss; and the soul itself will in full intelligence and unmurmuring adoration bow and bless Him who orders the place of each in the kingdom, and who while never abandoning His own sovereignty will take note of the greater or less fidelity and devotedness of each in service or ways.

Thus will God be vindicated, displayed and enjoyed in all that He is and does; and thus will the saint have perfect communion with all, in not a single detail any more than as a whole missing the joy and blessedness of what He is to all His own and to each forever.

But the manifestation of the wicked, as it will be at a considerably later time, so it will have a wholly different character and effect. The judgment-seat in this case will be the judgment of the great white throne after the reign of the thousand years, as for the righteous it will be before it, when the dead small and great are (not manifested only but) judged each according to their works. (Rev. 20) They refused the Savior; they stood in their own righteousness or were indifferent about the lack of it, thinking nothing of God or counting Him like themselves. They had no life, as no faith, in Christ; they rise to a resurrection not of life but of judgment, for God will judge all who believe not by Him

whom they despised. And if the righteous be saved with difficulty, or a difficulty which nothing but sovereign grace in Christ could surmount, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? It is eternal judgment dealing with evil, and the issues as sure as awful and endless.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we have been manifested to God, and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences.” (Ver. 11.)

The language here again confirms and necessitates the universality of the manifestation already noticed. For as there is no reason to soften down “the terror of the Lord,” so there seems no force in our persuading men if it does not mean the heart of the saint urged in love by the tremendous sense of divine judgment impending on the heedless yet guilty sinner. How deep and loud and constant the call for those who believe to arouse those who believe not, while the day of grace lingers, that they may not unwarned brave that judgment which will be their irremediable ruin to “persuade men” on the one hand of the wickedness, the folly, and the danger of sin; on the other of the reality and freeness, of the fullness and certainty, of salvation in Christ. Fearing always ourselves, no less than knowing His love, we realize for them what unbelief easily forgets till too late, and would be therefore the more in earnest to call to repentance in the light of the gospel of God's grace. And in this we are the more free, because we have been and are manifested to God. Our guilt is gone; we are justified, and are children of light, though once darkness—light in the Lord. Hence we speak what we know and press a remedy, a deliverance, we have proved. We are already manifested to God; so that the manifestation before the judgment, let it be ever so profound or minute, awakens no alarm for ourselves but anxiety for “men,” for all in their natural state, who have not Christ.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we have been manifested to God; and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences.” A most pressing motive was that judgment-seat, with the terror of the Lord for men, to preach the gospel far and wide; and the more because consciously before God, as he humbly but not without a reproof adds, “and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences.” Of the former he was sure and speaks absolutely; of the other he could only say “I hope also,” not because it ought to have been doubtful; but because their state was not all he could desire. And a state that is not good is apt to suspect evil in those who reprove it. The Corinthian saints, though in a measure restored and restoring, had not dealt with the apostle as became them. Love ought always to be able to count on love; but he had to say of them that, the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 5:12-15

The apostle felt, as we have seen, that he could appeal to their consciences, now that self-judgment was begun in the Corinthians. We have been and are manifested to God; and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences. This might have seemed, to ill-disposed men, savoring of self-complacency. It is really what every saint walking in the truth with integrity of heart is entitled to say, whatever an enemy might insinuate: a blessed state and statement doubtless; but what does not grace give to and effect in the Christian? And when strife and party feeling are rebuked and hushed, conscience cannot but approve what is of God, even in those most defamed like the apostle. In this confidence of love he had written, and quickly guards the sheep from any misleading shaft; and this for their sakes rather than his own. A calumny indeed injures not the assailed, but those who are influenced by it.

“For we are not again commending ourselves to you, but giving you occasion to boast on our behalf, that ye may have [it] with those boasting in face and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves, [it is] to God; or are sober, [it is] for you. For the love of Christ constraineth us, having judged this, that if one died for all, then the all were dead [or, died]; and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for them died and rose.” (Vers. 12-15.)

Nothing can be conceived more admirably than the apostle's delicacy, as far from indifference to the saints as from lording it over them, and equally far from the arts of those who, while ingratiating themselves with the Corinthian assembly, in order to exalt their own reputation and lower the apostle, were blinded by the enemy to attribute to him their own unscrupulous ways. He loved the saints with an unsullied conscience and an unselfish heart, and he counted on their confidence, now that grace had begun to work restoratively. As he did not seek to commend himself by what he said of his ministry, so neither did he again by appealing to their consciences as to his ways. He was but affording them occasion for boast, as he says, “on our behalf, that ye may have [it] with those that boast in face or person, and not in heart.” (Ver. 12.) For, on the one hand, holiness and truth go together, care for God's glory and love of His children; and, on the other, those who however fair in his presence aimed at undermining the apostle, were serving not the Master but their own belly.

But was he not inconsistent and capricious, at one time so ecstatic that none could follow his transports, at another so sedate as to chill his brethren and abridge their liberty? Not so; “For whether we are beside ourselves, [it is] to God; or are sober, [it is] for you.” (Ver. 18.) Cold is the heart that knows no rapture before God as one thinks of His grace in Christ. Such certainly was not the Apostle Paul's case, as we may see in many a doxology which interrupts a chain of closest reasoning, and yet more when the love of Christ or the counsels of God are before his eyes. But the same Paul can come down to the most ordinary questions of daily walk, can regulate the relations of husband and wife, or of master and slave, can prescribe for a weakly man, and check a woman's taste for dress. There is one name, and but one, which draws out and accounts for

both feelings, raising the heart above all that is seen and temporal, yet giving the most lively interest in the smallest detail of the life that now is. And He who bears that name is both God and man in one person.

“For the love of Christ constraineth us, having judged this, that, if one died for all, then the all were dead [or, died]; and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for them died and rose.” (Vers. 14, 15.)

If transported when turning to God, the need of saints and desire for the Lord's glory in them awoke sober thoughts; nor this only, for the love of Christ urged his soul toward men, sinners no less than saints, in loving service and faithful testimony of the truth. If there was the solemnity of manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ, there was the constraining energy of His love. There was no vain conceit of man's improvableness, no crying up of intellectual culture, nor even the most distant hope of good from further moral training. He had judged this that, if one died for all, then the all died or were dead. Christ's death for all is the proof that it was all over with mankind. If He went down in grace to the grave, it was just because they were already there, and none otherwise could be delivered. In this way of death is Christ here known, not a living Messiah to reign over the quick, but One who died for all, for all were under death; and it is a question of man universally, not of Israel only, and of the power and triumph of life in Christ over death.

Hence, if nothing short of this is the judgment of the Christian, as of the apostle, if there is no slighting of the fatal effects of sin, if death is seen and owned to be written on all, the death of Christ, though so unsparing in its import becomes the ground of deliverance; for we have judged also that He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves. There is then life in Him risen, and this not in Him only, but for those who believe. He is our life. And such is the meaning of “those who live;” not merely those alive on earth (though this be implied, of course) but living of His life, in contrast with all dead.

It is contended, as I am aware, that ■π■θανον can only mean “died,” and not “are” or “were dead.” But this is an oversight from pressing too technically the aoristic force, so as to clash with English idiom. We may see how harsh it would be to absolutely redoes us to the English preterite by a glance at the same or a kindred word in the case of Jairus' daughter. Even the most servile of translators gives us Matt. 9:18 as “My daughter is just dead,” (■ρτι ■τελε■τησεν) though he represents verse 24, “For the maid did not die but is sleeping,” (ο■ γ■ρ ■π■θανεν); and Mark 5 as “My daughter is dead"(ver. 36), but “The child did not die” (ver. 39); and Luke 8, “She did not die.” Is it not evident that the nature of the ease modifies the aorist? Although strictly ■π■θανεν expresses only the fact that one died, still, death being for the present final, it may be used for, as it implies, the condition of death: if one died, one is dead. But where express precision is intended, the perfect appears as in Luke 8:49, “My daughter is dead,” τ■θνηκεν. Yet in verses 62, 68, it is in both cases ■π■θανεν. To say here “She did not die,” and “she did die,” is mere pedantry, not good English; and in this connection the Authorized Version more fittingly gives “she is not dead,” and “she was dead.” It is not that the aorist is ever used with impropriety, or confounded with the perfect; but that the fact in Greek is enough, where English gives the state.

The same thing is no less appropriate here, where death spiritually, not physically, is in question. Grammar does not touch the question, whether the death is of all men as such, or of the saints; ■π■θανεν might be used either of death by sin or of death to sin. There was intention, it seems, in

retaining the same word for all as for Christ, though a different expression for men might have been used, as in Eph. 2 But this would have interfered with the aim, which is to mush as possible to link His death in grace with theirs in sin. “If one died for all, then the all died,” or “were dead.” And that this is the universal condition of mankind, is made the more apparent by the further judgment that He died for all that those who live, &c. It is not ζ■ντε as including all for whom He died, but of ζ■ντες as some out of all, those that live in contradistinction to all dead. It is the solemn judgment of faith that all are dead, whatever appearances may say; it is its no less sure but happy judgment that Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who for them died and rose. What men call a judgment of charity is Satan's cheat, and as far from the truth as from real love. It is the delusion of trusting appearance and feeling and reason against God's word. True love according to God owns that all are dead, but in the faith of Christ's death seeks that others too might believe and live, and that those who live should live to Christ.

The reader will observe that Christ's resurrection is associated only with “those who live.” This again confirms the special class of the living, as only included in, and not identical with, all for whom He died. Those who would narrow the all for whom He died to the elect, lose the first truth; those who see the special blessedness but responsibility of the saints,, those that live, lose the second: He died for all; He was raised again for the justifying of those who believe, and who consequently had life in Him; that they might live no longer to themselves, as of old in their sinful folly, but to their dead and risen Savior. It was not only “the terror of the Lord” that acted on the apostle's soul, but the constraining love of Christ, His outgoings of heart, and labors of love were not bounded by the church, however dear to him; as we saw, he would not only feed the flock, but “persuade men.” He knew what the judgment-seat must be to sinful man, but he knew also the efficacy of Christ's death, and the power of His resurrection. If Christ died for all, he earnestly sought all, and preached to all, urgent in season and out of season. The judgment which faith gave him seems therefore, like the context before and after, to take in all men, no less than the saints; whereas another line is brought in out of harmony with what we have, to speak of death to sin only, limiting the range of the first clause to the elect, instead of seeing its universality.

Thus the apostle sees death come in for all, and judgment awaiting men as such; and because this was the fact for all, Christ dead for all. Promises avail not, nor the kingdom: so complete is man's ruin. Else a living Messiah would have sufficed, but no! only a Savior that died could meet the case; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who for them died and rose. This closes the door, not for Him only who died, but for those that by and in Him live, on the world and man. Not “all” alas! but only “those who live,” really live to Him who died and rose for them. All outside Him and them is death; and they, now living, are called to live to Him: how could those who rejecting Him have not life?

This is practical Christianity. They are bound, as they owe all, to the Savior, but to Him not in this world, but gone out of it as dead and risen for them. It is Christ who determines and characterizes all for the Christian. It is not Christ as He was when coming into the world on this side of the grave; nor Christ as He will govern the world by-and-by in power and glory, but Christ who for them died and rose. Thus is He known to the Christian, and thus is the Christian to live. Nor is it, as sense and tradition reckon, that in the midst of life we are in death, or exposed to it, but that now in the midst of death we by grace live, but would live and own our obligation to live to Him who dead and

risen is in a new sphere, to which we too belong, though still on earth, as the apostle proceeds to set forth, man as well as self being done with to faith, and ourselves belonging to Him. Thus He who is the source of life is also the object of life to the Christian; and this in His full character of death and resurrection, so as to act the more on the affections. For if He died for us in grace, He rose for us in power, that we might devote ourselves thus set free to His service and glory.

Chapter 26

Notes on 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

The sin of Adam ruined creation here below. It fell in its head. Not less but more, as is due to the surpassing glory of His person, has the death and resurrection of Christ changed all gloriously for faith. The apostle draws the consequence for the present characteristic knowledge of the Christian.

“So that we henceforth know no one as to flesh: if we have even known Christ as to flesh, yet now are no longer knowing [him]; so that, if one [is] in Christ, [there is] a new creation; the old things passed; behold, they [or, all things] are become new.” (Vers. 16, 17.)

Man as he is in his present life with all its objects, pursuits, and interests, is morally judged in the cross of Christ, where alone God is glorified as to sin. Where are earthly rank, grandeur and power? Where are intellectual activity and learned attainment? Where is mental acuteness or far-reaching all-embracing thought? Where the wisdom of the wise, or the understanding of the prudent? Where even are moral exercise, and reverence in religion? All are closed, in death, all proved worthless in presence of perfect holiness and most lowly love. It is no question now of thunders and lightnings, and of Jehovah descending in fire, and every heart quaking in fear. The same God descended in grace, yet all that was of man cast Him out in the person of Jesus; and so death is stamped on all. Man judged himself in judging Him, and proved his own worthlessness in either with the pride of vain knowledge, or in not knowing Him who made the world, in receiving Him not, whom the living oracles attested and every testimony that should have gone home if man had not been deaf, yea, dead. Christ's death under man's guilty hand proved the moral-death of all; and as all played their part in it, so all were sentenced before God by it.

But He is risen; and thus by divine power and grace a door is opened, not of hope merely, but of life and salvation in the midst of a waste of death. Doubtless the mass of men go on as heedless as ever, the Gentiles abusing their power, the Jews striving to drown their judicial misery; but we, if none else, by faith beholding the dead and risen Christ, are in the secret of God now so clearly revealed in His word; we, perhaps primarily the apostle and his fellow-laborers, but we Christians also in contrast with all under death. Beyond question Paul entered into the full truth of all this, as no one else did; but surely it is no apostolic prerogative to know none according to flesh, to value nothing before God which flows not from Him who is risen from the dead.

The apostle goes even farther. “But if even we have known Christ as to flesh, yet now no longer know we him.” This is so strong that it is impossible to go beyond it. For Christ was the just cause of every expectation of blessing here below. In Him all promises centered, not only a rod out of Jesse's stem, but a root of Jesse, to which the Gentiles should seek. All hopes for men living on the earth were buried in the grave of Christ: not because of any defect of power or grace in Him, but because man is dead Godward, and how could He reign at God's expense? How take pleasure in governing a nature at enmity with God? No; He died, not only as the full witness of man's state, but to lay a righteous ground of deliverance to God's glory. No doubt the Jews looked for Him to reign after an earthly sort, exalting the chosen nation of whom He is the chief. But we

know Him only as a dead and risen Christ; and if even, as the apostle adds, we have known Him according to flesh, that is, on this side the grave, yet now we know Him so no more. Our association is with Him in that new and heavenly glory, where the death through which He passed has met our evil, and now He is risen and gone on high, and our life is hid with Him in God. The apostle does not say that He ever did not know the Lord thus; but that, if it were even so, we now only know Him as the risen and heavenly Christ. The luster of an earthly Messiah was quite swallowed up in the surpassing glory of His new place and condition. And this it is which imprints its heavenly character on Christianity. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Had we been Israelites, of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, we know Christ now in a brightness beyond the sun at noon-day, which utterly dims the light to which we had formerly turned fondly with all our souls.

Nor is this all; for there is power in Him as well as an object that we know. It is not a question of apprehending Christ no more as Messiah, or even of only knowing Him above. The life that is in Him has won the victory for us already and entitled us to regard and speak of ourselves according to His new estate. “So that, if one is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things passed; behold, they [or, all things together] are become new.” We do not wait for the kingdom, Still less the eternal state, before we know and can say so if any are in Christ, as every Christian is. A new creation can be predicated of such an one, Christ in risen and heavenly glory being the Head. What is true of Him can be said of His, as being in Him. The old things have passed; behold, all things together (τ■ π.) are become new. Faith sees the end from the beginning and looks for all the consequences according to Christ risen. It is no question, as so many make it, of examining ourselves within and seeing how completely we are changed in principles and path as well as spirit and end, since we believed in Christ, though there is a vital change and self-judgment be incumbent on us. It is what faith knows and can say, because of being “in Christ” and knowing Him only as risen, not connected with man on the earth, for this is closed in His death forever. It is true of “any one in Christ.” Whatever he may have been, Gentile or Jew matters not; if in Christ, there is a new creation, and from the starting-point the end is as sure as the beginning is the great all-including fact in Christ's person.

The marginal reading, “let them be” a new creature, was probably due to Calvin, whose notion at any rate agrees with it; but it destroys all the force and beauty of the passage by making it more than exhortation. On the other hand, it is no question of mere experiences which would reduce the language miserably. It is faith judging and speaking according to Christ, in whom the believer is. Thus new creation has all its scope. But it is of all moment to be ever measuring and forming experience by faith, and not to lower faith by experience.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Nor is it a question of new creation alone, great as is the power requisite for it, and precious as its exercise is in presence of death and ruin. Man can avail nothing. It is a question therefore of God; and love and righteousness would reconcile the lost and guilty foes to God, without which His glory must be compromised. Hence it is written, after “all things [or, they] are become new,” “And they all [are] of God that reconciled us to himself by Christ and gave to us the ministry of the reconciliation: how that it was God in Christ reconciling [the] world to himself, not reckoning to them their offenses, and putting in us the word of the reconciliation. For Christ then we are ambassadors, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God: him that knew not sin he made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him.” (Vers. 18-21.)

One object of reconciliation, as we read in Col. 1, is all things in heaven and on earth. But this is future, and awaits the appearing of Christ. Meanwhile believers are already reconciled, being not only born of God but redeemed. In virtue of the work of Christ God can act freely, not reinstating merely but making good their relationship, as it suits His own nature as well as theirs, according to His love and for His glory. Traditional orthodoxy errs in insisting on the death of Christ to reconcile His Father to us. Scripture never speaks thus. But if it declares that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son in order that the believer should not perish but have everlasting life, it is no less peremptory that the Son of man must be lifted up in order to the same blessed result. (John 3:14-16.) Still more dangerous is the error that leaves out that God is light in the anxiety to press that He is love. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. We must not let the needed expiation of our sins by the blood of Christ be weakened by the blessed fact that we are also reconciled to God. The enmity was on our side, not on His; but what was our evil nature, what our sins, in His eyes? Does not God abhor iniquity and rebelliousness, hypocritical form or even indifference to His will? And, if He abhor, has He no majesty to vindicate, no authority to judge? After sin and before judgment came Christ, who gave Himself up, not only to manifest God in this world but to suffer on the cross. Hence, instead of nothing but righteous judgment awaiting guilty man at the end, the Lord Jesus has so met and even glorified God as to sin in His death, that His righteousness now justifies the believer; and the reconciliation is so complete that in virtue of His redemption we stand in a wholly new relationship which derives its character from Christ risen from the dead. In due time all things in heaven and on earth shall be made new accordingly. Even now if one is in Christ, it is a new creation. The rest will follow in its season, whether for our body, or for heaven and earth; but for us reconciliation is a fact now. God reconciled us to Himself by Christ, as surely as He gave the ministry of reconciliation.

For the saving grace of God has a service suited to itself. It does not, like the law, govern a people already in relationship with God; it calls, as Christ did, not the righteous but sinners to repentance. The word of truth it proclaims for all to hear is the gospel of salvation; and those who hear not only live but are saved by grace through faith; quickened with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that God might display in the coming ages the

exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Reconciliation therefore is a term of rich meaning, and goes far beyond repentance or faith, quickening or justification. It is, if we may borrow the figure which lies at the root of the word, God's settlement of account in favor of him who, if he have nothing to pay, submits to His righteousness. Divine love in Christ has undertaken all and has set down the enemy and lost one, not only in deliverance, but in full favor, boasting in hope of God's glory, yea even now in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a question of our dispositions and feelings only, but of relationship with God, out of which we were as sinners, into which His grace has now brought us who believe, not according to Adam unfallen, but according to Christ dead, risen, and glorified, in virtue of His redemption outside us, though of course not without our being born anew.

But let us follow the apostle's explanation of the ministry of reconciliation: “How that it was God in Christ reconciling [the] world to himself, not reckoning to them their offenses, and putting in us the word of the reconciliation.” (Ver. 19.) By a change of form in the participles, there appears to be intimated, first, the continuous aspect of Christ's presence here below, and, secondly, the gospel charge deposited in His servants when He was no longer here. God put in us, says the apostle, the word of the reconciliation. But what was He doing when the Reconciler Himself was here 2 It was not the law which forbade all approach and registered every transgression: it was God (or, God was) in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses. This is not Christ's death, but His living presence; nor is it consequently that He reconciled the believers by His death, but the bearing of God in Him toward not Jews only but a guilty rebellions world; and it was reconciling—Jew or Gentile, it matters not, if it was God there and thus in Christ—reconciling the world, and consequently not reckoning to them their offenses. Was it not thus He bore Himself to the woman in Luke 7? to the Samaritans in John 4:2 But why enumerate? It was His special aspect in Christ here below, dealing in grace, not law, and hence indiscriminately, not reckoning to them their offenses. On the one hand, He came to seek and to save the lost; on the other “him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.” For the bread of God is He that came down from heaven and gives life to the world. As He was far beyond the manna, angels' food (Psa. 78:25), so He is for the world, not for Israel only. For this is the will of His Father, that every one that sees the Son and believes on Him should have life eternal, and He will raise him up at the last day. Christ's presence, or God's in Him, was the full proof that fallen man is irremediable. Before the flood he was left to himself; such was the corruption and violence that God had to sweep all away, save Noah's family in the ark. After the flood in due time the great trial of law was carried on in the chosen and separate nation; but they transgressed in every way, people and priests, judges and kings, till there was “no remedy,” even after prophet on prophet was sent in patience truly divine. Last of all He sent to them His Son, saying, They reverence my Son. But when the husbandmen saw Him, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will He do to those husbandmen?

Such is the divine account of human responsibility as tested in Israel even till judgment. But the display of grace in Christ here below is no less true and of infinite moment; and man's rejection of God in grace was as evident and complete as his total failure under law. For though Christ was here and the fullness of grace and truth in Him, receiving publicans and sinners, not reckoning to

them their offenses, they crucified Him as they had forsaken Jehovah for an idol.

But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; and over human iniquity at its worst God triumphs in Christ, yea in His cross. Hence, when the Son of man was cast out of the world, when it is no longer God in Christ reconciling the world and rising above every offense, He put the word of the reconciliation in chosen vessels; and as we have had the character of God's action in Christ in the days of His flesh, so here follows their character as sent out to testify of Him. “For Christ then we are ambassadors, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God: him that knew not sin he made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him.” (Vers. 20, 21.) The dignity is indeed great. They represent, not Levites, nor priests, nor yet the high priest, but Christ dead and risen, and this in the aspect of divine grace, God as it were (it was not meet to speak absolutely) beseeching by us: we entreat on behalf, or instead, of Christ, Be reconciled to God. Such is the gospel call to the world, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. The grace of God, and of Christ is stamped on every word; and human assumption as wholly excluded from its nature, as human worth or means from that new creation where all things are of God, flowing through Christ risen from the dead.

Calvin expounded verse 20 as the apostle addressing himself to believers. He declares that he brings to them this embassy every day. Christ therefore did not suffer that He might expiate our sins once only, nor was the gospel ordained merely with a view to the pardon of those sins which we committed previously to baptism, but that, as we daily sin, so we might also by a daily remission be received by God into His favor. For this is a perpetual embassy, which must be assiduously sounded forth in the church till the end of the world; and the gospel cannot be preached unless remission of sins is promised. This is as great an error, if not so pernicious, as the broad-church rationalism which teaches that the world is reconciled to God. The contrary of this last appears from this very verse. The apostle exemplifies the gospel call he was commissioned to declare in the words, Be reconciled to God. This exhortation does imply that they were not yet reconciled; and no boldness of assertion, no tortuous reasoning, can elude the plain expression of scripture. Not less plainly does the apostle contradict the first error in verse 18, which states that God reconciled us to Himself by Christ—a fact accomplished for the believer, es other scriptures treating of the subject confirm. It is false that the apostle is here addressing himself to believers, he is giving a specimen of the trite oil to the unconverted. Neither here nor anywhere else does he testify that he brings to the saints such an embassy as this every day.

Another apostle, not less truly inspired of God, expressly declares that Christ did once suffer for sins; as the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. x. 11-14) pointedly sets aside the Judaism of a daily provision to meet daily sins by the revelation that Christ, having offered one saclike for sins, sat down in perpetuity (ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς) at God's right hand.... for by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. It is not denied that we need our feet washed day by day, to use the expressive figure of our Lord; but this is the washing of water by the word in answer to His advocacy, not a fresh application of blood or another reconciliation into God's favor: strange doctrine from the head of Calvinism. The truth is that none of the Reformers knew the blessed comfort of Christ's having come by water as well as blood; and the effort to make the blood do the work of the water also has impaired the full efficacy of the blood that cleanses from every sin in the minds of Protestants generally. Of Romanists we need not speak, as they refused to profit by the candle of the Reformation.

It will be noticed that the critical text drops the argumentative particle with which the Authorized Version opens the last verse. The sentence is not so much a reason for the call that precedes as an explanation which the apostle adds in continuance, yet more enforcing the call. Him that knew no sin—not merely is it a fact, but no other supposition is admissible—He [God] made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in. Him: a most full and blessed statement of the way in which grace secured its victory when guilty man seemed to have lost the last possible hope through Christ, by rejecting Him even on His errand of reconciling love. In that rejection to the death of the cross God wrought another thing, even atonement; He made Christ sin, laying for us His solemn unsparing lodgment of sin on His holy head, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus was our reconciliation effected by propitiation and substitution, the two goats of atonement-day, which find their meaning in the work of Christ on the cross, as we may see both parts distinguished in Heb. 9:26-28. He became a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:18, 14.)

The aoristic, not present, subj. is the true form, for “we might become,” as all critics allow following every manuscript of value. Why Scholz and others read γιν■μεθα, it is hard to say, for every authority he cites is against him. Indeed it would be hard to show what manuscript reads the present, not even Matthaei or Scrivener citing a single cursive for it. Yet Dr. Hodge also says the apostle uses the present tense because this justification is continuous doctrine and criticism equally erroneous. For Christian justification is regularly spoken of as past, e.g. in Rom. 5 as a fact, in Rom. 6 as a state. But this is the perfect. Where the present is used, it is abstract.

The Christian will notice the peculiar manner in which God's righteousness is here predicated of “us.” Elsewhere it is what is revealed in the gospel, and declared both to vindicate His dealings with saints of old and still more fully at this time. (Rom. 1, It is what the zealous but unbroken Jew did not submit to (Rom. 10), losing that blessing in refusing Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us righteousness and all else we need. (1 Cor. 1) It is of God by faith, in contrast with one's own. (Philippians 3) But here and here only are we said to become such, a fact as truly accomplished in the believer as the incomparable work of Him in whom He believes. Christ in virtue of His work was set at God's right hand in heaven: no other seat was adequate to express God's sense of His death in which sin was judged and God forever glorified. Therefore did He raise Christ from the dead and set Him in the heavenlies; or, as the Lord said, the Spirit should convict the world of righteousness by His going to His Father and their seeing Him no more. Had there been righteousness here, the world would have received Christ to reign; but the world proved itself under Satan's dominion by casting Him out, as God showed His righteousness by receiving Him in the highest place above; and there, associated with Him, we become God's righteousness in Him. His righteousness wrought not only in thus exalting Christ, but in justifying us according to Him. Nothing can exceed the energy of the inspired expression as to both sin and righteousness to the Savior's praise and our blessedness.

Chapter 28

A Word on 2 Peter 3:17-18

There are no epistles that show us in a more distinct and serious manner the danger of practically dishonoring the Lord, or of going back, than we find here and in the Epistle of Jude, unless it be Hebrews for the latter. And I believe there are none so exposed to that danger as those who take the ground of Christ. I do not mean that therefore any who are really born of God will ever forfeit His grace. But departure from the Lord may be allowed as a distinct chastening, as far as it goes, of our carelessness and lack of dependence.

I grant you that, in any case, the righteous with difficulty are saved. Everything is against them but God. He, however, is for them; and “if God be for us, who can be against us?” Still, on every side the difficulty is such that God alone can surmount it. Notwithstanding it is a difficulty that God does surmount, without in any way lessening it, in order to exercise our faith and patience. If He did, He would detract from His own glory, and He would diminish the proofs of His grace to us, of His intimately watchful care, and, finally, of His sure prevailing over all His and our foes. Now it is God that undertakes to bring every Christian through. But this does not at all hinder either the difficulty, on the one hand, which God only is equal to, nor, on the other, the danger of slips by the way, even though deliverance and restorative grace triumph in the end.

But there is another thing. All that are not of God, but who take such a place, will infallibly become much worse than if they had never taken it. This is what we find so solemnly in Jude and Peter. There is no place in the New Testament where we find such a fearful character given. In both cases they were persons who had taken the stand of Christians, and a bad Christian is worse than an ordinary worldly man. Nor do I now confine myself in so speaking to a merely professing Christian. For when even a real Christian gets into a bad state, he will do and say things more unkind and more contrary to all that is becoming and right than any other man. It is the same flesh, whether it be in the Christian or in the non-Christian. The fallen nature of man is the same in all. The difference between the Christian and the unconverted man is not that the flesh is better in the one than in the other, but that the Christian has, with a new nature and the Spirit, One on high to guard and strengthen him against the flesh. But if there be anything allowed to hinder the Holy Ghost's working in him, the flesh shows itself.

What strikes me as so all-important for us to ponder over, is, that these same, epistles which show us the danger of declining and of decay, or of complete apostasy, on the part of those who bear the name of Christ, are encouraging and urgent, more than any other epistles, for the growth of the Christian. Can you tell me any place where you find it asserted in the same manner as in these two epistles? In the verses just now read we find it thus: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye knew these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” Instead of that, instead of merely yielding their ground, or going back from what they began with, they are cheered to go on, growing in grace.

No matter how much one may have seen the grace of God in the first coming to the knowledge of Christ, this should not, and does not, satisfy our soul, still less the Master. It is well if grace has

wrought a good beginning, but Gal. 3:8; 5:7 warns not to rest there. It is of all moment to be also going forward in the ways of God. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and [not simply forever, but] to the day of eternity. Amen.” Peter puts in view the day of eternity, with the new heavens and new earth, where everything that can be broken is gone.

Jude, in the same way, says, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith.” This is the only place in the New Testament where our faith is called “most holy.” Why so? Because the chapter is speaking of the most unholy sapping and mining at the time of the end. Instead of the Christian contenting himself, and saying, It is a day of ruin and evil, and therefore it is vain to swim against the current, there is the very reverse. It is a time for being specially guarded, not for allowing any distrust of God's grace, and goodness, and love, on the one hand, but neither is it for allowing any negligence as to His holiness and truth on our part. “Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

Thus may we see what the Lord undoubtedly lays on us for this present time more than has ever been. Therefore does it become increasingly necessary, as we go on, and the departure becomes more evident, that we look well to the Lord, while cherishing His grace, to be making progress in the knowledge of Himself. I am sure that where we are shut out necessarily by stern duty from opportunities of hearing much truth, the Lord always makes up for it; but it becomes us to see, in the love of one another, and as being earnest for the glory of the Lord Jesus, how far we show that we are not mere men of the earth belonging to this age, with the calls and occupations of present duties, but that we give practical proof, day by day, that we belong to Christ for eternity, decided and resolute in meeting the departure of Christendom by growth in grace in our own souls.

Chapter 29

Abigail

Let us mark the features of Abigail's faith, All rests upon her appreciation of David (it is this which forms a Christian's judgment—in every respect he appreciates Christ); his title as owned of God; his personal perfection, and that which belonged to him according to the counsels of God. She thinks of him according to all the good which God has spoken of him; she sees him fighting God's battles, where others only see a rebel against Saul; and all this from her heart. She judges Nabal, and looks upon him as already judged of God on account of this, for with her everything is judged according to its connection with David; a judgment which God accomplishes ten days later, although Nabal was at peace in his own house, and David an exile and outcast. Nevertheless the relation of Abigail to Nabal is recognized until God executes judgment. She judges Saul. He is but a man, because, to her faith, David is king. All her desire is that David may remember her. Jonathan says, when he goes out to David, “I shall be next unto thee;” and David abides in the wood, while Jonathan returns to his house. In the order of things which God had judged (a judgment that faith recognized) he remains with his family, and shares its ruin. This is important to a Christian. For instance, he respects, in so far as based on God's authority, official Christianity, which in the world is the religion of God while God bears with it, and does not stand up against it. As to faith and personal walk, this Christianity is nothing at all; just as Saul was only a man to Abigail's faith.

Chapter 30

Affection and Consecration

Paul, active in love, his work accomplished for the moment at Antioch, turns towards the gatherings he had founded, desiring to know how it fared with them. But now Barnabas, like Peter before him, disappears from the scene. Not that he no longer worked for the Lord, but he did not maintain himself at the same level of service of Paul. Eclipsed in the work when with him, now he disappears altogether. A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, he was yet not detached from everything as was Paul, for whom, according to his call on the way to Damascus, Christ glorified and His own was all in all.

This remarkable servant of God knew no longer anything after the flesh—a consecration necessary to the founder of the church of God. He had given up Judaism that he might become a minister of the economy of the church. (See 1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 1; 2 Col. 1:23-25.) This economy had always existed in the counsels of God, but after the delay granted by His patience till the preceding mission of Paul from Antioch, which mission was then only put into execution, it is put on its true footing on account of the attachment of Barnabas to things which were only objects of natural affection. John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas, and the island of Cyprus his native country. (Col. 4:10; Acts 4:36.)

Barnabas was quite disposed to accompany Paul in his journey, but he wished to take Mark with him; this, however, was displeasing to Paul, for Mark had left them in the preceding journey at Perga. He had not courage sufficient to confront the difficulties of the work outside of Cyprus. Paul only thought of God, Mark of the circumstances; but it is not thus that difficulties are to be overcome. It is possible that the flesh may have manifested itself in Paul; but at all events he could not boast of being in the right. Paul did not think of the economy entrusted to him, but of what according to faith suited the work—the principle of life and heart necessary to accomplish it. He did not know the results, but what was necessary to produce them. Separation was necessary, and that God had wrought out in him. Still acerbity was unnecessary. At the bottom Paul was right, and the hand of God was with him. Even where the purpose of the heart is just, the flesh may very soon manifest itself.

Barnabas separates himself, and sets out for Cyprus, his country, taking Mark, his cousin, for the work of the Lord, but no longer the companion of Paul in the work to which God had called him. We do not forget the real worth of Barnabas, a true servant of Jesus, to whom the Holy Ghost Himself has borne witness; only he was not suited to that work. We learn ourselves that a heart consecrated to the Lord, without other attachment, separated from everything, is alone suited to represent Christ in a ministry such as that of Paul, and indeed in every true ministry.

Affection is good, but it is not consecration. Woe to us if we have not natural affection—it is a sign of the last times (2 Tim. 3:8); but these are not suited to such a work, a work which demands that one should not know anything after the flesh. Natural affection is not the “new creation,” though fully recognized by God in Christ Himself, when He was not in the work; neither is natural affection the power of the Holy Ghost, which alone produces the effects of grace in the work of God.

Barnabas then goes his way; such was his will. Paul chooses Silas, and is recommended by the brethren to the grace of God—a second ordination if it were a question of that, but it is quite another thing. And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. Remark here that many had been formed where the apostle had not before been, as he found the first time he passed through the island of Cyprus.

Chapter 31

How to Get Divine Affections

If you would have blessing or holy and divine affections, hold fast the revelation of a divine object, and the divine revelation of that object,

Chapter 32

Reading on 1 Peter 1, 2: Part 1

Peter is only laying the foundation here; you do not get anything of the proper subject of his epistle until “Dearly beloved, I beseech you,” in chapter 2. In each epistle he lays the foundation of redemption. They are the government of God that the Jews were put under. “He that will love life and see good days,” that is not redemption for heavenly glory. Or, again, “The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.” As far as I have seen, the first epistle is government in favor of saints, telling them they will suffer, and so on; and the second is government in respect of the wicked. In this chapter he tells first of redemption, and then how judgment begins at the house of God. And it is very instructive as to the order of the revelations and dealings of God. It is addressed to the scattered Jews through Pontus, &c.: “sojourners of the dispersion” it really is. “Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?” is the same. They are Christians, converted Jews, though scattered, before the destruction of Jerusalem. Peter was put to death before Jerusalem was destroyed, according to common chronology. You never find anything about the church as a body in Peter, but as a house. Paul alone speaks of it as the body of Christ; that was his special ministry. Peter does address them in their new standing, but it is individually in accomplished redemption, not as in the one body united to Christ.

At the end, “the church that is at Babylon,” I doubt. “Elected” is in the feminine, and no word is given for “church” at all; many have thought it refers to Peter's wife—she. Only Paul touches the subject of the body of Christ, and so he alone speaks of the rapture. There is in John's Gospel, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself,” but nothing more. As the house it is in chapter 2. They were Christian Jews, converted, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; it was any quickened soul among the dispersion. Peter was specially the minister of the circumcision.

James writes on a larger scale, He says, “the twelve tribes,” and he talks about anyone coming into their “synagogue;” it is like a national body, but he singles out those Who are believers. And he says “twelve,” though ten are in captivity; this is faith. Like Paul, “Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.” And like Elijah at Carmel, twelve stones. He could say “instantly,” as it was so, though they were doing it very ignorantly and badly; just as Paul himself had been doing when he was Saul. All really honest Jews were doing so. They might have done it in a bigoted way; still they were serving. Just as you may have a church near you kept open night and day, it is kept open whatever may be there beside the truth itself.

The cross had really ended Judaism, though it went on after: you see “how many thousands of the Jews there are that believe, and they are all zealous of the law,” offering sacrifices, &c.; and you got Paul going on to do as much....What is striking is, that in James you never have a word about redemption; grace You get,” of his own will begat he us by the word of truth” fits in pretty close to the conscience, if you will only let it. It does not allow will in man at all, but patience. Its general character is practical righteousness, the total destruction of self-will in the Christian, and the renouncing of the world. He takes them where they avowedly are, and says, “My brethren, count it

all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," and so on. He takes the cross for granted; but you get the grace that quickens us. And it is all the putting down of the working of evil in every shape. In James you get positive grace, but it is all the judgment of a man's heart.

Peter goes farther than that; be takes up the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ" applies to both those. Is it the obedience of Jesus Christ instead of the law? No; I take it the obedience of Jesus Christ is not merely that there is a rule given, but rather His own, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." There is a whole life which has no spring of action except the will of God, and if there was no will of God, He did nothing. At the beginning the Lord says, as it were, to Satan, "I am come to live by the word of God." He could have turned the stones into bread, of course, but He had no will of God for it, and so He did nothing.

There are two characters of it—obedience such as Christ's, and confiding dependence (or dependent confidence, if you like). "Through sanctification of the Spirit" means that the Holy Ghost has wrought in us to put us apart for these two things. You are elect to both, but the way by which you are brought into them is by "sanctification of the Spirit." Thus the Holy Ghost has come and taken man out of the flesh altogether, and put him into this place. And then these two things are, if you please, His life, and His death. It is a different kind of obedience from that of an obedient child now; my child wants to run out, and I say, "Sit down, and do your lesson." Well, he does so, and that is very pleasant and right. But Christ never obeyed thus, He never wanted to be stopped; He says "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." In 2 Thess. 2 you get" sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" together—the same thing pretty much.

You must begin practical sanctification by setting me apart first. The Holy Ghost comes, and sets us apart to God, separated out of the flesh to obedience. It is not so much the fact of the new life, as it is that the word has wrought in me; "being born of the word of God that liveth and abideth forever." In Hebrews sanctified by the blood of the covenant is another aspect of sanctification. Here the Spirit is the one who brings it into actual operation. In "by the which will we have been sanctified," you get that which sets us apart judicially; but the direct action of God at all times is by the Holy Ghost. So we are born of the Spirit; there is new life communicated, the Holy Ghost giving me a divine mind, bringing that into me, whereby my thoughts and feelings are all changed. It is God's purpose to set me apart by the Spirit. God's purpose is in His own mind, and God gave His Son that we may be, in a redemption way, set apart to Him. But we all that while are still sinners. Then comes the Holy Ghost, and operates in us, and sets us actually apart. Sanctification of the spirit is actual operation. All the operation of God is by the Spirit. We are born of the Spirit, born of the Father in one sense, and the Son quickens whom He will. And the Holy Ghost still goes on, for He takes the word, and makes the child grow.

Sprinkling is the application of blood, in opposition to what we had under law. There was a certain sanctification of Israel to God, but not by the Holy Ghost, and they had the blood of sprinkling in a way; but it is Christ's blood that we are sanctified to, and not that of bulls and goats. Obedience comes first, because you get the actual thing that I am sanctified to the obedience of Christ. But if I am to be before God, it must be by His blood; the one is for cleansing, and the other is His life. It is general, but more the person that is in view, because the blood has been put upon the mercy-seat, and this made God approachable.

It was Jehovah's lot, and without that we could not have had the sprinkling. John uses the fuller word, and says “washed.” if God had not been glorified as to the question of sin, which is specifically Jehovah's lot, you could not have had this; the two goats make one Christ. It is the general idea here of sprinkled blood; sometimes it was on the person, sometimes on the altar to God, but then the person got the benefit of it. When it was sprinkled on all the people, it was to hold them good under the penalty of death. It is the legal character of it there, but this is not for us. It is not the new covenant here, but just what it says. I am set apart to obey, and to all the value of Christ's blood. It is a great thing not to bring into a verse what is not in it. You get other verses and other truths, and clearer light by putting them together, but it is an amazing help to keep clearly what a verse gives. There is nothing about the covenant here, but a set of people, elect, chosen, and set apart to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. “Sanctified by blood,” in Hebrews, was strictly Jews, though we come under it in the fatness of the olive-tree.

A person could not walk practically in the path of obedience without, the sprinkling of the blood; we should not be set apart to God at all without it. It is in contrast with Judaism, where, as a matter of fact, they were brought through the Red sea, and so separated from. Egypt. Here it is the Holy Ghost that does it, and it is a real thing in the soul. In Hebrews you do not get the sanctification of the Spirit at all, though you get holiness; they are sanctified by blood, and are warned not to fall away. Where there was faith, they, of course, had the actual valve of it all, and where it is individual, it says, “perfected forever.” It is a great thing to take our verse up absolutely and simply. Here am I, set apart to have no will at all, only God's; obedience is not having a will of my own, and that is the law of liberty. Just as if I told my child again to go off and play in the street, he would go off, and be obedient in doing so, but it would be what he liked to do. Here, he says, I am bringing you out of a sinful world, where the carnal mind is enmity against God, and I set you apart to do my will in the world, and nothing else. And then comes the second blessed thing, all the value of Christ's blood.

“Blessed be the God and Father.” You often get that, Christ as Son, and as Man, “my Father and your Father, my God and your God,” “of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Lord is another title: “God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.” “Hath begotten us again onto a lively hope.” We had got into this state of death and tin, and Christ came there, and took us out of it, so that I have a lively hope, and there I get the key of all this government. “Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” “Revealed,” that is, not catching up theories, but a positive thing from God, kept there for me, and I am kept while down here by the power of God through faith; God's power keeps me, but it is by keeping my faith, unto a salvation ready to be revealed. The salvation here is the full description of the status of a Christian, and he is kept by the power of God. Peter is showing the way of the government of God; there is nothing about advancement in this world.

Hebrews is very much upon “Peter” ground, chap. 12:22-24 describing all the millennial blessedness from top to bottom, but you do not get “union.” “Fellows” is not union. If he speaks of the Father and of Christ, then he can speak of first-born among many brethren, but it is individual still. John, too, is always individual, and yet he carries us quite as high, dwelling in God, and God in me, but this is not union with Christ. When I get union with Christ, it is God raising Him from the dead as a man, and putting Him at His right hand, and He takes and puts me into Him there. Christ as Head (Eph. 1) is looked at as a Man whom God has raised. Peter answers to wilderness

experience in measure, but “ready to be revealed” is a different thing. Paul's revelation in Colossians is more like Peter, and so you get only, “we shall appear with him in glory,” but not the rapture; “called in one body” you, have, and “not holding the head,” but even that is not developed at all. Peter here is the contrast with having Canaan, and all that on earth. Here the inheritance is in heaven; the difference in Ephesians is, that there I am seen sitting in heaven in Christ, that is, in Christ in glory. He says, “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled,” and so on. The one thing you do not get is, the union with Christ by the Holy Ghost.

Would you say that you have eternal life in Peter? It is not developed in Peter. You never get a hint about God's love in Peter, though you get the things that flow from it. It is, God has wrought this, and has given that, and He keeps us safe, and so on; but you never have what you find in Paul and John, “God so loved the world.” It is a governed world, people in view for whom redemption has been wrought, the perfect standing of a Christian with an inheritance in heaven, and the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. You get the fact of redemption and actual standing, but you never find Peter saying, “Ye are dead;” he does say, “He that hath suffered in the flesh.” Paul says, “dead to sin,” and goes to the root. Peter says, “dead to sins,” which is another thing, being practice, and not root.

The moment I am in Christ, I am in a totally new place, where man looked at as born of Adam is done with. But Peter gives you the whole statement of my relationship to God, as redeemed, and quickened, and walking down here, but with a hope up there. And then government comes in—I am kept by God's power through faith. The rapture is not mentioned, for it is not an act of government, but of sovereign grace. But 2 Peter 1:19 is a most interesting passage, for you have this dark world—Satan's darkness—and this light of God, which shows how all here is going on rapidly to judgment. In Ephesians is the most extreme contrast that can be conceived: “Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” — “but fornication, and all uncleanness.” Paul goes down from my being an imitator of God Himself down to all that is vile in a man. Verses 6, 7 are government again, but it is as to men who are walking down here, but redeemed, and having this inheritance above. In verse 7 the fruits of all these dealings in government will come out. It is not that you find a. poor sinner, and take him and put him up in glory with Christ, that is not Peter. What is the salvation of soul? It is in contrast with the deliverance that Israel had, I think. Soul-salvation is contrasted with temporal deliverance. Then comes an orderly statement in verses 10, 11. The prophets which were before speak both of the sufferings of Christ, and of glories which were to follow; but we now stand in between the sufferings finished and the glories not yet come.

The prophets were telling of both; neither had yet come, and they searched to see what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, and it was revealed to them when they studied their own testimonies, that they ministered not to themselves but to us. This is very striking, for, so far from its being the expectations of their own minis that they were telling, they had to study their prophecies to understand them if possible. But now the Holy Ghost come down reports, these things to us, things which are to be brought unto us, but are reported now.

It does not state that we have got them, but the glory is reported, and by the Holy Ghost sent down. The Holy Ghost was not until Pentecost, but the thing that distinguished Christianity is the

Holy Ghost down here; just as of old Christ, looked at as coming down here, was not. All this does not go on into Paul's statement, nor into John's. Peter's is complete and perfect in itself.

I have soul-salvation and eternal life, and Christianity makes me wait for them. It is a report now. I am changed, but I have not a single thing but life and the Holy Ghost. Of the things that belong to me as being alive, I have nothing but the earnest of the inheritance. You have the new nature? Yes, that is eternal life, and yet, as to that, in the full purpose of God, the end is everlasting life. God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, He has called me to His own kingdom and glory, but I am not there yet. I am waiting for that. The grace of God has appeared, teaching me to wait for the glory; it is all revealed, and I have the life that enjoys it as a revelation, but I have not come into the estate yet. When the revelation comes by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, other things are brought in. As the Lord says to Nicodemus, “If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?” It was necessary, even to the Jews, to be born again for their earthly things. In John's “last time” you get Antichrist, the day of the Lord, and the days immediately preceding are the last time. Messiah is come, and He is not come; Elias is come, and He is not come, and you never see clearly in this kind of statement until you see that. Messiah shall be cut off and have nothing, He has none of the things that belong to Him yet. The moment the Son was there, the Father's name was revealed, though they did not understand it. And when the Holy Ghost came down you get the Spirit of adoption, and Christ's place where we are heirs; all that was not in the Jewish promises, any more than the church was.

The whole state in Peter is different, without going to Paul, because the veil is rent.

Present relationship with God is made perfectly clear by redemption and the new nature, and the Holy Ghost too, and this is an immense thing. We read in this very chapter, “Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.” Do you mean to say that God gave His Son for you? Then there is perfect love in the heart of God. I believe in God by Christ, and I say, God out of the depth of His own heart would have me with Him, He showed it by rending the veil from top to bottom. Certain privileges were not thereby revealed, but my soul's relationship with God, as brought to Him, is revealed. “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end.” (Vers. 13-17.) So I am calling upon the Father as a, child during the time of my sojourning here, and such is my place of relationship with God during that time. That is practically where we are. “In fear” is a very good thing; “Blessed is he that feareth always.". “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It has nothing to do here with final judgment, of course—Peter does not think of that with fear. But if you are calling on the Father, and His name has been revealed, and the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and the Father is keeping His children, still it is as a holy Father—so mind what you are about.

Judging according to every man's work is a present thing; otherwise, “the Father judgeth no man.” Then he goes to the foundation of it, “Forasmuch as ye know ye were redeemed.” Silver and gold are the general character of the infinite price with which we have been redeemed, contrasted with poor corruptible things—silver and gold. The Jews understood it very well. You get in Jude the corruption of the church, brought in by false brethren, and in John you get them going out in apostasy.

The two characters of the last days are, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and apostasy, or giving it up. That is all going on to this day; they crept in then. Though the last days be spoken of and perilous times, yet the Lord let it come out in germ at that time, that we should have the word of God about all. Enoch prophesied about them. The moment Christ was rejected all was closed, except the present time of mercy. As Christians we do not belong to this world at all.

“Who by him do believe in God.” The statement is general, and the effect is that their faith and hope are in God. I know God through His means; this gives a distinct aspect of God altogether. It is trust in God in everything, for I know that God has come in to my case. I know the love of God in giving Christ, and I know that all my sins are gone, and God Himself is God my Savior. He is not in the character of Judge there; nor is it faith in Christ before God, but in God Himself who raised Christ from the dead, so that it takes in everything between me and God, and alters His whole character from Judge. I may believe God as a righteous Judge, and so He is, but that will not save me, though there must be that for salvation. Abraham believed God, that is, believed what God said, and you get various forms of that. You get the Jewish expression, “hope;” but hope is used as confidence, as “in him shall be the Gentiles' trust,” that is, hope. “Hope thou in God.” Hope is used as counting on a person; but He will give us glory too; here it is the general thought—we reckon on Him. Believing on Him, and in Him, are different. “I believe in God” is a different thing. This is the object and the confidence, God is the object of the faith. It is the Red Sea. God raised Christ from the dead. There is no knowing God any other way, save as Creator. I do not know God at all, save as I know Him in Christ. “This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” is knowing God the Father, not merely God. The other names of God do not give eternal life, but the Father sent the Son that we might live through Him, and that gives eternal life. Then comes another thing—first, the revelation in Christ, and then, obeying the truth through the Spirit. This is what sanctifies the soul.

“Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” It is wonderful how purifying the hearts, and love, go together. You may get hold of truth, but it is always imperfect, badly put together, and that kind of thing, in man's hand, but here it is obedience to the truth through the Spirit—another thing. You see selfishness is at the bottom of all sin; the opposite of selfishness is love, and we are purified from selfishness by this love. It is love of the brethren, and love which brings in holiness. You get the two things so in 1 Thess. 3:12, “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you, to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.” Love and holiness. It is a wonderful power which has come in in Christianity. Paul adds, in Thessalonians, “at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” It is not, establish your hearts here, but he is looking at it in all its fullness when Christ comes. It is the power of the hope too, “He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.” And therefore it is in John 17, “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” It all takes us up into the other world. “As we do towards you” is the pattern of it, but it is towards one another, and towards all..... You never find that Christ loved the world, nor that God loved the church, because that is the relationship of Christ and the church, His body and His bride. When you get “love as brethren,” it is again relationship, love unfeigned. It is the opposite of feigned; it is not “putting it on,” as you say, but real. It is the converse here of what it is in Thessalonians. It is the

bringing in of divine life, and the Holy Ghost was there, and He is the spring that is in my heart. So it is not talking about inconsistencies, but what is love, and what is God's nature. It is a wonderful thing for us to look at in all our path—Christ; and then in that sense we could not know any man after the flesh. Purity and love is what God is looking for here. Self is dead, and consideration for others is what reigns in the heart according to God. And the recollectedness of God's presence is the great secret of that. I was struck some time back with this, that when the apostle describes what love is, it is all subjective. In 1 Cor. 13 you do not get one atom of activity in it; it bears, endures, hopes, and so on, and that is all. Love is not always subjective, but it is so in 1 Cor. 13.

You go and live it out, and see if other people will be disappointed. Activity, of course, is all right too. God gives to us in the blessedness of His nature, He makes us enjoy Himself, and, besides that, He gives us a share in the activity of His love. “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently,” These instructions are drawn from the very depths of God's nature, and you get God and grace instead of self.

Suppose a man is giving way to bad feeling, the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. I ask myself how should I feel if I met that man at the door of heaven, going in—supposing I had met a heretic, or anything else. Would it not be nice to meet people here as you will meet them there? Only when you have to meet opponents, take care that it does not connect itself with anything of feeling as regards the individual. Look at Christ in Gethsemane in an agony. He asked His disciples to stay, and He went further, and when He comes to them again, He finds them sleeping, but He only says,” What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” and He goes back again into His agony; and this was His way to them when He was thinking of meeting God in judgment!

Verse 22 is love “fervently.” “Seeing ye have purified,” &c., is the principle: now let us have the practice in all its extent. He is looking for fervent love in a pure heart, seeing that they have been brought into this relationship. God is light, and He is love, and He has come down in light and love, and He wants this divine nature which has root in us to come out. “Increase and abound” is to be brought about by keeping nearer to God. I have often thought that it requires great grace to see a little grace. If you go out in love, it will find some response. At one place they. Complained that all was so dreadfully cold, and I could only say, Why do you not go out in love, and warm the rest?.... “Born again.” This is divine life, for this connection of purity and love is by the Holy Ghost. John 3 is the same truth, but more specific. John says ■νωθεν, insists on its being altogether new, and so it is more emphatic. Here it is connected with the word in John with the Spirit. In John, too, you get the positive communications of the new life, in Peter you get the practical effect and working, not the source. It is similar in 1 Peter 4:1: “He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,” but in Paul I get” He that is dead;” it is the same truth, only the one is the principle, and the other is the outward practical carrying of it out. Again the Jews must be born again. We are born of the Spirit, and get a new life, but it brings in divine thoughts, so that I am cleansed. The sin in them, then, remains, as in Ezek. 31, and so it does in us now. It is a great thing that the word lives, it comes from God, and is really in the power of the Holy Ghost, but then it brings in the things it tells about. In John 8:25 the Lord tells them what He was—in principle altogether what I said; in our version it is, “even the same that I said unto you from the beginning,” but His word expressed Himself,

And the word not only lives, but it judges what is in us too, because it is true.

Chapter 33

Reading on 1 Peter 1; 2: Part 2

(Concluded from page 313.)

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” is another idea; he is a new creation, and belongs to an entirely different state of things. In Gal. 5 it is more applied to the individual. It is the thing so many will not have. Some men openly ridicule the idea of two natures; but “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Methodists always took wrong ground, having no thought of being born again at all, and this has run very much through all the body of the evangelical world. New creation takes in everything, new birth is my having a nature that is fit for it. New creation, if you take it in its full sense, leaves nothing else. If you say, I am the same man after I am born again, I do not doubt you are, but you will find a difficulty in saying what “I” now is. I have life from Adam; that is never mended one atom, but I get a new life from Christ, a totally new thing— “He that hath the Son hath life.” Adam had not that, but I have the life of the second Adam. Adam innocent had not that life one bit more than Adam guilty. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and Adam was not born of the Spirit, but God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. But this is a new thing, that eternal life which was with the Father, and has been manifested unto us. That is the Christ who becomes my life through the operation of the word, and is a totally new thing, it does change the man.

As to the Old Testament saints, eternal life was no part of the Old Testament, even if the Old Testament saints had it; “life and incorruptibility are brought to light by the gospel;” not that they were brought to existence, but “brought to light.” And. when He in whom life is came down, and died, and rose again, then a totally new thing is brought out. Eternal life is twice found in the Old Testament, but both passages are prophetic of the millennium. And therefore you never get conflict between flesh and Spirit, in the Old Testament. You get “born in sin” (Psa. 51), but no thought of flesh lasting against spirit.

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” and so you get a contradiction twice over, and somebody else put in instead of you, So, in Rom. 7,” What I hate I do,” and “it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me,” but in the verse before he said he did do it. All that the psalmist can say is, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” He there takes this ground, if God wash him he will be whiter than snow. It is not washing with the blood of Christ in that passage, and what I insist upon is, not to put into a passage what you cannot get out of it..... The Father raises up the dead and quickeneth them, that is, those who are dead in sins are quickened, it is not the simple fact of receiving a new life; it is not the way scripture speaks, to say, “There is a living man, and I quicken him.” “Quickens” refers to both soul and body, as for the last in” quicken your mortal bodies.” But it is always a dead man when you talk about quickening. And “quickened us together with him” involves a great deal more. He was lying in death, where we were lying, and there was quickened; but that is a great deal more than life.

A man is changed, the flesh is never changed. In the history of the flesh I get it as an outlaw, and under law, but it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; again, I get it having Christ presented to it, and man crucified Him; then I get it with the Holy Ghost come, and find “ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye;” and then I get it in the third heavens, and Satan tries to puff Paul up about it. In the Old Testament dealing with the nature was no part of the dispensation, though saints were quickened, or born again; but eternal life they ought to have found out, and the Pharisees had picked it out. The young man came to Christ, and asked, “What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” But the Lord, in answer, takes the law upon its own footing, and says, “This do, and thou shalt live?”

In John 20:8 the other disciple “saw and believed.” What was it he believed? That Christ was risen, only he believed when he saw, but had no knowledge of the scriptures (ver. 9) that Christ must rise; so he saw and believed that He was risen; did not know it by faith in the word of God, but believed when they saw. Peter only gives it us in hope. The seed here is the divine life, but it is by the word, which is the seed of life. In verse 23 we are born of God, but by this word instrumentally. It gives you the character and source of the thing, but the instrument is the word, and so the word is the seed. It “liveth and abideth forever,” and it is a great thing to see that clearly in the word; “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” The word is the revelation of what is in God, in His nature and character, His love, His ways—in short all that He communicates. And it is what God uses to quicken. “Forever,” in verse 23, is left out by the editors.

Is there any difference between λ■γος and ρ■μα? λ■γος is the deeper word, and the ρ■μα is the giving of it out. λ■γος is that which is known in the mind, and known by expressing it. I cannot think without having a thought, and λ■γος is used for that and the expression of it, but ρ■μα is the mere utterance, and that is it which by the gospel is preached unto you. Then the word of the Lord is that which is in mediatorial communication, I suppose—that is all. It is a great thing to see that character in the Word, for if I have not an inspired word here in this book, the inspiration of God's mind, I have not got it all. The Bible is the ρ■μα written down. And the Lord gives importance to it, “If ye believe not Moses' writings, how shall ye believe my word?”

It is not Christ here, but it is Christ written down. You get the two thrown into one in Heb. 4. And “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live;” so it is God's own mind, of course. In the middle of a world that is away from God, and has rejected Christ, as it has rejected God, you have one thing, that is of God and from God, and that is the word of God, and this is all. God Himself is here, of course, but the word is the only thing that is of Him. And, when everything else has passed away, this will remain until it is shown that everything it said is true.

“The word of God is living.” That is the very thing; it is divine, it is not merely a word that I give out, and it passes, but a word that comes out from God, which abides, and never changes, and never can change. It comes down into my heart, and shows me everything that is in it. In these days it is a great thing for saints to carry with them the conviction that the word of God is the word of God, and can never be broken, but endures forever. It is, and will ever be, the truth. Many of the things spoken of old have passed, and many others may pass, but the word will be the truth hereafter, just as much then as it is now. But as for this world, and the infidels and their reasoning, there will not be one atom of them left. Man's breath goeth forth, and his thoughts perish.

Then comes another thing in chapter 2, and that is growing by the word to salvation. It is the only thing here which is positively of God (in one sense all the creation is, of course, but that will all be burnt up); but that which is of God nourishes. There is a sense, too, in which we are all new-born babes, and it is the new life in simplicity and purity that desires the sincere milk of the word; whenever I come to the word to get nourishment, I come as a new-born babe.

Peter looks at salvation as ready to be revealed, and means by “if so be” that he is supposing you have tasted, or else you will not desire. It is the knowledge of the graciousness of Christ that makes us desire to get more and more.

In chapter 2: 4, 5 follows the house that Christ builds, and in contrast with the house in 1 Cor. 3 There you get the house built on the ground of man's responsibility, “according to the grace of God which is given unto me,” &c. (Vers. 10-15.) There is man in responsibility building the house. But in Matt. 16 the Lord says, “I will build my church,” and that is going on; the house is not yet built.

Here, in Peter, you have no responsibility of man, but the living stones built together. In Ephesians Paul says, “groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; groweth, is growing yet. Matt. 16 answers to Eph. 2:21, verse 22 being a matter of fact; one is “growing to a holy temple,” the other is a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is the confounding of these two together which has brought in all the pretensions of popery and high churchism. A house is not a body; the two ideas are totally different. It is Christ's body, and God's house. In Heb. 3 it is “Christ as on over his [God's] house.” I believe the “own” ought not to be there. A person may be in the house, and not in the body; wood, hay, and stubble will be burnt up, but no members of the body will be.

People often ask if Christ is precious, but the terms, “elect, precious,” are His character, not my estimate of Him: the words are connected with the corner-stone.

The Jews were appointed to stumble at Christ—that was to be their judgment; but they were not appointed to be disobedient. Judas was not appointed to be a sinner; but, being a sinner, he was appointed to be a betrayer of Christ.

“The wicked for the day of judgment” means in this world; there is a day of judgment that comes upon them here in this world. “Ordained to this condemnation” is not condemnation as people think; it is to this condemnation. The Stone of stumbling was such to the house of Israel.

You see we are all lost, to start with; not that I believe in what is called reprobation, for I do not, but God brings about His own way. Israel was appointed, as I said, and prophecy had declared that they would do this when Christ came, and then they stumbled upon Him; it was the form that their wickedness took in the purposes of God.

In Rom. 9 you have, first, the sovereignty of God, and if He chooses to make vessels for distinction, nobody can say “No” to Him; you cannot help it. Then be takes up the ground, “What if God,” &c., in verses 22, 23—another thing. And when he comes to the good side, God prepares them; when he is on the bad side, God endured the vessel fitted to destruction. Is that “fitted,” fitted themselves? He found them fitted you must not bring in what is not there. He finds things fitted for destruction, and He exercises endurance. Rom. 9 is simply absolute sovereignty; people talk about national election there, which is the very thing he is denying. You are the children of Abraham, are you? Very well, then, says the apostle, if you plead that, you must let in the

Ishmaelites, for they were of Abraham. But they were slaves! That ground is gone. Then take Esau and Jacob: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Then come to Israel, but if God had not been merciful, all of them would have been cut off, except Moses' own children. God is sovereign, then, and if so, He can let in the Gentiles as well. It is a smashing argument to them, for they had broken the law, and they could not deny it. Ah! but, says the Jew, I have got the unconditional promises, and so have a right to have them. And then the apostle takes up that principle, and says, in rejecting Christ, they had rejected the promises too. And then he takes up this national election.

When I was young you might have found an infidel or two, but now you may almost say people are appointed to infidelity, though they were as bad then as now, one way or another. Infidelity is often according to the increase of light, and the increase of light often according to the infidelity. Now, it is like that in our Lord's time. The Pharisees are the Puseyites, and you may find as well Nicodemnses and Josephs, or Nathanaels even.

Then come verses 8, 9. Two kinds of priesthood here, “holy,” and now “royal.” The holy is a kind of Aaronic priesthood; “royal,” more Melchisedec. “Going in and out” (John 10) is liberty. One “fold” is a sad piece of error in translating, to keep up an established church; it should be, “one flock.” You get three things there: eternal life, never perish, and saved; going in and out; and finding pasture. Salvation, liberty, and feeding of God's sheep are thus before the mind of the Lord, and now made good to us. They are not shut up in a fold, but under the care of a good Shepherd. He keeps them safe. So it takes the image first of the Aaronic priesthood; and we are the epistle of Christ in our life, and words, and everything.

“The offering up of the Gentiles,” in Rom. 15:16, I take to be an allusion to the offering up of the Levites in Num. 8:11, “acceptable by Jesus Christ.” They could not be so without Him. I cannot carry anything up to God, except in Christ's name.

We have to offer our bodies, but he is not speaking of that so much as of praise, and thanksgiving, and adoration. It is in the man, the same character as in Heb. 13, and that is Aaronic. To show forth the praises is somewhat of Melchisedec. It all refers to Ex. 19, “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation,” and it is putting these despised believers in the place given to the nation Israel. And they will be it by-and-by. Melchisedec comes out with blessing up and down, and not intercession properly at all. In Hebrews Paul takes Melchisedec as the stamp which was to mark out Christ, but there was another priesthood, that of Aaron, and this offered sacrifices, and so on. “Darkness” is always ignorance of God, and light is the knowledge of God.

It is never said that Christ presents our worship, but in the midst of the church He sings praises.

Advocacy is a definite thing, but the priesthood in Hebrews is as for grace to help in time of need. But Christ presenting, as though we could not go in, is not the fall character of Christian worship at all. It is “the Father seeketh,” &c. I do not talk of a priest with a Father—priest over the house of God—and so draw near. I know He is there, and so draw near with boldness. But that is not Father. Worship of the Father is peculiar for the Christian, but there is a tendency to bring worship down merely to Hebrews. There is no Father in Hebrews. “The Father himself loveth you;” could you bring in a priest there. In John you got the obligation and necessity, and it is also the Father; so our fellowship is with the Father, and that is the necessity of His nature, “God is a spirit; and

they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Chapter 34

All of One

(Heb. 2)

We never know our place rightly till we know Christ's place. What we find in this chapter is, that we are completely associated and identified with Him. “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (Ver. 11.) Then God's way is to settle our relationship with God Himself first, and then to pass us through the wilderness, till the time comes for the full accomplishment of His purpose in glory. If we do not connect our place with Christ, we do not get the key to it. He passed through the wilderness, dying for us too, and He is now crowned with glory and honor. This chapter puts Him in this place.

The wilderness is no part of God's purpose for us at all; it is a part of His ways, not His purpose. Christ could take the thief straight to paradise without any wilderness at all, so absolute was that work of His in its efficacy. Bringing us to God and into the wilderness are the same thing. Christ's work is complete, and the effect of redemption is to bring us into the wilderness. The Israelites began the wilderness, properly speaking, after Sinai. As soon as they had passed through the Red Sea, they could say, “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” (Ex. 15:13.) At Sinai Jehovah said, “Ye have seen.... how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.” (Ex. 19:4.) They were brought to the wilderness and to God.

Ex. 15 goes on to show God's purpose: “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Jehovah, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Jehovah, which thy hands have established.” (Ex. 15:17.) That Israel had not got, and we have not got it, but Christ has entered in, and that is the difference.

If you look at Ex. 3, you will see that the wilderness formed no part of God's purpose: “And I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Ver. 8.) In Ex. 6 you find the same, and in Ex. 15, where faith celebrates redemption, you have the same thing. “Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” (Ver. 18.) This leaps right over the wilderness. He did bring them through the wilderness, but it was no part of His purpose for them. Redemption was accomplished when they were brought through the Red Sea. In that way the Red Sea and the Jordan coalesce: in both there was the passing on dry ground through the water that formed the barrier, the real difference of moaning being, that in the Red Sea we get Christ's death and resurrection—not merely blood-shedding, we had that in Egypt—and in the Jordan, our death with Christ.

The blood at the passover kept God out, but the Israelites were in Egypt all the while. In Christ's death and resurrection there was the bringing us out of the state we were in into a new one; in Christ risen we have a totally new position. Christ coming and taking our place died to that, not merely bearing our sins—though that is true too—but He was made sin for us; and now He is risen up into a new place as man, a place that is the effect of redemption, and He is gone into glory too.

This brings us into this totally new place, which forms part of the counsels of God.

The first man was the responsible man; the Second Man was the man of God's counsels. At the beginning all depended on Adam, and he totally failed: then Christ becomes man, according to the counsels of God, and in His own person He takes manhood into the place of God's counsels about man. The wilderness comes in by the bye, very profitable, but only by the bye.

I have got God perfectly glorified in a Man—much more than man, for He is “God over all, blessed forever” —but still in a man. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Cor. 15:21.) He comes into this scene of ruin, manifests God in it, and then manifests man to God. God raises him from death, and puts Him into His own glory as Man. In virtue of the work which has glorified God, man is at the right hand of God. “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself (the second step down), and became obedient unto death, oven the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given, him a name which is above every name.” (Phil. 2:6-9.) Because of that He is in glory. As the eternal Son He was always in glory, and He could speak of Himself as “the Son of man who is in heaven.” In John 13 you find it there. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” (John 13:32.) He cannot wait for the kingdom and glory that are coming, but personally He glorifies Him at His own right hand.

Then, redemption having been accomplished, the people are brought out through redemption. We get in Jordan, not Christ dying for us, as at the Red Sea, but our dying with Christ; consequently there is not the smiting of the water, as at the Red Sea; there is no judgment, but the ark stood in the midst of Jordan till all the people passed over.

Canaan was a rest in the purpose of God, but instead of that the Israelites found it a place of fighting: Joshua met there the man with a drawn sword in his hand. What characterizes heaven now is fighting.

Therefore there, and not till there, we get circumcision: the manna ceased, and they ate the old corn of the land. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.” (Eph. 6:12, 13.)

We get the two things: the accomplishment of redemption brings us into the wilderness, and the purpose of God brings us into heavenly places. Faith realizes these, redemption perfectly accomplished, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God because it is accomplished. He is not on His own throne at all: “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Psa. 110:1.)

Then the Holy Ghost comes down, and connects us with Him in that place. The believer, therefore, if he knows his place, says, “Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” That is all settled, but we are not there, except in spirit; we are in the wilderness all the way.

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come.... can never with these sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the corners thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.” (Heb. 10:1, 2.) “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” They were always at it, clearing people of sins; every sin committed required a fresh sacrifice. This is in contrast to Christianity, though people do not see it; for, inasmuch as Christ is sitting down, the believer, not like the Jew, has no “more conscience of sins.” Then, as Christ is sitting there because He has finished the work, our conscience is perfect, not we: it is “once” and for all. If failure come in, “We have an Advocate with the Father;” but the Christian who knows Christ's place has “no more conscience of sins.” “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14.) “For over” here is a specific word, meaning continuous, not eternal, though, of course, it is eternal. The point here is, that as Christ is always, continuously, sitting there, my conscience is continuously perfect, because it is the person who bore my sins that is sitting there. The Christian is not in his right place till he is there—he may be on the way. “No more conscience of sins” —that is what I get in scripture. “Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity.” (Psa. 32:2.) He has not got the blessedness, if he thinks it possible that sin can be imputed to him. Such is the basis—that, and the Holy Ghost coming down from heaven—of our whole Christian place. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb. 9:22.) It does not say, “without sprinkling of blood” (though the blood is sprinkled); but if anything is to be done for sin now, you must get the blood shed. “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. 9:26.) If we are believers, we are under the effect of that work of Christ that never changes. We shall know more of its blessedness and value, but there is no renewing of this work of Christ in any sort.

This is only the entrance into the wilderness. He does not bring us into the desert till we are out of Egypt; until Christ has met God for us, we are not brought into the desert at all. We have trials and exercises there, but it is redemption that brings us into it; our path flows from that. In telling of redemption in Egypt, there is not a word about the wilderness; but when the Israelites have gone through it, then, in Deut. 8, the wilderness is reviewed. He talks of the forty years there. “And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.” (Deut. 8:2.) There we find all these ways of God proving the heart, yet He was watching their clothes and their feet all the time. He adds another thing— “to do thee good at thy latter end.” Redemption was at the beginning, Canaan at the latter end; the wilderness comes between the two. Through the wilderness we have God with us, and for us, not imputing anything to us, but exercising our hearts. These are the ways of God, the government of God, and so on.

He begins by leading a redeemed people to God. The force of Rom. 8:9 is, that we are in a new place “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” The flesh is not your standing or place before God at all: before God you are not a child of Adam, but a redeemed child of God.

Heb. 2 puts the world to come in connection with Christ. “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” We speak of a world where Christ shall reign; that is God's purpose, and it is not come at all. “What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou visitest him?” Job says the same thing; he wonders why God takes such

trouble about him. “What is man that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, and let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?” (Job 6:17-19.) Here is the answer: “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thine hands. But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor.” Christ, who is the man of God's counsels, to be over all things, is now sitting at the right hand of God, “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” He has accomplished redemption, and gone to the right hand of God as man, and He is sitting there till the time comes when He shall take His great power, and reign. All things are not put under Him yet, but He is crowned with glory and honor.

In Psa. 2 you find Christ spoken of as come to this world, and rejected, and then it goes on to say, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, Jehovah shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” In that character as King in Zion, and Son of God, as born into this world, He was utterly rejected; yet God will set Him on His holy hill in Zion. Psa. 8 tells us what He will be when He is rejected.

To show how scripture all hangs together, when Nathanael owns Him as Son of God and King of Israel according to Psa. 2, the Lord answers, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (John 1:51.) Psa. 8 comes in, and we see the highest creatures subject to the Son of man. He was Son of God and King of Zion (Son of God, even as born into this world). It was all right for Nathanael to own Him as such, but that is not going to be now; so He speaks of Himself as Son of man. In Psa. 8 you get the purpose of God; the Son of man is to be set over all the works of His hands. We do not see the works set under Him yet, but we see Him crowned with glory and honor: half the psalm has been fulfilled, but not the other half. He is waiting, and we wait; meanwhile we have the wilderness, where we have to learn ourselves and God, because we are redeemed.

Therefore, to show the perfect completeness of Christ's work, He could take the thief straight to paradise. The thief was looking to share in the glory when Christ came: “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” (Luke 23:42.) “Oh,” says the Lord, “you shall not wait for that.” “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:48.) It is more blessed to wait up there, than to wait down here: “To depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” (Phil. 1:28.) The apostle says, I do not know which to choose, but if I am beheaded, I can do no more work for Christ: it is better for you that I should remain—so I shall remain. He decided his own course; it was Christ who settled those things, not Nero.

As regards acceptance, that is a settled thing. Giving “thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Col. 1:12.) Even in Colossians you get them passed through the desert. “You are reconciled, but you must hold fast to the end.” Whenever a saint is looked at as going through the wilderness, you get ifs, only with a promise that He will keep us, but we have to be kept. Why is it said that no man is able to pluck the sheep out of Christ's hand? Because, if He were not there they would be plucked. “The wolf catcheth them;” this is the same word. The wolf may come, and scatter the sheep—that he has done; “but,” says Christ, “not out of my hand.”

Now see where in the chapter before us we come in, “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.” There is never such a thing in scripture as the thought of Christ being united to men by incarnation. “He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.” Here we have that blessed truth which is at the root of all these thoughts and purposes of God, but you never get this without His personal pre-eminence: you will never find His personal glory compromised. As another has said, “He never speaks to His disciples of our Father;” but He has brought us into His place as Man. “All of one,” all one set, kind, and state—an abstract expression. Adam was the head of the mischief; he and his descendants were all of one: now “He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” In wonderful grace He takes us into union with Himself— “My brethren.” There we come in, and we come into the desert. Christ has gone through the desert before us, that He might understand what we have to go through.

There are four reasons why He became man:

1. Because of what becomes God.

2. What was necessary as to Satan.

3. Then as to our sins; and

4. As to His sympathy with us.

The glory of God required it; therefore, if Christ took up our cause, then God had to treat Him accordingly. If God had cut off Adam and Eve, it would have been righteous, but there would have been no love in it: if He had passed over all, there would have been no righteousness. In the cross God's majesty was made good as nowhere else. Christ there perfectly glorifies God as to His majesty, His righteousness against sin, His love, and His truth: all that is in God was perfectly glorified in the cross, therefore the Man that did it is in glory. That is the righteousness of God. He has set Christ at His right hand: the Person that glorifies God goes, as the only adequate measure of His work, into glory. “For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” The consequence is (that being the grand basis of all), “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause be is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Then I get Satan in view (we had God in view before): “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” It was through death that Satan exercised all his power; he committed himself wholly to that, and in the resurrection of Christ all his power was over—that is, as to the work that annuls it.

The next reason was for our sins: “To make reconciliation (or, atone) for the sins of the people.” We have got God glorified, Satan destroyed in his and our power, sins—those of all believers I mean—gone. All that is not wilderness work, it is accomplished work. God is glorified; Satan's power destroyed; our sins all borne: that is all done—if it is not, it never can be.

Then comes the wilderness. Therefore He has not only made “reconciliation” or propitiation “for the sins of the people,” but He has “suffered, being tempted,” that He may be “able to succor them

that are tempted." This is the fourth reason why He became man. He has gone through every trial, everything that could hinder or be opposed to Him; He has gone through ten thousand times more than we can do. "He is able to succor them that are tempted;" He has experimental knowledge.

There are two kinds of temptation. Look at James 1:2: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;" this means trials in fact. Lower down, at verse 14, you will find quite another kind of thing: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." This is what is in my own heart. If we confound the two kinds of temptation, we either put Christ into this evil condition, which would be horrible blasphemy, or we take away the bad kind of temptation from ourselves. That is the reason it is said, "but was in all points tempted like as we are, except sin." (Heb. 4:13.) We are tempted by all trials from without, and by sin within. He was tempted by all, sin excepted. I get by redemption into this totally new place, but I am waiting for the redemption of the body. I have got now my soul and spirit in heavenly places with Christ; my body is not there yet, it belongs to the old creation; I belong to the new.

In Numbers we get, consequently, the red heifer, the provision for the wilderness, which is not among the sacrifices in Leviticus. If you touch death, you want your feet washed. The ashes of the heifer came in for restoring communion, when they had lost it in going through the wilderness. We have an immensity to learn about ourselves, and about God too; we have been left down here, being redeemed, to know ourselves and God, in His own faithful, blessed, ways with us.

In Joshua circumcision comes in (when there was circumcision before, they simply followed their fathers); as merely redeemed in the wilderness, they were not circumcised. It is a different thing to say, "I am safe, and my sins are gone," from saying, "I am dead to the world." It is only as sitting in heavenly places that I do not belong to the world at all. In Ephesians only we have God's purpose completely; and there, consequently, we have Christ raised from the dead, and seated in heavenly places; while we are with Him there, and there only, we have conflict properly. We get the three things— "Ye are dead," "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3) We have not got there yet. In Rom. 6 faith is told to reckon self as dead, and in 2 Cor. 4 we get the carrying it out in practice: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (2 Cor. 4:10-12.) They were so bona fide realizing this death, that nothing but the life of Christ comes out in them.

"We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," Paul could say: he was really carrying it out. When God puts him right in face of death (2 Cor. 1:8), he could say, "You are killing a dead man." "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."

I do not know that I could quite say that in Hebrews we are walking down here, while Christ is up there. Hebrews gives us the desert rather than the Jordan. Deliverance has nothing to do with sins, but with sin working in the believer. Then I get, not forgiveness or justification, but deliverance from sin. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." (Rom. 7:5.) "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." (Rom. 8:9.) "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17) liberty with God, and liberty from the power of sin. The way you get it is in having died with Christ. When I

believe in forgiveness through the work of Christ, then I am sealed with the Spirit, and this makes me know I have died with Christ, and am risen with Him. We get there, in Rom. 4:25, “who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification;” and in Rom. 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;” this is a new place. Could you charge Christ, who is up on high, with sin? You cannot separate “the law of the Spirit of life” from the Spirit in Rom. 8 “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” (Rom. 8:8.) Where was the condemnation? In the cross. He did condemn sin in the flesh, when Christ was there for sin. This goes with it, that, when it was condemned, it died there; that is all right—then I am dead. Death and condemnation came to; Christ took the condemnation, and I got the death. “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” (Gal. 2:19.) I have got now not only that Christ lives in me, but that I have a title to reckon myself dead because I died with Him. There is a great difference to note between guilt and Attire. That state of which I have spoken is the consequence of the Spirit of God dwelling in us, not of our being converted merely. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” (Rom. 8:10.) If I let the body live in that moral sense, it is all sin. Suppose a person was lying dead on the floor, could you charge him with evil lusts and a wicked will? He is dead. We are dead to faith, though not in fact, and we have a new life in Christ. “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.”

“No more conscience of sins” would be true if the believer were falling into sin; which makes it ten thousand times worse. None but a purged conscience can ever be a bad conscience.

The priesthood of Christ in Hebrews is never for sins, except when He offered Himself on the cross. It does people a great deal of mischief to think of Christ as a Priest for sins. I get in John another thing: “If any man, sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 3:1.) If there is even an idle thought, you have lost fellowship with the Father and the Son; but then you have Christ as the Advocate on high. “And he is the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 2:2.) He acts as Advocate, and the soul is restored as to its state; the conscience is purged, and we are brought into the light, as God is in the light. As long as there is a question of guilt, I cannot go to God; I cannot have boldness; therefore I do not get into the place where holiness is unfolded, and where there is the Advocate. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7.) This is an abstract statement; John always gives us abstract truth. “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” (1 John 5:10.) The devil has nothing for the new nature.

We are in the light as God is in the light: if I cannot stand before God, where the light is, I must be off. What is the consequence of being in the light? Fellowship one with another. Divine things are totally distinct from human things. We must have meum and tuum down here; if I give you this book, I have it no longer; but if I enjoy fellowship with God, do I lose by bringing you into it? There common joy and common blessing characterize the Christian state; and you are always perfect, because you are there in virtue of the blood that cleanses from all sin.

We have these three things:

1. We are in the light, as God is in the light.

2. We have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another.

3. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This is an abstract statement, as if I should say, "Quinine cures the ague."

Propitiation in John is in no sense a present thing; it is all finished. The blood was on the mercy seat for a year; now it is with us for eternity; that is what I get in Hebrews.

Rom. 7 is not Christian state at all; it is no proper conflict, for I am there a captive to the, law of sin and death. In Rom. 7 you never find a man doing right; neither Christ nor the Holy Ghost is mentioned until you reach the end: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The moment I am in chapter viii., it is all about Christ: conflict begins then, in one sense; that I get in Gal. 5:17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;" that conflict you never find in Rom. 7.

In Rom. 6 we are dead; in 7 we are not under the law—the man is not there to be so. If alive in the flesh, you never do right. What is learned in Rom. 7 is not sins, but that there is no power" Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Perfectionists think you can jump through Romans. But you will never get out of it till you get into it. That we have no power is a harder lesson to learn than that we are sinners. The man in Rom. 7 learns,

1. That in his flesh dwelleth no good thing.

2. That it is not himself at all; this is relief, not deliverance.

3. That though he hates it, it is too strong for him.

Gal. 5 is proper Christian conflict. Conflict in the Christian state is there. "I am crucified with Christ." (Galatians "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." (Gal. 5:24.) "For ye are dead, and year life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3.)

Chapter 35

From Antioch and Back to Antioch: Acts 13, 14

IN the assembly at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers. These ministered to the Lord and fasted. While thus engaged, with hearts consecrated to the Lord, the Holy Ghost said—"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Doubtless the command was given by the mouth of one of these prophets, for this reason called such; but the important fact to remark is that these two apostles were called by the Spirit Himself.

Then, under the impression of the seriousness of the call, having again fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them away. And it was on a mission of the greatest importance. The gospel, and the revelation of the assembly, is now formally given to the Gentiles, they and the Jews (as believers) being united in one body on the earth and for the heavens. Let us consider a few particulars.

Already Paul had been called by the revelation and the authority of Christ, and more precisely by the revelation of a glorified Christ. Saul had not known Christ on the earth. On this we have spoken. He had been separated both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. As regards religion, he did not belong to the one class any more than to the other, but was united to a risen and glorified Christ. Henceforth he knew no man after the flesh, not even Christ—that is, as a Jew who awaited a Christ on the earth, according to the promises given to the nation. As a witness called by God, his starting-point was the glory—Christ in heavenly glory, the same who had suffered by the hands of those who were still persecuting His members on the earth. For him the cross was the end of his Adamic and Judaic life. He was dead to the world, to the flesh, to the law. He labored as an apostle of, and one who belonged to, a new creation.

Moreover, he drew neither his authority nor his mission from the apostles who preceded him; his mission did not even originate at Jerusalem, and was not dependent on the sanction of the apostles there, nor of the church at that place. His mission was given directly from God and from Christ. Personally called by Christ three years before, he is now sent by the Holy Ghost and departs from Antioch, a Gentile city, from the bosom of an assembly where the Gentiles had first gathered together. He did not go to or from another assembly. The superstition and legality of the Jews very nearly did so, but God did not permit it, as we shall see. His mission was nevertheless entirely independent; it was dependent on the authority of Christ alone, and on the power of the Holy Ghost. The apostle insists much on this point in the first two chapters of the epistle to the Galatians.

He desired to be absolutely independent of Peter and the others; and not only did he assert his having been sent from God Himself, but he was obliged to rebuke Peter, who, for fear of those who came from Jerusalem, had been unfaithful to the truth and to his own convictions. Paul was free from all men, subject to Christ, and in love the servant of all; a model and example for all Christians, as indeed he himself tells us. He fully recognized the mission of Peter to the Jews, as well as that of the other apostles; but though he preached the same gospel as they, his mission

was directly from God Himself.

Barnabas and Saul are not only called but sent by the Holy Ghost. They depart therefore to Seleucia, and from thence sail to Cyprus. But here the state of the work is manifested—a new aspect of affairs. The Gentiles are disposed to listen. Judgment falls on the Jews for a time, on account of their opposition to the gospel, especially on its proclamation to the Gentiles. (See 1 Thess. 2:16) Till now all the light that was in the world the Jews possessed; but, having rejected the true and perfect Light of the world, they had fallen into darkness, and hated the light, and all the more because jealousy filled their hearts. The apostle never denied their privileges. In Salamis he began by preaching in their synagogues. He did not give up the Jews till the Jews rejected the gospel.

Now John Mark, the son of her in whose house the disciples had met together to pray for Peter, was with them. The relationships of the apostles were still Judaic, for, though himself free, Paul profoundly loved his nation as the people of God. Having gone through the island, they find with the governor a certain Jew, a false prophet. The governor, a prudent man, desires to hear the word of God. The sorcerer Elymas, however, withstands the apostles, seeking to turn the deputy away from the faith. But if the hurtful power of the enemy was with the sorcerer, the power of God was with the apostles. They strike the false prophet with blindness. Such is a remarkable picture of the state of the Jews, and of the power of God shown in the propagation of the gospel. The deputy, astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, believes.

Saul now assumes the name of Paul, having (we are not told how) changed his Jewish name for a Roman one. The moment was a convenient one. The word literally signifies “to work;” but I do not think this is either the source or the intention of it.

After crossing the sea; John Mark leaves them. His relationship with Jerusalem was too strong for him, and the difficulties and dangers of the work of the apostles too great for his faith. Barnabas was his cousin; Cyprus, the country of Barnabas. Alas! how many there are whose faith depends on circumstances! They go on steadily while surrounded by these circumstances; but when the path leads to simple dependence on the faithfulness of God, their steps at once begin to flag.

The power of the Spirit of God creates His instruments, and adapts each for His work; and, set forth by the energy of the Spirit, they are sustained by His power in the midst of all circumstances, whatever they may be. We shall see that even Barnabas could not continue always with Paul, nor consent to know longer any man after the flesh. But it is sweet to see how, as I have already said, Paul in the end recognizes Mark as profitable for the ministry. (2 Tim. 4:11.) So Mark goes away, and Barnabas and Paul continue their journeying in strange lands, where the gospel is unknown.

Leaving Perga, they come to another Antioch (in Pisidia),where they enter into the synagogue of the Jews. Called on by the rulers of the synagogue to exhort the congregation (for the ministry was freer among the Jews than in modern Christian churches), they announce Jesus and the resurrection. Let us notice certain points in this address. As was generally the case, it was composed of facts. The apostle briefly relates the history of Israel till the time of David; and then lays down the two fundamental parts of the gospel—namely, the fulfillment of the promises, and the powerful intervention of God in the resurrection of Christ, by which He was shown to be the Son of God. In this way also He begins the Epistle to the Romans. All the narratives of the Acts

depend on the mission given at the end of Luke. The subjects are repentance and remission of sins. For Israel the way had been prepared by John the Baptist. Then God, according to His promise, raised up (not raised from among the dead) a Savior.

But they of Jerusalem had accomplished all that the prophets had spoken, knowing neither the Savior nor the voice of the prophets, which, in crucifying Jesus, they had fulfilled. But God had raised Him from the dead, and He had been seen for many days by those who had accompanied Him from Galilee. Thus was the promise in Psa. 2 of the coming of the Son of God, the King of Israel, accomplished. But, we would add, as to the responsibility of Israel, it is lost on account of the rejection of Christ; yet on the part of God all the promises were firmly, established in His resurrection, according to Isa. 55:3, and, as to His person, the prophecy of Psa. 16 is accomplished. All that the Jews were now to receive was to be given in pure grace. On this foundation the doctrine of the gospel is established. The remission of sins is announced, and justification from all things, from which the law of Moses could not justify. The basis of the new covenant has been laid, and the blood of that covenant shed, though the covenant itself be not yet established. It will be with Judah and with Israel in the last days, but founded on what has been already accomplished.

The apostles then exhort their hearers not to neglect the salvation which had been announced to them. The fundamental truths of the gospel ever, remain the same: the remission of all sins to believers; the person of Christ proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection; and the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel, though that people be for a time set aside. But this justification being for believers, it was for the Gentiles also.

The Gentiles then ask that these words may be preached to them on the next sabbath. The fame of this new doctrine quickly spreads, and nearly the whole city comes together to hear it. But the poor Jews moved with jealousy, cannot bear to be surpassed in religious influence, and that another religion than theirs should work on the Gentiles. Oh, poor human heart, always stronger in religious people! The truth it has already believed in (and believed in because received by many, themselves unconverted; and because, besides being the truth, it does them honor to profess it) does not put the heart to the test. But truth is always truth, even though it be not received by the many; it does put the heart to the test, and must be received only because God gives it.

The Jews now begin to contradict and to blaspheme. Paul at once takes his stand, and, acknowledging that the gospel ought first to be preached to the Jews, as heirs of the promises, openly declares that he turns to the Gentiles, taking the remarkable prophecy in Isa. 49 as the commandment of the Lord. There the Spirit presents Israel as the nation in which God should be glorified. But then the Messiah had labored in vain, for Israel was not gathered in. Still it was but a small thing to bring back the tribes of Israel; the Messiah should be a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth. On the ground of this declaration of the will of God, the apostles turn to the Gentiles.

Such was free grace, poured out on all, leaving the strict confines of Judaism, and directing itself to the whole world. But still the grace of God, mingled with faith, was necessary to make the truth enter the heart, so that it might be born of God. This is what happens here. The power of God accompanied the word, and “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” The result is this: opposition on the part of the Jews, testimony throughout all the earth (except at Jerusalem, chap.

15.), and the operation of grace in the heart, whereby it is led to the acceptance of the gospel.

Already, on the first sabbath-day, many Gentiles and proselytes had followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. The Jews however, on account of their failure, are put aside. The spiritual energy of Paul now places him at the head of the work. Till this moment it has been Barnabas and Paul; henceforth we shall find Paul and Barnabas.

The gospel is shed abroad in all these regions; but the opposition of the Jews increases. They “stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.” Similar scenes are enacted everywhere. By the permission of God (He however, still holding the reins in His own hand) the devotees of the old religion, and the devout women, with the chief men under their influence, seek to cast out the gospel. The apostles shake off the dust from their feet, in testimony of the justice awaiting those who rejected the grace and salvation of Gods “'And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.”

Such is the varied picture of the work of the gospel in the world, and the first public exhibition of its result, when announced in the face of the opposition of the old religion, which still exercised its power over unconverted hearts, in presence of the need and unbelief of mankind. And such, in spite of conflicts and difficulties, is the power of the gospel under the influence of the Holy Ghost. It is first preached to the Jews, because they had the promises; then it is given to the Gentiles, because all believers are justified by faith in Christ. A dead and risen Christ is for all. Opposition springs up from the hatred of the Jews, of the devout women according to the old religion, and of the principal men of the city. Judgment, though not executed, is pronounced; and then grace, working in the hearts of the believers, leads them to faith and joy in the presence of the Spirit, those who do not believe being left under judgment. Expelled from Antioch, the apostles prosecute their labors elsewhere.

At Iconium many believed, but the Jews renewed their efforts against the gospel. As God worked by the word, however, the apostles abode there a long time. But, the city being divided, and their adversaries desirous of doing them injury, they set out for Lystra and Derbe, where they preach the gospel, as also in the regions round about. At Lystra the power of God was manifested, by the hand of Paul in healing a cripple who had never walked. Here we find that the faith of the Cripple had to go with his restoration; in other eases this does not appear, the cure being effected in the power of God alone by him who was His instrument. (Chap. 14.)

The people, astonished by the miracle, call Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas (as Mercury was servant to Jupiter) is mentioned first in the narrative. The priest of Jupiter desires to do sacrifice with the people. The apostles, Barnabas and Paul, vexed in heart at seeing the purpose of the people, and far from desiring any honor for themselves, rend their clothes, and running in among the crowd to stop them, announce the one true God (not here salvation), who, till then, “had suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Such was the beautiful description of what God was, even among the Gentiles, and of what He gave to be known by them; I do not say that they did not know Him, for they preferred the imaginations of their own hearts, and the gods who favored their evil lasts. Nothing could be more horrible than what man showed himself to be, when God left him, on account of his perversity, to himself. What they did every day in their idolatry is unfit to be written. The account of it may be found in Rom. 1. The apostles seek to persuade the Gentiles of Lystra to give up their idols, and to believe in the one, true, and bountiful God, whom they had come expressly to declare to them, to lead them to His knowledge and to faith in Him. Scarcely, however, do they succeed in preventing the people from sacrificing to them.

But the Jews (not satisfied with having driven the apostles from. Antioch and Iconium, and moved by an animosity, grievous to the heart, against the gospel) come to Lystra also, and persuade the people, who, ignorant and fickle, now seek to stone those whom, shortly before, they had been ready to adore. Paul, the more culpable in their eyes because the more active in the work, is stoned, and, apparently dead, is dragged out of the city. Such is man—such the religious, when they have not the truth; Paul himself had been such—but sack also is the power of the gospel, when active in an unbelieving world.

But it was not in the thoughts of God that His servant should then perish. “As the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” Much blessed in this city, he goes on his way and returns to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, from whence he had been expelled. Outrage and violence neither impede the work nor enfeeble the courage of the servants. When the Lord so wills it, they return in peace to the very places from whence they base been driven. It is beautiful to see the calm superiority of faith over the violence of man, and how God conducts the hearts of His servants. They submit to, or, if possible, avoid violence; but if the work requires it, God opens the door, and the laborers are there with it again.

Now another part of their work is here presented: They continue to preach the gospel; but it was now necessary to establish assemblies, and put them in regular order. (Ver. 23.) They give the disciples to understand that Christ was not come to bring peace on the earth which would meet with the opposition and enmity of the world, but that through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom of God. It was a warning for all times to make, men understand that persecution was not a strange thing. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” not, however, all Christians. If a Christian conforms to the world, he will avoid persecution; but be loses the joy of the Holy Ghost and communion with God; he will be saved as by fire, and an entrance into the eternal kingdom shall not be abundantly ministered to him. If we walk with God, we shall not be barren in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

I speak thus, because for many the time of open persecution has passed away; but, if we are faithful, we shall most, surely experience persecution both from the world and from our own families. The world cannot tolerate faithfulness. If the Christian walk with the world, instead of winning the world to Christ, he himself gets at a distance from Him, and will lose (I do not say life, but) his spiritual privileges, his joy, and the approval of Christ; and his testimony is against Christianity. By his ways he declares that the friendship of the world is not enmity against God. The Christian when with the world is in no respects at ease; and when in the company of spiritual

Christians his conscience reproves him because he is walking badly, and that which is a joy to them he cannot enter into. May all who are disposed, or in danger of being let, to mingle with the ways of the world give heed to this exhortation

The apostles chose elders for the assemblies in every city. It is neither “chose by common vote,” nor “ordained"; these are not the true renderings of the word; but “chose.” The same word is employed in 2 Cor. 8:19, where the assemblies chose brethren to accompany Paul with the money collected for the poor of Jerusalem. The same word occurs again in Acts 10:41, where it is used in respect of God, and “chosen” is necessarily the sense. The apostles then chose elders for the assemblies. The epistle to Titus is another proof that the authority of the apostles was the source of that of the elders. I do not dwell here, however, on this question, though it is an important one, since the ordinary translation leads to putting the truth in a false light.

We have not in these days apostolical authority; and election made by the assembly is a thing unknown to the world. The authority descended from Christ to the apostle, and from the apostle to the elder. The word Bishop, in its present acceptation, is also unknown in the word. All the elders are really called bishops, as in Acts 20:17, 28; no other bishops are found in scripture; and at the beginning Paul and Barnabas chose them for every assembly among the Gentiles, as afterward Paul sent Titus to establish them in every town in the island of Crete.

It is important here to observe that the apostle not only preached the gospel for the salvation of souls, which was his principal work, but that he united the converts in assemblies, to which he was afterward able to write; and that the church or assembly which he founded in every city was properly ordered and represented the universal assembly, of which those who in each place composed it were members (1 Cor. 12), with the promise that Jesus would be in the midst of them. But the wickedness of Christians, or of Christians so-called, and forgetfulness of Christ's return (Matt. 24:48-50), have corrupted Christianity according to the prophecies of the New Testament (see 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Jude 4; John 2:18, 19; Matt. 13:28-30). All is disorder, confusion, and corruption.

But we are here learning the primitive order, before the assembly became corrupted. John tells us that the last time has already come; and Paul, that “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7); Peter, that the hour has arrived to judge the house of God; Jude, that those who should be judged at the end had already crept in unawares.

The testimony is as clear as day, if we have ears to hear what is written in the word; that in the time of the apostles the corruption of the assembly of God had already commenced, and that, when the apostolic energy of Paul should be absent, evil from within and from without would inundate the church like a deluge.

Matt. 13:29, 30 teaches us that the evil effected by the enemy in the kingdom of God should not be taken away till the judgment. It all exists still, while the patience of God gathers in His own.

Then, when they had prayed with fasting, and had commended them that believed to the Lord, the apostles go down by Pisidia to the sea-shore, preach in Perga, and pass on to Antioch. Here we see the true force of what had been done in chapter 13:3. They had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work they had now fulfilled. This is repeated in chapter xv. 40; so that Paul would have been twice ordained, if this had been ordination; and he would moreover have been an

apostle ordained by the laity. This, however, be stoutly denies (Gal. 1:1); “an apostle,” he says,” not of men, neither by man.” The Judaisers sought to have it so, but he refuted it with all his power. These insisted that his mission was from the church at Jerusalem, and opposed him precisely because it was not. He was not willing to be an apostle at all, if not from God, and from Jesus Christ.

It is to Antioch they go, not to Jerusalem; they return to their starting-point, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God. The work of the Holy Ghost connects itself with Antioch, in its earthly relationship; the power is all from above. There the apostles recount the great things which God had done for them, and how He had opened the door among the Gentiles. “And there they abode a long time with the disciples.”

In the preceding narrative we find this history of the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles by formal apostolic mission, the difficulties, the position of the Gentiles and of the Jews, the circumstances under which it was propagated in the world, and that independently of Judaism and of Jerusalem, a work in which Peter took no part. God worked mightily by him among the Jews; but, except that he was employed to introduce the first Gentile, he had nothing to do with them. He was the apostle of the circumcision, and with the other apostles formally gave up the work among the Gentiles to Paul and to Barnabas. (Gal. 2)

Chapter 36

Thoughts on the Atonement

The sacrifice of Christ was one and indivisible, but the doctrinal (like the practical) application of that sacrifice, as taught us in scripture, is another thing; that is, these are various. Thus, as to His death, “He died for our sins.” (1 Cor. 15:8.) But also, “In that he died, he died unto sin once.” (Rom. 6:10.)

Again, as to His blood, “He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.” (Rev. 1:5.) But we nowhere read that we are washed from sin in His blood. “Sin is lawlessness;” that is, it is a state or condition, and there is no such thing as being washed from a state or condition. The very state or condition is destroyed by death, and we are dead with Christ, as well as” quickened with him,” “raised with him,” &c.; though we did not die when He died, &c., for evidently we did not die before we were born. Hence, being dead with Christ, we have passed out of the old condition of sin, and being quickened and raised with Him, are as to our souls, in a new condition, namely, resurrection: we may add that in spirit we are ascended with Him. It is God who has done this. (Eph. 2:4-6.) And though it ever be divine power in the Son, there is a difference between “with” Christ, and what Christ Himself does. (John 5)

The death or blood of Christ has expiated the sins of those who believe in Him; but the obedience unto death of the Son of God—death too to Him, as expressing the divine wrath against both sin and sins—the death of Christ is now to believers complete deliverance, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. Hence practically, we are exhorted to mortify our members which are upon the earth, whilst as a matter of privilege, there is the “bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus.” (2 Cor. 4:10.)

In fact, sin is neither atoned for, nor forgiven, nor does sin properly come into question in the Old Testament, though birth in it is recognized in Psa. 51:5. When in Lev. 1 blood was shed, and atonement (propitiation) made, yet all is a sweet savor; that is, the condemnation side is not what is in view, but acceptance. God has indeed been glorified in the offering of Christ, where by sin He had been dishonored. It is as a περ■ ■μαρτ■ας that God condemned sin in the flesh in Christ for us; but a sinful condition in itself is not atoned for, but condemned (κατακρ■νω, to adjudge to punishment).

Christ having suffered the condemnation due to sin in the flesh, we are dead to sin (Rom. 6:2), in God's sight, and are called to “reckon ourselves dead to sin.” (Rom. 6:11.) Actual death to the believer destroys at a stroke and forever, sin in the flesh; but till then, “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,” &c. (1 John 1:8), that is, we are dead to Him, but sin is not dead in us.

God, by visiting upon His own Son His abhorrence of sin (as lawlessness), the penalty due to the sins of His people, and the cost of the redemption of all things (for “he tasted death for everything"), has so vindicated the divine glory, that the death of Christ is our refuge from the condition of sin, and is the atonement (propitiation) for our sins, so that sins are forgiven. The result is, that we are already reconciled to God—brought into a state of harmony with His nature

and will. We have “justification of life.” The word “atonement” occurs only once in the English New Testament, namely, Rom. 5:11, where it should be rendered “reconciliation.” It might be better always to use instead of it the word “propitiation,” as in 1 John 2:2; Heb. 2:17. So “to make propitiation for,” instead of “to atone for,” on what was called the “annual day of atonement,” the Lord's lot and the scape-goat formed together one sin-offering. Blood was presented to God, remission of sins was the result to the people, that is, propitiation and substitution. The Lord's lot was the ■ντ■λυτρον, or ransom for all. (1 Tim. 2:6.) Such was the value of the blood of Christ; the application to individuals of the efficacy of that blood, represented by the scape-goat, was the λ■τρον, or ransom for many. (Matt. 20:28.) This was, as it were, that part of the former which is made good to believers personally, in the remission of their sins.

J. B. P.

[It ought not to be overlooked that Christ's propitiation, as set forth in Jehovah's lot or the slain goat, did so deal with sin before God that God could go out in grace to the whole world (1 John 2:2). This was not for their sins as met in Azazel; else all would be pardoned. Yet no one holds that it was for sin in the flesh. And so in John 1:29, Heb. 9:26; it does not mean a sinful condition, or “the flesh” as in the Pauline teaching, but sin as a whole. The writer, I think, narrows too much the meaning of “sin.” So too, Jehovah's lot and the scape-goat from one offering for His people; but is it so for the whole world? Are their sins sent away to a land of forgetfulness? I trow not.-Ed.]

Chapter 37

The Beginning of the Creation of God

Rev. 3:14

Few things are more calculated to give stability and comfort to the heart of a saint in passing through this world than the conviction that, according to the counsels of God, he has been introduced in a divinely effective way into an entirely new order of things, and that he is eternally established therein upon immutable guarantees. So wonderful and so impressive is this discovery of the “new creation,” that most of those who have any adequate apprehension of it can probably remember what a moment it was to them, when, in all its blessedness, it broke in upon their souls, opening up a lovely and an incomparable scene, and revealing at the same time their own integral part in it, in the length of it and the breadth of it, without restriction and without reserve.

But one is painfully convinced that the subject is foreign to the minds of believers generally, forming no part of the creeds of churches, and unknown as a doctrine in the theology of Christendom; also, among ourselves, alas I many have never possessed themselves of it in its marvelous sublimity and precious import. What, we may ask, do such make of the last title of Christ to the church as a professing body on earth, the title specially taken by Him in view of these closing Laodicean days— “the beginning of the creation of God?” If Laodicea set forth a spurious and apostatizing form of Christianity, denying the power of godliness, such as in its incipient state at least is disclosing itself everywhere around us, and by means of which Satan is making the name of Christ as a football in the streets, the title which our sovereign Lord takes at such a moment is peculiarly refreshing to every loyal heart, indicating as it does a new glory inalienably re served to Him, and distinctly suggesting to our souls that sinless, cloudless, domain into which He has brought us even now, and where no unholy element can ever enter, nothing that defileth or worketh abomination, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Nothing, probably, can supply motive and power more blessedly than this truth for the threefold deliverance which the Lord loves to effectuate for us as believers—from self, from the world, and from Laodiceanism. Each of these spheres pertains to man as alive in the flesh, and is characteristically marked by the workings of the human will. How many dear children of God there are who have never known deliverance from these things, simply because they have never learned the truth of the new creation! They have known their deliverance as sinners from their sins, from guilt and from judgment, but they know not the further deliverance which grace effects for them as believers. Yet it is impossible that I can say with truth and candor, I know that I am part, a veritable part, of the new creation, until I am divinely assured that for faith every link has been broken that connected me judicially and morally with the first man, Adam, and the effete creation of which he was constituted the responsible head. If personally I have not got beyond being a responsible man in the flesh, in the very nature of things my will works, the flesh is allowed some liberty to act, I hold to the fact that the earth has been given to the children of men, and human religiousness is the consistent sequence of such mistaken reckonings of my bearings as a believer!

But the only innocent man of the old creation, set in a paradise of earthly blessing, sinned away his innocence and his Eden directly the hot breath of the enemy touched his cheek; thus he sank into a debased and fallen being, under sentence of death, with its premonitions, too, in every sorrow and suffering which befell him in the cursed scene he went forth to occupy, under pressure of sin and its penalties. Such was the first man in the first creation in the results of his responsibility.

Into that same creation, when morally it had ripened to the utmost, “in the consummation of the ages” (Heb. 9:26), came the second Man, the last Adam, God's Man; not set in a paradise, but in the blighted scene that the first of his race had turned that paradise into, and, as another has said, the only perfect man that ever trod this earth has died out of it!

What a character do these two Adams—the first and the Last—impart to the old creation! The first a man of the earth, created upright and innocent, and set in an Eden—yea, in a garden which the Lord God had planted for him—yet becoming disobedient and self-willed, bringing upon himself the catastrophe of a moral and physical ruin involving all his race. The second Man, from heaven, the untainted, the holy, and the true, in the same creation in grace, but being hated and refused, dying out of it, thus abrogating, and morally closing to faith, that creation forever, for all who have died to it with Him!

Rising, then, from among the dead by the glory of the Father, in the power of a new and endless life, He is “the beginning of the creation of God;” “the beginning” of that which will have no ending, the Head of that unchangeable order of things which grace loves to unfold to faith, and that will find its illumination and display in the glory forever!

Of the first creation we read, “all things were made by him;” and again, “All things were created by him and for him;” not so the second, for the formula of this is “in him.” It is “the creation of God” with Christ its Head, as the former was by Christ, with Adam its head. Accordingly, in Ephesians—the birth-book, or book of the generations of the new creation (Gen. 2:4)—we are said to be God's “workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them.” So that this now creation, and the works morally suited in character to it, are as truly as the first creation divinely formed and prepared. And, what is of deepest moment, they are altogether and exclusively in Christ in every respect. Thus we are chosen in Him, have redemption in Him; are made nigh, sealed, blessed, accepted, and seated in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, &c. (Eph. 1, et seq.) In the same epistle, too, we read, “Having put on the new [man], renewed into full knowledge, according to the image of him that has created him, wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondsman, freeman, but Christ all things, and in all.” Clearly we see here the righteous title of Christ as sovereign Head of the new creation, and the same scriptures constitute our title-deeds to this inheritance in Him, in whom all its moral characteristics find full and blessed display.

Now in Rom. 6:11 we get the first mention of this new ground, “So also ye reckon yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” So in verse 23, “the wages of sin is death” —that is the old creation— “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” —that is the new; for, be it observed, it is not only eternal life, but “in Christ Jesus our Lord,” which establishes it as this new, positive, order of blessing which is ours in association with Him, as “the beginning of the creation

of God," and which is perfectly exemplified only in the moral beauty of His own character. Then, in chapter 8, "No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," making clear our deliverance judicially from the curse of the first creation. In Adam is condemnation, in Christ Jesus none; because in the reckoning of faith we have died with Him out of the creation to which condemnation belonged, and for those who are His it is irrevocably abolished. "So if any one be in Christ [there is] a new creation." (2 Cor. 5:17.) This is the positive side, as the other was the negative, and essentially and positively blessed it is. For, observe, it is not that this creation is a matter of hope, or a matter of attainment, but there it is, a positive present portion; we are actually upon the virgin soil, as it were, of a new creation— "in Christ, a new creation"; the words are forcible in their terseness, and sublime in their simplicity! "The old things have passed away;" this was indispensable, for it is impossible that we should have at the same time a standing in Adam to answer for ourselves, and a standing in Christ who has answered for us. It is the total relegation, morally, for faith of the former and abrogated creation, now no longer acknowledged, and carrying with it a final repudiation of the flesh and its activities, so that it has no longer a recognized existence, and even "Christ after the flesh" is not known.

What a thorough, what a perfect, deliverance is this! In fine, it is God's solution for us of every problem as to our relation morally to man's world. "I have died in the death of Christ" is the reckoning of faith, and in the same reckoning, "the old things," in which the life of the first man found gratification, "have passed away," be it the world, with its lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life; or be it the flesh itself, with all its nameless variety of ways of working; or be it man's religiousness, or will-worship; all that God traces to that parent root of self will, or lawlessness, He, in His supremacy over the evil, assures us that all has "passed away," as between us and Him

One need scarcely say that, inasmuch as we have yet to wait for our glorified bodies, those we have belonging to the old creation, this leaves untouched every human relationship, and the natural affection belonging to it, as well as of moral duties the laboring for our bread, and submission to authority, all which things. God has specifically ordained for the scrupulous observance of the believer. And He has thus established, upon the highest ground, for those of the new creation just so much of what belongs to the old; which indeed constitutes the special title upon which these things are held or exercised by us. Seeing that now, according to faith's reckoning, we are not here in the way of nature, and therefore cannot speak of "rights," but by the grace of Christ as sent into the world, one recognizes the gracious hand of our Father in ordaining for the need of His children the comfort to be found in (1) these natural relationships; (2) in honest labor; and (3) in submission to the powers that be: so much, and only so much, of the old creation is ours, and one delights to take it, not upon natural grounds, but upon the new title of the Father's consideration for His children. In the old creation one has to be peremptory with oneself in expressing its total abrogation to faith (save as stated), but in this "all things have become new, and all things are of God" (ver. 17, et seq.); its sphere, its nature, its character, its headship, its everything, is essentially new; and faith affirms its investiture with every privilege found therein, and reckons, not only that we are "dead to sin," but in the same reckoning, that we are "alive to God in Christ Jesus," and thus orders its way in traversing the old creation in the light and power of the new, where—pervading the whole scene—God in everything prevails, and all is altogether of Him! Seeing this, how peculiarly fitting is the term, "the creation of God;" God protecting it, too, by

divinely enforced exclusion of whatever is not of Him, no trail of the serpent ever marring its pristine loveliness. For a brief moment all things were of God in the former one, but how soon evil entered, probably on “the opening day” of Eden, “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” and a greater than they rejoiced “in the habitable parts of his earth.” Thus what was of Satan, through his victim, man, quickly became more manifest than what was of God, and this has developed more and more ever since, so that now those who have eyes to see find emblazoned upon the world's brow, “all things are of Satan and of man.” And how cheering when that discovery is made, and in the sense of our eternal emancipation morally from the old creation, to have divine assurance that in the new everything will be its converse, for there one can never meet with one iota of the things of man, or man's enemy; all, all, is of God.

Are there not serious grounds for concluding that the great failure among us is that of not sufficiently bringing ourselves practically into relation with the wondrous truths we hold? What, among other things, is greatly needed is that the truth of the new creation should be a controlling power, not so much for testimony, blessed and important as that is, but, primarily within our own souls, in separating us from things down here. We cannot surely acquire too much of truth, but too frequently we are not in the current of what we have accepted. This accounts for its not so imparting to us of its tone and character as would be the normal effect of such truth if cultivated in its unction, and submitted to in its power. When Paul records his rapture into the third heaven, how beautifully does he take his new creation place as “a man in Christ!” In that supreme moment in his history he lost all his reckonings as to the old creation; even the question of whether in the body or out of the body, he could only refer to God; but his place in the new creation could not be more clearly asserted.

With what remarkable vigor and pungency does he also write to the Galatians: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” (Gal. 6:14, 15.) In what a superb manner are the world, and the flesh, and its religiousness brushed out of the way, that the new creation may stand prominently forth in a supremely salient style.

If we now turn to John 20, we see Him who is also “the Amen, the faithful and true witness,” emphatically as “the beginning of the creation of God.” “Touch me not,” He says to the weeping Magdalene; the tears and the touch alike belong to the old creation, and have no place now. He knows no man after the flesh; His mother and his natural brethren disappear from the scene: to all this He has died, and in His death parted company with all its associations; the favored home at Bethany even He visits no more! And everything was over too for His disciples at the moment; house-less, homeless, and orphans indeed!

But hark, “Go tell my brethren I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God!” Magnificent word for faith—the new-born message of a risen Lord and Savior! The corn of wheat which had died is bursting forth its prolific fruit, and this resurrection word on the first day of the week is as the shout of a king, a clarion note of victory, as the Conqueror enters triumphantly upon the new ground He has won, and into which it is His prerogative, as also His peculiar joy, to conduct His own along with Himself!

And if so, shall there not be new relations as well as new conditions? Assuredly, and thus divine relationships are now revealed, and eternally established. They were brethren to one another before it is granted, but now, says He, “My brethren,” thus bringing them into relationship with Himself; and now also are they constituted children, whose Father is His Father, and whose God is His God! Following this, “Peace unto you;” and then He breathed on them, expressly and impressively identifying them with Himself, and they received in the Holy Ghost the power of His resurrection-life, or life abundantly, as had the Lord God in the first creation breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of lives; by which man became a living soul.

How beautiful the order of this as presenting the characteristic features of the new creation! “Touch Me not” closes every thought of the old thing. Then (1.) He is there in the dignity and majesty of a Conqueror— “the beginning of the creation of God,” the new creation which He opens up for the first time in His own person, and into which, on this “opening day,” He carries them in spirit along with Himself (2.) New relationships are now formed for them, they are for the first time His brethren avowedly, and have His Father also as theirs! (3.) He greets them with “Peace,” the very atmosphere of this new and blessed scene—unbroken, unending peace (4.) The Holy Ghost is the power of His life imparted to them in resurrection for this new regime of blessing.

Thus did He send His disciples forth; the old creation had been abrogated in His death, the new is inaugurated in His resurrection, and they are to go forth as those who have been inducted of Himself into all its unique privileges, and are invested with all the dignity He imparts to it, to represent Him who had been refused in His own person here.

How far have we accounted this portion to be ours? How far have we realized that we are identified with Him who is “the beginning of the creation of God?” That He has in that character formed new and abiding relationships into which He has introduced us? That He has, in the precious and tender love of His heart, greeted us with “Peace” as we crossed the threshold of this new creation? And that Himself has given us of His risen life, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that we might go forth in all the wonderful elevation of spirit and tender grace of heart that belongs to His own character, “always bearing about in the body the dying [or death-process] of the Lord Jesus, that the life [or life-estate] also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies?”

May He deepen in our souls the recognition of all that necessarily follows from the fact, that in these days of defection and declension, we, through grace, have been eternally associated in the same life, the same scene, and the same character of blessing, with Him who, as first-born from among the dead, is “the beginning of the creation of God!” R.

Chapter 38

The Bible and Its Critics

Dear Mr. Editor,

With the question now stirring the Free Church of Scotland, respecting the teaching of one of its professors, the readers of the Bible Treasury have no direct Concern. Yet when the scriptures are assailed by criticism to prove that large parts of the Pentateuch were not written by Moses, but by others after his time, all Christians are deeply concerned in the accuracy of Such startling statements. The Lord quoted from the Pentateuch as the writings of Moses. “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?” (John 7:19.) The Spirit of God teaches us, that “the law was given by Moses.” (John 1:17.) Professor Smith, in his recently published statement in vindication of himself, would, by criticisms on Old Testament scripture, invalidate such teaching. Now what are such criticisms worth? To a consideration of them let us now turn, first quoting his own words (page 36): “Apparently, says criticism, the only way to make the new law an integral part of the old legislation was to throw it into such a form, as if it had been spoken by Motes, and so incorporate it with the other laws. Of course, if this plan was adopted, the statute-book ceased to be pure literal history. The ascription of a law to Moses could no longer be taken literally, but could only indicate that the law was as much to he observed as if it came from Moses, and that it was a legitimate addition to his legislation. Such a Method of publishing laws would not be free from inconvenience; but the actual unquestioned inconveniences of the Pentateuch, when measured by our ideas of a law-book, are so great, that this cannot prove the thing impossible. On the other hand, there is no deceit implied in the use of an artificial literary form proceeding on a principle well understood, and so it is a pure question of literary and historical evidence whether the Hebrews did at one time recognize and use such a principle. There is one piece of direct historical evidence which seems to sheer that they did, for in Ezra 9:11 a law is quoted from Deut. 7, expressed in words that throw it back into the wilderness period, and yet the origin of this law is ascribed, not to Moses, but to the prophets.”

Leaving it to the simplest Christian to determine whether there is no deceit in stating that Moses wrote what he did not write, and remembering that God in His word, and the Lord Jesus, speak only of Moses as the one by whom the law was given, let us examine the scriptures to which the professor turns in support of his statements and position. A law, he tells us, is quoted by Ezra 9:11 from Deut. 7, and yet the origin of this law is ascribed, not to Moses, but to the prophets. Now it would scarcely be credited that any one contending for, and engaged in, critical studies, could have made such a statement. A quotation the professor calls it! Why, the fact is this: there is not a word in the one passage quoted the same as those in the other. Of the three verbs in the law in question in Deuteronomy, only one of them is made use of in the passage in Ezra. The negative particles used by Ezra are not the same as those in Deuteronomy; and the nouns in the one passage are in the singular, and in the other are in the plural. With these important differences in a raw of only eleven words, it is surely trusting too much to the credulity or inability of his readers to verify his statements, to assert that a law is quoted in Ezra 9:11 from Deut. 7:8. That the ready scribe in the law of. Moses referred to this passage of Deuteronomy we may well believe; but, that

he meant it to be a quotation of it, his words would surely negative. He speaks of what God commanded by His servants the prophets. It was the tenor of prophetic teaching that he spoke of. Now Deut. 7 is not the only passage in the Pentateuch which refers to such a subject. In Ex. 34:16 we have a reference to it; and elsewhere, in Josh. 23:12, likewise. Ezra does quote from in Deuteronomy that passage, but it is from Deut. 23:6. A quotation, then, from the law of Deut. 7 the passage in Ezra clearly is not.

But we are further told that “the origin of the law is ascribed, not to Moses, but to the prophets,” because Ezra speaks of God's servants the prophets. Was not, however, Moses a prophet? Is he not termed one in Deut. 18:15; 34:10? But Ezra makes mention of prophets, and surely correctly; for in the book of Joshua (classed by the Jews among those called the former prophets), as well as in the books of Moses, the people were warned against the sin of intermarrying with the nations in the land. Ezra's words, then, seem well chosen; and the professor's attempt to make him a witness of the use in scripture of “artificial literary form” sorely falls to the ground.

Again, writes Professor Smith (page 37), “If, for example, Num. 18 assigns the firstlings to the priests, and Deut. 12 bids the people eat them themselves, and if both laws are perfectly clear and unambiguous in the tenor of their words, it is vain to ask us to believe that both laws wore given by Moses to be observed together.”

Let us examine this. In Ex. 13 we meet with the first command about the firstlings. The Lord claimed them as His for evermore. He had the right to dispose of them as He would. In Ex. 22:30; 34:19; Lev. 27:26, He reminded the people of His claim. In Num. 18:17, 18 He gave them to the priests to eat. In Deut. 12:6, 17, 18; 23; xv. 19, 20, He told the people who brought them, to partake of them with their families and the Levites who were within their gates, at the place where He would choose to put His name. Now it is clear that there is an alteration made in the law. The principle however, that God claimed the firstlings as His, to dispose of as He would, remains the same throughout. In the wilderness God gave them to the priests. (Num. 18) In the land the people were to eat of them likewise. God, of course, had the right to modify His law, and doubtless there was an adequate reason for it. How well the priests were provided for when in the land, we have evidence in the reign of Hezekiah. (2 Chron. 31:4-14.) God's provision was ample when the people conformed to the law about it. Some useful remarks on this point, too long to be here quoted, will be found in “Synopsis of the Books of the Bible,” vol. i., pp. 267, 268. They will well repay perusal.

“But,” adds the professor, “it is vain to ask us to believe that both laws were given by Moses to be observed together.” Who, we may ask, said they were to be observed together? Read Num. 18, as the provision for the wilderness, and Deut. 12; 14, as the arrangement for the land, and all is simple and easy. For it is not a solitary instance of a change made consequent on the people's entrance into the land. Compare Deut. 12:15, 16 with Lev. 17:3, 4, and Deut. 22:1, 2 with Ex. 23:4, for other changes necessitated by their leaving the wilderness, and entering on the land of their possession.

Again, it is objected that the law of Deut. 12:11 could not have been given by Moses, for Samuel, it is assumed, and Elijah knew nothing of it, as they did not conform to it. Now Samuel must have remembered the days of his youth at Shiloh, when men abhorred the offering of the Lord. For certainly then the law of Deut. 12:11 was observed, though the people had had the greatest provocation to break it, from the sins of the two sons of Eli. But what says the law of Deut. 12:11?

The people are told to bring to the altar of burnt-offering all that God had commanded them. The words are, “All that I have commanded you.” Now did the offerings of Samuel at Mizpeh, and those of Elijah at Carmel, fall under this category? They were such as God permitted, but were not of those which He had commanded. Now a law of Ex. 20:24 clearly provided for the building of other altars than that in the tabernacle or temple. In Judg. 6:25, 26; 13:16-20, 1 Chron. 21:18-28, as well as 1 Sam. 7:9, and 1 Kings 18, God commanded on some occasions, and sanctioned on others, altars for exceptional offerings. For such the law of Ex. 20 provided, whilst that of Deut. 12 clearly did not. Deut. 12 was to guard the people from all admixture of idolatrous rites with the worship of God. Ex. 20 provided for the exceptional instances of which we have the proofs of the divine approval. There is, then, really nothing contradictory in all this.

Again, in page 55, attempting to support his theory about Deuteronomy, the professor seeks to make the opening words of the book itself to be a witness in his favor. His words are these: “But does not Deut. 1:1 show that the whole book claims to have been written on the east side of Jordan, before the people entered Canaan? On the English translation, yes; but the translation is wrong, and the verse really says, ‘These are the words which Moses space on the other side of Jordan.'“

Now here the professor is incorrect in saying that the English translation is wrong. Grammatically it is quite admissible, for the Hebrew, b'ngehver, øÆáÅòÀÌá may correctly be translated, “on this side,” or, “on that side,” for it does not of necessity by itself determine anything as to the locality, east or west, of Jordan. For proof of this I would refer to the book of Joshua. In Josh. 1:14, 15 the word is used of the east side of Jordan, where Joshua was at the time he addressed the children of Reuben, of Gad, and of the half tribe of Manasseh. In chapter v. 1 it is used of the west side of the river. Again, in chapter ix. 1 it is used of the west aide, and in verse 10 of the east. In chapter xii. 1 it is used of the east side, in verse 7 of the west; and there, as at times elsewhere, defining words are introduced to make plain to which side reference is made, “towards the sun-rising,” 1; “on the west,” verse 7. Anything, then, but on the meaning of b'ngehver, to discredit Deuteronomy being really written by Moses, must fall to the ground.

Three other scripture proofs of the position the professor has taken up, may be more briefly noticed. In page 38 he suggests the chronicler (2 Chron. 20:36) has misunderstood the phrase in 1 Kings 22:48,” the ships of Tarshish.” May not the chronicler be right, and the critic wrong? Further on (page 40) he Calls attention to the introduction of the word Samaria (1 Kings 13:32) in a speech of the old prophet, years before Omri built the city, which he celled Samaria, after Shemer, the owner of the hill (1 Kings 16:24), adding, “we shall misread the history, if we assume that the speeches were given word for word as they were written.” Now this remark is not to the point, the question being, not whether we have a summary merely of the old prophet's speech to his sons, but whether he is made by the historian to use a word which was not in existence till years afterward. This is a very different matter. On what ground is such a statement based! In 1 Kings 13:32 Samaria is used, it would seem, as the name of a district— “cities of Samaria” —like Heshbon and her cities (Josh. 13:17), or “cities of Hebron.” (2 Sam. 1:3.) But in Kings xvi. it appears for the first time as the name of the city built by Omri on the bill he bought of Shemer, its former owner. Such are the facts of the case.

What explanation can be offered? Critics, we learn, cut the knot in a very summary manner. “The history,” we are assured, “is consistent, and the critic is only anxious to reach a standpoint, from which the consistency shall become manifest.” (Page 40.) And the standpoint to which we are conducted is, that the Spirit of God sanctioned “artificial literary form,” making a person say what he did not say, and which it was well known he never uttered. Without dogmatizing on the example from 1 Kings, may it not be that, after all, 1 Kings 16 gives us the clue to the difficulty? The hill was called Samaria, and the city on it was called Samaria, after Shemer. May not the bill have been so called from its position suited to be a watch-tower, whilst the city received its name from Shemer? The hill, then, may have been known as Samaria before Omri built it. The historian only tells us why the city was so named. Is there anything opposed to this in the sacred record? 1 Kings 13 appears to speak of a district of Samaria; 1 Kings 16 clearly tells us the origin of the name of the city, but mentions the hill Samaria as well.

One remark more. On page 47 we read,” In the Old Testament the prophetic word, as a whole, and not merely prophetic vision in the narrow sense, is called a seeing, or intuition. (Chazon Isa. 1:1; Nah. 1:1.)” Such a statement surely needs explanation. Intuition, in the common acceptation of the term, is not the same in sense as “vision” in the prophets. Did Nahum by intuition pour forth the burden of Nineveh? And did Isaiah by intuition give forth his predictions about God's people and the nations?

Having passed in review the different scripture witnesses adduced by Professor Smith in support of his teaching, a simple-minded Christian will perhaps say, What are such criticisms worth? But a more solemn question remains: Is this the way to deal with God's word written?

C. E. S.

Chapter 39

The Blessing of Jacob

It seems to me that there is this difference between the prophecies of Jacob and Moses as to the tribes. Here the prophecy refers to the responsibility of the first parent source of the tribe, as Reuben, Simeon, Levi; and to the counsels of God, which put forward Judah (the stock from which the Lord sprang as regards the royalty) and Joseph (type of Christ as Nazarene, separated from his brethren, and afterward exalted). The rest, if we except Benjamin who ravages with power, gives the general characters of the position and conduct of the tribes of Israel; Dan, of his wickedness, and even of his character of traitor. Moses gives rather the history of the people as entering into the country on leaving the wilderness; and we find the priesthood and people to be the two points brought into prominence, although power and a special blessing be given to Judah.

But I add a few details as to this prophetic blessing. We may remark in the tribes' responsibility and the future of Israel as firstborn according to nature. Reuben represents Israel in this character; Simeon and Levi, who come after, and will maintain their right by nature's force, are no better. Then we have the purpose of God in the king and the whole of the royal tribe till Christ come, to whom the gathering of the peoples shall be. Joseph comes with Benjamin at the end, the representative of Christ personally glorified, as Benjamin of Christ in judgment on earth. Joseph is a personal representative of Christ, separated from his brethren, glorious and blessed as the heir of all the resources of God. Dan, before this, though owned as a judging tribe, and so Israel in him, yet marks out that apostasy and power of Satan in Israel which led the remnant to look beyond the portion of the people, unfaithful in every way to Him who was the salvation: "'We have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah."

I rather think that in the other tribes we have a distinct contrast of what Israel is as oppressed, before Christ, who has taken the full Joseph character in glory, and has answered the faith of the remnant expressed in verse 18, and after, and that thus, in these characters of the tribes, we have the whole history of Israel. Judah and Joseph have been already marked out and distinguished in the history—Judah as surety for and connected with Benjamin, and Joseph in all his history. Thus, after Judah, in Zebulun and Issachar we have Israel mixed with the world, busied in its waters to seek profit, and a slave to it for rest and quiet; but this ends in Dan and apostasy, so that the remnant, In the spirit of prophecy, wait for the salvation which is to come with the true Joseph. All is prosperity when this is looked to. Once overcome, he overcomes at the last: his bread is fat, and yields royal dainties in his own land, not seeking them by mixture with, and subjection to, the world. And Naphtali is in the liberty of God, and full of goodly words. In Joseph and Benjamin we have the crowning of all blessing in the double character of Christ, the heavenly Heir of all, and power and strength upon the earth that subdues all.

So that the whole series would be thus: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, the moral character and failure of responsible Israel. It will be found, as ever, corruption and violence: such is man. Next, the purpose of God in Judah: he remains till Shiloh come, to whom the gathering of the peoples belongs. But He was rejected when He came to Judah, and there was no gathering; "beauty" and

“bands” were broken.

Next, the state of Israel being such, intercourse with nations (which, when not in the power of God, is corruption), subjection to their yoke for ease, and apostasy: still owned as a people, however; and then the remnant looking to the only source, and waiting, not for good in Israel, but salvation from Jehovah Elohim. Thereon deliverance and blessing for Israel; and finally (what we have already seen as the double character of Christ—separated from His brethren—and then glorified), Joseph and Benjamin present Him to us as the heavenly glorified Man to whom all is entrusted, and the all-conquering Lord on the earth.

Personally the fear of God was in Joseph from beginning to end: a mighty principle, and the true base of power. Whatever his glory, he does not forget Canaan or the earthly promise—he sends his bones there: nor has Christ. So Joseph, when Israel is gone, forgives his brethren their wrong, and nourishes there with his riches. So is it with Christ: He is above the wrong and the just fears of them that rejected Him; He will bless Israel from His own stores of heavenly glory. The Lord hasten it in its day!

Chapter 40

Christ Dwelling in Our Hearts by Faith: Ephesians 3:14-21

It is of God's sovereign grace, and our precious privilege, to know that in Christ we are brought into an unchangeable place of blessing before Him. It is not only that we are made the righteousness of God in Him, nor that the righteousness of God never can rise in value in His sight, never can grow in us though we may understand it better, and can never justify us one whit more than it did the first moment that we were justified by His grace. And this is of immense moment for our souls to receive and rest on calmly, without fear of change. We require, as the very first answer for the need of our souls when we are awakened, that we should be thus established in peace with God for evermore. But God has wrought for His own glory, and according to His own counsels in Christ, quite apart from Adam or Israel, to bless as with Christ; and this we have in Eph. 1, closing with the prayer that the saints should know it.

Besides this standing which should be known, we do need to be exercised in our souls, and to have our hearts drawn out to Christ, and to grow up to Him in all things. To be only unchangeable in righteousness, blessed as it is, would never meet the full wants of the saint, any more than it could suit the love and ways of God with us. We need that which should ever act on us in renewed affections toward Christ; changing us habitually and increasingly into His image, to whom we shall be conformed perfectly when we see. Him as He is at His coming. But we are not in resurrection yet, though we seek more and more to know the power of it in Christ. The very reverse. We are in a body wherein we never act aright, unless we by the Spirit treat it as a mere instrument, reckoning it as dead. (Rom. 8:10.) Where and when we give it a place or title to act for itself, we are always wrong. “Therefore,” says the apostle, “if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Let the body act independently, it will produce nothing but sin: reckon it as dead, and the Holy Ghost will prove that He is life in a practical sense, and will not fail to produce in us the fruit of righteousness which is by Jesus Christ unto God's glory.

Hence, while holding fast that place in Christ which never changes, we need to look at the other side, and to have it ever before us, that we should be transforming habitually. We should not allow as a fixed thing before our souls to-day what we had attained yesterday. It will be found that there is apt to be death in the pot wherever the soul sacrifices the one truth to the other, whether it be the foundation of grace, or the building up. Do we take our stand only upon that which is accomplished, and settled, and finished? Do we make only our standing to be Christianity? If so, it is and must be a sad coming short of Christ—a shutting out the present living power of the Lord Jesus, to the deepest practical loss to the soul. On the other hand, where an awakened soul only seeks after Christ as a means of heart enjoyment and present communion with God, without having the assured consciousness of establishment in Christ, without guilt, sin, blot, cloud, or question, there will always be weakness; and even, to say the least, the danger of self-righteousness, an habitual sense of struggling after this and that, leading into not only a self-occupied spirit, but also censoriousness as to others. Now our God would deliver us from all evil, not only as to guilt, but practically, and this, too, in the face of all that is against us.

He knows the power of Satan better than we do, and the wretchedness of the flesh; He knows what the world and its snares are incomparably beyond creature estimate. We best know it so far as we believe His word about it; but we never know it with any fullness if we make our experience to be the measure of our knowledge. Not that one would disparage experience by any means; but let your experience flow from faith, instead of being the standard you set up; let your faith rest on what God says about the flesh, the world, and Satan. Then you will find how true it is in the experience of your own souls. You must come down from what God says, and bow to it by faith in your hearts; you never can rise from your own thoughts or feelings up to God. When we begin with God and with the revelations of His own grace, all is changed. We may be overwhelmed by the sense of our sins, but we And ourselves entirely delivered by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there we are settled, where there never can be a shadow over our blessedness. If the measure of that blessedness is Christ risen and accepted in the presence of God, what can there be to compare with that? Less than that we are not even now to faith.

But then comes in another and a most important advance. It is what the apostle has before his soul here. In chapter i. he gave them the revelation of God's purpose in Christ, founded on what God has already in Him, and for them even; and all this the apostle prays that they may know.

But in chapter 3 he prays, not merely that they should know what grace had thus wrought and given, but what God could now work by Christ in them, not what He had wrought for them in Christ. This leads him to show the all-importance of Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. It is not the Spirit of God dwelling in us; it is just as sure now that He has come and abides, as the work of Christ for us. The Holy Ghost, in virtue of that work, never leaves the Christian; when given, He never departs. But Christ may not be always dwelling in our hearts. Let us look well to it that we do not make this to be a part of the standing privilege of the believer. It is not so, but a question of spiritual experience after we are established in our place before God. He prays for them that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would grant them according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. It is not a place that is, conferred. It is not our standing before God; but something that ought to be renewed day by day—to be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” And how would this be proved? “That Christ,” says he, “may dwell in your hearts by faith.” Now we all know alas! what failure in respect of this is. We know what it is to have other objects occupying us, instead of our heart fixed on the Lord. We know what it is to have all kinds of objects that plead for notice, and that claim our thought and affection, distracting us from Christ. Then and thus we are weak, not “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

The effect of the strengthening by the Spirit is that, instead of sensible things engrossing us, the things that are round about us, and that we can see and desire, Christ is before us. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” It is not merely seasons of enjoyment, it goes farther. What the Christian has to seek is, that while one part of his blessing has to be held fast, as never waning, never changing, the other part should be one of constant growth. I do not mean by this our having recourse to the Lord by times merely; as if the Lord must vanish from us as the Messiah from the disciples after His resurrection. It might lead us to think that we are not entitled to the Lord dwelling in our hearts by faith, if we supposed that we could only look for Him again from time to time. It is not so; “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” That dwelling may have effects in gradually enlarging and deepening enjoyment, in greater power over everything here below; but what he

desires is the power of the Spirit in strengthening the inner man; that Christ should be pre-eminently, and always, too, the object of the heart's affections. What is the effect? In the measure in which Christ is before us, and dwells in our hearts, we have true enlargement of heart toward all the saints; as he says, “being rooted and grounded in love, that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints.”

It is not beginning with the saints, and rising up to Christ, which is a great illusion for the Christian; but when we have Christ dwelling in the heart, then alone can we share in the affections of Christ, which embrace the whole church of God. “That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.” It is the whole question of that wondrous secret of God, in which He has joined together Christ and the church, and that over all things. That counsel of God the Spirit did not give him to express, to make man feel that it could not be expressed adequately, being beyond all utterance in the tongue of men. He does not say what it is. He speaks of the breadth, length, depth, and height, but not of the love of Christ, as so many make him say. And if he does not define it, neither should we. It is left in its own unmeasured vastness. He has brought you, with all saints, to apprehend this illimitable counsel of God. But the heart wants far more than glory; even a human heart could not be satisfied without more, not to speak of God's heart. If I could be in heaven, with all the glory that God could confer upon a creature, even so all would not suffice for what the heart feels the need of even now. Glory, therefore, bright as it is, is beneath what he next brings before us: “and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with [into] all the fullness of God.” He who deserves and made possible for us the divine counsels of glory is far above all that will be shown throughout creation by-and-by.

There is a deeper glory than that which will be manifested. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation. of the world.” The glory enjoyed in the presence of God will far surpass that which will be a matter of display. But take even the lowest end of the glory, that which will be seen by the world: “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” We shall appear with Him, but it is to man on earth, to those that will be the theater of divine government in that day. And when that glory does appear, the glory of Christ that we shall share along with Him, what is the design of God in it? What is the design of manifesting it to the world? “That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” The love could not be entered into by the world. The glory that the world will see will be the proof of the love which, far from having to wait for, we are free to know and be enjoying even now. What a place is this into which Christ has introduced us, and which now rises above all creature things, into what God is— “That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Now the latter verses show again, and increasingly, how this is a matter going on; and that it is a thing, too, that admits of no limits, because He who dwells in us has none, and He in whom He shows us this love has none. The Holy Ghost cannot he limited any more than Christ. Therefore he says,” To him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

The Lord give to us that we may, everyone of us, rise up more consciously into the dignity, as well as the enjoyment, of that which is ours in Christ Jesus! May we be kept from every human thought which would limit us down to that which we may, or may not, have been! We are called by the Holy Ghost now to this familiar enjoyment of Christ dwelling in our hearts—called into this growing acquaintance with what God gives us in Him. We shall find that, however we may have enjoyed before, this will not suffice, and our perceptions of the truth are amazingly affected, Christ Himself thus dwelling in our hearts by faith. We can all look back upon the time when we felt the fresh power of the grace of God that brought us to Himself. But when we have gone on in the knowledge of Christ, what has been the effect? That what then we received is, however blessed, small compared with what we now know in Christ Himself, and so God would have it to be evermore. Nature always sets up a totally contrary thought. How natural it is, even for God's children, to make the first acquaintance with Christ the standard! How poor, how paltry, to make the learning the letters that compose the name of Christ to be sweeter than that knowledge of Him which opens everything to us, and fills all with His love! The Lord keep us from anything so human! It is easy to make even of Christ a stereotyped creed, to make the hour of mingled fear, and fear melting into the love of God, into a creed that repeats itself for all future time. Let us hold it fast, and rejoice in the energy that opened to us even the feeblest and scantiest knowledge of pardon and peace through Christ. But it is not this which is here pressed on us, but “that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.” Therefore it is that we find this enlarging, this taking in of all saints, of God's purposes and Christ's love, of God Himself. The Lord give us to know what we are called to, and how great a Savior our Lord Jesus Christ is.

Chapter 41

Christ in Heaven and the Holy Spirit Sent Down

Acts 2:22-36.

This passage brings very definitely before us (Christ having been exalted as man by, and to, the right hand of God), consequently how the disciples received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. This runs through all the instruction given here. The place of Christ, having finished redemption, is to sit now at the right hand of God, “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” (Heb. 10:18.) He has not yet taken His own throne at all; He is seated on the Father's throne. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21.) Thence He will “come again,” as He says in John 14, and receive us unto Himself.

Christianity is not the accomplishment of promise. Of the earthly part the Jews were the center. But God meanwhile “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;” and then, till Christ comes again, He is sitting on the throne of the Father, and has sent the Holy Ghost down.

The Christian is one in whom the Holy Ghost dwells between the accomplishment of redemption and His coming again. The thought and purpose of God about us is that we should “be conformed to the image of his Son.” The Holy Ghost is given to dwell in us meanwhile, to dwell in us individually—collectively too, but I speak now individually. That is what the Christian is: Christ is his life, his righteousness: it is a ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9); it does not say, “If he is not converted,” though that would be true, of course. You see so many saints everywhere who are not settled in their relationship with God; the present power for this is the Holy Ghost come down.

The coming of the Lord Jesus is not simply a little bit of knowledge which we may add to the rest, but it is the hope of the Christian. If we die we go to Him, but what is held out to us is that the Christian is waiting for Christ. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Heb. 9:28.) If we die we go up to Him, and blessed truth too; but that Christ shall come, this is the hope of the Christian, the only full hope. “To depart and to be with Christ which is far better,” but this is not the purpose of God for us; the purpose of God is that we shall be like Christ. I do not want to be like Christ with my body in the grave, and my spirit in paradise: the expectation of the Lord's coming makes the person of Christ to be so much before the soul. I am going to see Him and to be like Him. Scripture does not talk of going to heaven; “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5:8.) “To depart and be with Christ which is far better” (Phil. 1:28), always the thought is going to Christ. That is what we all want personally, that Christ should have a larger place in the heart: “Rooted and built up in him;” “To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” “Christ is all,” and He is “in all” as the power of life; having become our life, He is before our souls to fill them. Christ is the motive for the Christian for whatever he does, whether he eats or drinks and his desires are never satisfied, and never can be, he be with and like Christ. Therefore he is always waiting for

Him. The Thessalonians were converted “to wait for his Son from heaven.” —(1 Thess. 1:10.) The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of being a little bit of prophetic knowledge, is interwoven with all the thoughts and condition of the Christian. Grace has appeared teaching us (Titus 2:11, 12), and the grace that has appeared is the grace that saves. When the Lord went up on high the Holy Ghost came down, and through the Holy Ghost we have not only the knowledge but the fruits of the place He has given us. The seal of the Holy Ghost is put upon us; the presence of the Holy Ghost is that which gives the fall knowledge of our place and blessedness. Redemption, which brings us to God, is finished; we are exercised afterward, all that goes on, but our relationship is never in question. I believe the government of God is most important when we are children; “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” (Job 36:7.) This is most important and blessed in its place, but the great thing is first of all to get into the place where God has put us.

The very names of God go along with this. To the patriarchs He was “God Almighty,” when they were strangers and pilgrims to Abraham He said, “I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward” (Gen. 15.); to Israel He had given promises, and He takes the name Jehovah, the name of One who, having given promises, never rests until they are fulfilled. Then in the Revelation He speaks of Himself as the One “who is, and who was, and who is to come.” (Rev. 1:8.) All that was concerned in a certain sense with this world, but it is not so with us. We are called to suffer with Christ, because Christ has been rejected, and this with the full knowledge of redemption. “And I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). God has another name, Most High.” You never find the name “Father” from Psa. 1. to 150. “And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.) “Life and incorruptibility” have been brought “to light through the gospel.” (2 Tim. 1:10.) The name “Almighty” does not carry eternal life. “Jehovah” fulfills promises, but does not give eternal life, but the Father sent the Son, “that we might live through Him.” (1 John 4:9.) “For the life was manifested and we have it and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” (1 John 1:2.) “And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in the Son.” (1 John 5:11.) When we receive the Son, we get into the place of children; is the force of the expression in John's Gospel. “But as many as received him, to them gave he right to be called the sons of God.” (John 1:12.) The Son is there, and we are associated with Him completely and fully. In Matt. 3 the Holy Ghost comes down upon Him, and the Father's voice says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” There the full revelation of the Trinity is Christianity: we have the Son as man, the Holy Ghost coming down in bodily shape like a dove, and the Father's voice, in that wondrous scene of Christ taking His place publicly as man: “I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:34.)

The Old Testament saints were quickened surely; but if you take Gal. 4, you find they were not in the condition of sons. “The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.” (Chap. 4:1.) “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Ver. 6.) That had not been the case before; they were ordered to do this and that under the law.

“Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24.) He was totally alone, a true man in His relationship with God; even when He declared His Father's name to His disciples, they did not

understand a bit of it. Then you see redemption brings us into this place.

Let me turn back to the basis of all this. Here am I, a child of Adam, with an evil nature and sins; Christ bore my sins, and that is all perfectly settled forever; if it is not, it never can be; it is “once for all, forever;” there is no other application as regards the putting away of my sins in God's sight. He does not impute them for the simple, blessed reason that Christ has borne them, and He is sitting at the right hand of God, because it is done. Many a true honest soul sees only past sins put away, but what about sinning afterward? Go to Calvin, and he will send you back to your baptism, while the evangelicals go back to the blood. “For the law, having a shadow of good things to come.... can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the corners thereunto perfect.” (Heb. 10:1.) “In which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.” (Heb. 9:9.) If I go into God's presence I have not the most distant thought that He imputes anything to me as guilt: that is what is wanting to so many souls. “Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of airs” (Heb. 10:2); it does not say sin, the old stock is there. “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.” (Heb. 10:3.) I go into the presence of God now, and I see Christ sitting, because by one offering He has settled everything. “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins; but this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” (Heb. 10:11-13.) He sits at God's right hand, because He has finished that work perfectly. “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Ver. 14.) He has set them apart to God, and He has perfected forever their consciences.

“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” (Heb. 9:5.) Now we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” The thing is done; it was prophesied of before, but now it is done. “Forever” here means never interrupted. If I come to God, Christ is always there, and my conscience is always perfect. I may go and humble myself in the dust if I have dishonored Christ; it is in the holiest that I learn how bad sin is. I could not be before God in the light until the veil was rent, but “by one offering” Christ has perfected my conscience. When I go to God I find Christ, who bore my sins, sitting at the right hand of God because He has done it. This will make me see sin a great deal more than anything else. I have got a new nature, and I am in the light as God is in the light.

This turns the question from righteousness to holiness. So long as I am connecting it with a question of acceptance, it is righteousness that I want: suppose righteousness is settled, then I abhor the sin because it is sin, for itself. “Well but,” you say, “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” That is quite true, but you are looking for righteousness, not holiness. The clearance in that way is absolute; but there is another thing which gives my soul its place before God. Not only Christ died for my sins, but I died with Christ; the tree is bad, not only the fruit: then I reckon myself dead. In the first part of Romans we get nothing about experience. Suppose I owed £100 and that it was paid for me, no experience would be in question; but suppose I say to you, “You are dead to sin,” perhaps you would say, “Indeed I am not, it was working in me this morning.” Till you are clear about that, you are not settled in your place. The old tree has been cut down, and grafted with Christ. In Rom. 6 I reckon myself dead: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead

indeed unto sin" (chap. vi. 11); in Col. 3:3, we get "For ye are dead;" and in 2 Cor. 4:10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We find God's estimate and faith's estimate; and in Gal. 2:19, we have the summary of the whole thing, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." When I find a nature working in me contrary to Christ, I say it has been crucified with Christ, and I do not own it. "What the law could not do.... God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. 8) He has forgiven the sins and condemned the tree that produced them, but the tree that was condemned has died in Christ.

I have to learn thus by the power of the Spirit of God, not merely that what the old tree produced has been blotted out, but that Christ is my life; "I am crucified with Christ," and sin in the flesh has been condemned. Where? Where you died with Christ: when Christ was there for sin, sin in the flesh was condemned, not forgiven; it died, for faith, where it was condemned. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:24, 25.) Looked at as in that old man, I died in Christ. The moment we believe in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we get the sealing of God. Because the blood of Christ is upon me, then the Holy Ghost comes and dwells in me. They received the Holy Ghost on believing the forgiveness of their sins; in Acts 10 we find the same thing: faith received the forgiveness of their sins in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then the Holy Ghost came on them. As in the figure in the Old Testament, we are washed, sprinkled with blood, and then anointed with oil. The Holy Ghost comes, then I know where I am, that my standing is in Christ "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1.) "In Christ" is my standing before God; the Holy Ghost is the present power of it all; the work is Christ's.

I get the other point, knowledge of salvation, and knowledge that I am not a child of Adam, but a child of God. "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." (Luke 1:77.) "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. The same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost." (John 1:29, 33.) He could not baptize with the Holy Ghost till He had died, and was risen and glorified. I know the place I have got into: the treasure is in an earthen vessel, but I have got the knowledge of salvation. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. 3:17.) It is that which enables me to say with truth, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." There I get first the accomplishment of redemption; and Christ sitting on His right hand; and the purpose of God, as the blood on the lintel and doorposts made the Israelites free, and they were brought from Egypt to the Red Sea, out of an old place into a new, so that Moses could sing, "Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." (Ex. 15:18.) "Thou shalt bring them in." (Ver. 17.) I get these two things, complete redemption is one; the other I have not got yet; Christ has entered as our Forerunner, I have not entered yet, but the Holy Ghost is "the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame" and He is set down as man at the right hand of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." (Rom. 5:1, 2.) I know by the Holy Ghost that I am in divine favor. We have these three things.

We are justified, and have peace with God.

We stand in present grace, in divine favor.

When Christ comes again, we shall be in glory with Him. “That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:23.) It is “That the world may know,” not believe: this ought to be now, but it is very far from it. When it sees us in glory, it cannot help knowing; when we appear in the same glory with Christ, people will think, “Why these people that we trampled under foot are in the same glory with Christ!” We do not wait for that: the world will know when we are in the same glory with Christ, but now we know by the Holy Ghost, “That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” (John 17:24.) Beloved friends, just think of that: your hearts ought to have the consciousness that He loves you as He loves Jesus! A child might say, “I am a foolish child; I think little about my mother;” but he has no uncertainty about his mother's love to him. We never apprehend all God's love to us; still we know we are children and sons. It is no uncertain place: I know I am loved as Christ is loved; we have poor wretched hearts, that is quite true. A true child does not measure its mother's love; I am sure it could not, but it knows and is in it.

We have got “the adoption of sons.” “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.” I have got the consciousness of it; I know my place. We know God as our Father. The soul that has the Spirit of God dwelling in him knows not only the clearing of the sins of the old man, but that he is in the Second man, and knowing it, he cries, “Abba Father.” “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (Heb. 2:11.) They are “all of one,” one set, as it were. What is my life? Christ. What is my righteousness? Christ. He is not one with the unconverted world; there is no union in incarnation; He stood for us in the cross, but He has united us with Him in glory. If I take the Father's relationship with Christ as man, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. In Psa. 22 He says, “Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” His work was finished: as soon as that was done, He comes out in resurrection, past the power of death and of Satan, and He sends this message to His disciples: “I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.” (John 20:17.) He had never said that before, though He called them “sister” and “mother” and “brother” in a general way. Beloved brethren; what we want is to see how Christ has united us to Himself, to see the way God has brought us into the place of the Second man, as sin brought us into the place of the first man.

One point more, our connection with Christ: “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter,” “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” Ah, it is a terrible thing that saints are so far from scriptural ground as to say we cannot know! We are in Christ, “accepted in the Beloved,” and we have the Spirit of adoption. One thing more, besides the point I am on, Christ is in us. You cannot live on in sin, you are dead; that is where the Christian's reponsibility is, not in connection with his acceptance (“By one man's obedience many shall be made righteous"). I know He is in me, having bought me at all cost, and there I get responsibility. I get the two things in Rom. 8 “No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” and “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” You have been delivered, you have redemption in Christ, and you have been sealed with the Holy Ghost. I own nothing as life in the Christian but Christ: the whole of our lives should be the expression of Christ and nothing else, our “speech always with grace, seasoned with salt.” Only one other thing, beloved friends; God is love, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts: therefore we get in the Epistle of John, “He

that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” We have the person of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, so our bodies are temples: God is there in the perfection of His own nature; we have to watch not to grieve such a guest. It is through the Holy Ghost that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; that is the key to everything. “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also” (Rom. 5:3); it is the key to everything; I want it, and He sent it. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost comes down giving us the consciousness of the present relationship in which we are to walk.

“Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children.” (Eph. 5:17.) How are we to imitate God? Was not Christ God? I earnestly desire that all our hearts may get hold, through the power of the Spirit of God, of the place we are brought into, that we may have the consciousness of this, the knowledge of it through the Holy Ghost until we go to be with Him. The Lord give you to have this consciousness. Why, beloved, to think of the Father's love at work, and the Son of God having gone down to death for you, it is not much to expect!

The Lord give us to feel what we owe Him, that our whole desire may be to glorify Him. J. N. D.

Chapter 42

Christ of the Gospels As Seen in the Epistles

Nothing that touches the person of Christ, for good or evil, can be without interest to any heart that has learned His value. In view of this we may profitably look at the way in which He is presented by the Holy Ghost in the writings of the New Testament other than the Gospels, but in relation to them; that is to say, the Gospels' character of Christ as it is enshrined in the other books of the New Testament.

As might well be expected, these writings, emanating from the same Master-hand, contain many historical additions to the Gospel narrative of incalculable value, besides wonderfully beautiful touches that tend to heighten and complete the divine transcript.

In Acts 1 we learn, as nowhere else, the fact of the Lord's continuance on earth after His resurrection for forty days, during which He was seen of His disciples, making known to them His valedictory commands, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God. Also the special question which, when gathered together, they preferred before Him as to the time of the restoration of the kingdom again to Israel. This elicited that momentous word of His designed, without setting the kingdom aside, to direct their hearts to the coming in of the Holy Ghost—an unseen spiritual power—with all that it carried with it to faith, signifying that it was not Israel in revived glory and a Messiah in displayed power that He would set before their hearts, but a refused and departing Savior bringing in a time of testimony, in which the Holy Ghost and they were to be His witnesses, as also He had Himself said before He suffered. (John 15:26, 27.) Of the One bated without a cause the Holy Ghost and they were to be the witnesses; all this had faded from their minds, and the Lord's latest breath on earth was expended in re-enforcing it upon their souls (Acts 1:8), expressing as it does the whole character of the period until He return. We all know that the first word with which He met His disciples in resurrection at the beginning of these forty days was, “Peace unto you,” expressing their portion in Him; and now, in the closing moment before He ascended, He clearly suggests that His portion would be in them (“Ye shall be witnesses unto me"), and the Holy Ghost's advent would be the incoming of power unto this specific end. Nor is it unimportant for us to see that it is as the refused One of men He is received up, and it is as associated with this refused Man, the Christ of that glory into which He has entered, that they go forth joint-witnesses with the Holy Ghost. And, indeed, we may fittingly go much further, for it is in fact the key-note of the whole period of His absence. He went away as the refused Man, and is that refused Man to-day. He constituted His disciples, in the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, His witnesses in the scene of His refusal, even unto the uttermost part of the earth, and it goes without saying that just such, if up to our calling, is what we are to Himself this day.

And then that wonderful attendant cloud, the mysterious indication of the divine presence and favor, received Him into its bosom, and He was taken up into glory!

Thus we clearly see man's new place. In heaven, as the risen and the exalted Man, He was received up into glory, out of sight, gone into the Father's house; we in Christ there. On earth, as His witnesses, we go forth in the unseen power of the Holy Ghost, as associated with the refused

One; Christ in us here. Man's new place is thus defined both in heaven and on earth. There is also a further thing in the fact that, after His resurrection, it was through the Holy Ghost that He wrought and spoke (for it is safe to conclude that if He spake by the Holy Ghost as Acts 1:2, so He wrought by Him as John 21) As pointed out by another, we may surely infer from this that the Holy Ghost will be the unhindered power of our service and our worship, of our communion and our enjoyment, in the glory itself. Oh how suggestive is it to our souls of the unlimited potentialities of the blessedness in store for the saints!

In like manner as He had gone away should He return; such is the brief but reassuring declaration which the two white-robed ones make to His bereaved disciples, and this closes Luke's personal testimony concerning the now glorified Nazarene.

In the next chapter, as also in chapters 3 and 10, we have the bold and courageous, no less than the noble and elevated, testimony of Peter. In Acts 2 how he identifies God with the Christ of the Gospels, a Man approved of God amongst them, whose wonders and miracles God did by Him. Equally by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God had He been delivered into their hands for death, out of which death God had raised Him, they being witnesses; by the right hand of God had He been exalted, and the same Jesus whom they had crucified God had constituted Lord and Christ. In chapter 3 how incisively does he charge home to their souls that they had denied the Holy One and the Just, and killed the Originator of life; but, as for God, He had shown by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should so suffer, and so had He fulfilled it. But He had been fore-ordained for them, and God had raised up His servant Jesus, and unto them first had sent Him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities. How beautiful and how precious such grace to the guilty nation. In chapter x. a few striking touches complete what we would point out in Peter's testimony in the Acts. He declares of “Jesus, who was of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” So much for His life in the flesh; as to His death, slain of the Jews, who hanged Him on a cross, “this Man God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be openly seen, not of all the people, but of witnesses who were chosen before of God,” who ate and drank with Him after He arose from among the dead. Finally, as to their testimony, “He it is who was determinately appointed of God to be judge of living and dead.” In the compass of five verses does the apostle, in rapid transition, bring to view these four things—His devoted service, His death of shame, His manifested resurrection, and His judicial title and appointment.

We turn now to Stephen (Acts 7): he accuses the Jews, his persecutors, of having betrayed and murdered the Just One. This they can bear, but when he adds that the law they had received by the disposition of angels they had not kept, their gnashing teeth declared how much more serious in their eyes was law breaking than shedding the blood of the Pretender of Nazareth, which, in their unequaled moral turpitude, they deemed Him to be. Stephen's shining face of angelic beauty, illumined by no created sun, but by a glory which reached him from beyond its orbit, is upturned of the Holy Ghost to heaven, looking steadfastly into which the martyr saw not only the glory of God, but Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, “Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” It is enough; they stop their ears, clamoring for the life of him who had testified that their slaughtered Victim was standing at the right hand of God! That they had murdered Him stirred them not, that they had broken the law made them gnash their

teeth, but that the One they had slain was in the glory of God, was the signal for his life to be forfeited, and, thirsting for his blood, with one accord they make the fatal rush which conveyed him into the presence of his Lord.

Passing by Philip, the character of whose testimony is summed up by the Holy Ghost in the one pregnant and unsurpassable word, “Jesus,” we come to Paul. At the very outset of his service the page of inspiration points out the apostle's predominating note, that Jesus is the Son of God. Eight or ten years later, at Antioch in Pisidia, in another synagogue, the burden of his testimony is still the same. Not only was that blessed One unknown to the habitués of Jerusalem, but so also were the voices of the prophets speaking of Him, though read every sabbath-day, and thus they became unwittingly the fulfillers of prophecy by their condemnation of Him. Desiring that He should be slain, and fulfilling all that was written, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher, God raising Him from the dead, and He seen for many days of them who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem.

But Paul then turns emphatically to the divine side of the picture. The former was what man had been doing; what had God? God had been fulfilling promises—wonderful thought! This Savior Jesus, of the seed of David, whom they had murderously slain, was the object of divine promise to the fathers, as well as of prophecy by the prophets. They had been fulfilling prophecy in their consummate wickedness, and God had been fulfilling promise in His abounding goodness! He had raised up Jesus in incarnation, according to Psa. 2, the Son of God begotten into the world in time, but He had been murdered! What then? Is it beyond all remedy? Shall God be defeated? Shall His eternal purposes be frustrated? No, God's resources of mercy were not exhausted. He had resurrection in reserve, and thus He had raised Him up again from the dead as the sure mercies of David, not seeing corruption, the Man of resurrection, an object for their faith By this Man was remission of sins afresh preached unto them. Marvelous grace! And now we close the Acts with that precious little revelation of hitherto-unrecorded utterance from the Master's lips—the words of the Lord Jesus, which He Himself said— “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

In the Romans we learn that He who was David's Son according to flesh was by resurrection demonstrated Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness present with Him: also that He was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, and that God's not sparing Him, but delivering Him up for us all, is such a proof of God for us, that “all things” must needs follow in its wake. There, too, we have Him termed “Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God,” in which character He confirmed the promises of the fathers, and gave occasion, too, for the nations to glorify God for mercy.

In the Corinthians, as the crucified One, He was the burden of Paul's testimony among those polished Greeks, the only foundation which could be laid, the one Lord by whom all things, and we by Him. There we get the revelation He had made to Paul of the Supper on the night of His betrayal and desertion, with its touching reminiscences, the sacred and ever-recurring announcement of His death, to be perpetuated until He come. There also the apostle recapitulates the gospel he had preached—Christ's death according to the scriptures; His burial and resurrection according to the scriptures; and, further, His successive appearances before He ascended, in the course of which it is disclosed that on one occasion, probably by appointment with His Galilean disciples, He manifested Himself to a company of no less than five hundred

brethren together. In the Second Epistle He is the Yea and Amen of all God's promises, who had been here reconciling the world unto God, not reckoning to them their offenses, but they would not; being rich, for our sakes had He become poor, that by His poverty we might be enriched, who was at length crucified in weakness, but lives by God's power.

Galatians states that He gave Himself for our sins to deliver us out of this present evil world, which was the will of God our Father; speaking personally, Paul says, “the Son of God, who has loved me, and given himself for me.” Ephesians, beginning with Him as dead, speaks of the transcendent power put forth by God, according to the working of the might of His strength (and which is to us-ward who believe) when He raised up Christ from the dead, and set Him down at His right hand in the heavenlies. It will be observed that here, in a remarkable way, we have resurrection and rapture into glory regarded as one combined and crowning act of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory; not resurrection and ascension as distinct actions, with a forty days' interval between, but rather as the rehearsal and the pledge of that magnificent act of sovereign grace and divine power which shall in one mighty swoop lift every saint of God, whether buried in the grave or in the sea, or moving in the world, and deposit them in the Father's house, eternally attired in the beauty and perfection of Christ! The Cross comes before us, too, in a striking way in this epistle as the occasion of razing the Jewish wall of enclosure, annulling the enmity embodied in the law, and expressed in its ordinances, forming Jew and Gentile into one new man; He. who is our peace thus making peace, and Himself also the preacher of the glad tidings of peace, both to those afar off and to the nigh: moreover, as to the Cross, there comes out the love of Christ to the assembly, in that it is expressly stated He delivered up Himself for it.

Philippians, of all the epistolary writings, supplies the finest and fullest testimony to Christ in His humiliation, in the following incomparable verses: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking a bondsman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly, and earthly, and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory.”

Passing over Colossians, where it is rather the exalted Christ, Head over everything, and Thessalonians, occupied mainly with His return for His saints and His manifestation with them, all based, however, upon the alone foundation “that Jesus died and rose again,” we come to the apostle's letters to Timothy and Titus. Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, giving Himself a ransom for all, having first witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession. God had manifested His purpose and grace by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility, being raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to Paul's glad tidings. Thus had He given Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works.

Hebrews, in its wonderful combination of the earthly and heavenly glory of Christ, records His having by Himself made purification of sins, being made somewhat inferior to angels, on account

of the suffering of death, which by the grace of God He tasted for everything, for it became God, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. The children being partakers of flesh and blood, He took part in the same, that through death Satan's power might be broken, and those who were a prey to the fear of death set free. For He had taken up no angels by the hand, but the seed of Abraham, having been made like unto His brethren, and having suffered and been tempted, that He might be to us all that He is. In the days of His flesh He had known the anguish of Gethsemane, when, however, He was heard (in contrast with the Cross, when He was not heard, Psa. 22:2), and was delivered when the time came, not from, but out of, the death into which He had gone. Thus had He obtained eternal redemption for us, in being once offered to bear the sins of many, and in the same at laid the basis on which, in another day, the sin of the world shall at length be taken away. To this end had He come, as written of in the volume of the book, to do God's will in the body of His preparing, through the offering up of that body once for all, which one sacrifice for sins allows of His sitting down in perpetuity, and of the Holy Ghost's witnessing to us that in perpetuity we are perfected. Leader and Finisher in the path of faith, He had endured the cross, despising the shame, undergoing the terrible contradiction of sinners against Himself, resisting unto blood, to sanctify the people by which He suffered without the gate.

Peter reminds us of the redemptive value of that “precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but who has been manifested at the end of the times for your sakes, who by him do believe in God, who has raised him up from among the dead, and given him glory, that your faith and hope should be in God.” Nor less beautifully does be present Him as our example: “For Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his month; who when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously; who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness; by whose stripes ye have been healed.” Again, “For Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that be might bring us to God: being put to death in flesh, but made alive in the Spirit.” And in the Second Epistle, being an eye-witness of His majesty, he says, “He received from God the Father honor and glory, such a voice being uttered to Him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight; and this voice we heard uttered from heaven, being with him on the holy mountain.”

John, in consonance with his personal intimacy with the Lord, says, “That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life; (and the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us) that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.” Again, “Hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us: and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives.” So also as to God's love, “Herein, as to us, has been manifested the love of God, that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him—a propitiation for our sins.” Adding this also, “And we have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”

In Revelation He is the One “who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to bins be the glory and the strength to the

ages of ages. Amen.” Beautifully and fervently does this language breathe forth what He is to us now, while the scene in chapter v. reveals what He will be personally to us forever and forever; for however many the crowns which now or then shall bedeck His brow; whatever be the glories with which He is now invested, which He shall assume when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, or which He shall resign when He delivers up the kingdom to God and the Father, those who have redemption through His blood, of whatever age be they, and of whatever clime, will have in everlasting remembrance that He glorified God on the earth, and finished the work He gave Him to do, since they will never cease to see in Him “the Lamb as it had been slain” —the Christ of the Gospels!

In concluding this review, we may remark how strikingly the Holy Ghost, in all these scriptures, reproduces the salient facts of the Lord's life and death and resurrection. Wonderful the variety of thought and of language employed, but without repetition and without monotony, the Spirit of God presents unweariedly before our hearts, in ever-renewed freshness and heavenly power, the Christ of the Gospels!

B.

Chapter 43

Christianity in Contrast With Rationalism

Life and incorruptibility were brought to light by the gospel; but this life did not begin to exist then. Christ, who is the Lord from heaven, is a lifegiving Spirit; He has not merely a living soul, though that He had of course; and He communicated this life to others, from Abel—I may well say, and doubt it not, from Adam—downwards. But then, for that very reason, though the great contrast, the enmity of man—of the carnal mind—against God was not brought out till the cross, when the perfection of God revealed in flesh was fully presented, those who partook of this life through grace were hated and rejected of the world, whose boasted progress is depicted to us by the new philosophy. “He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.” They were moral contradictions: one loved God, judged self, and owned God's authority; the other sought self, and would none of God for that reason. Conscience there was and is in all: conscience judges good and evil: but a new life is good in a divine way. Hence you will find that, with all this modern school of rationalism, even in its most infidel forms, Christ will be recognized, provided He be a restorer of what the scripture denounces as flesh. They will use what appears Christian language to many a simple mind. But the just condemnation of a sinner, the absolute condemnation of flesh, and a new life in Christ, and atonement for the sin of the old—all this will not be heard of; and into this anti-Christian system even Christians fall in measure. It exalts man; and all the blessed light of God, the heavenly place into which Christ is entered, is lost.

See what a magnificent picture we have in Stephen of this!—in a remarkable way, no doubt; but still exhibitory of it morally as well as by a vision. The whole question between Christianity and the rational system is brought to an issue. The progress of human nature, with the very elements it speaks of, and the contrasted result, is stated. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” There is the relationship between man and the Spirit. Next, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” These were their ways with those who unfolded the law in a more spiritual manner; and with the great living witness of perfection Himself. Such was man—flesh in contrast with the law. Such was his state: he always resisted the Holy Ghost. Now note the contrast of the objective spiritual man. Stephen, “full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” And what was the effect—the subjective effect in one full of the Holy Ghost—of his objective perception of heavenly objects? In the midst of rage and violence, and while being actually stoned, in all calmness he not merely bears, but kneels down, and says, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” So Jesus: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Then he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” as Jesus had said “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” He beheld with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, and was changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. But how full and complete a picture! man always a resister of the Holy Ghost—under law, not keeping it; with prophets, persecuting: with the Just One, a murderer; with the witness of the Holy Ghost, gnashing his teeth and slaying

in rage. Christianity is in contrast: a man full of the Holy Ghost, seeing Jesus the Son of man in heaven, changed into His image, and killed by man, falls asleep, Jesus receiving his spirit.

Chapter 44

The Closing History of the Lord and of Paul

I have been much struck with the comparison between the blessed Lord, at the end of His life, and Paul, in his last visit to Jerusalem, faithful and blessed servant of the Lord as He was. Christ, aware of the purpose of the Jews, as indeed the disciples were, remains calmly at a distance when He had gone away from Jerusalem, moved by no human claim, touching as it was, till God His Father's will was manifest, and then goes up without fear; dismayed as the disciples were at the thought of it, He walked in the light, and stumbling was not before Him. Paul, bound in his spirit, warned in every city of bonds and afflictions, and, not only so, but told by those who spoke by the Spirit not to go up, goes, no doubt under the hand of God overruling it all, but listening to the counsel of Judaizing Christians, to be taken, and, as we have seen it recorded by the Holy Ghost, close his public ministry, not carrying out his purposes as to Spain, &c. He is taken in a tumult, and then seized by the Romans. The blessed Lord delivers Himself up, saying, “If ye seek me, let these go their way.” In the temple all classes of the Jews come to prove and try Him, but are judged one after another, and, unable to answer Him, dare ask Him no more questions, and then He is condemned for the testimony to the truth He gave Himself, both before the chief priests and Pontius Pilate. All was simply perfect, as it became One who, if in grace among men, must have manifested His perfection among them. If ever man was honored and blessed, it was Paul; but he was a man simply, a divinely raised up and divinely gifted testimony to Christ, and faithful in his walk. But Christ was the subject of testimony (through the Faithful Witness), Paul a testifier to Christ, and, however prominent in service, a man as we are.

Chapter 45

Colossians 1

The character of Colossians is that the saint is looked at as risen: we hear nothing of the Holy Ghost except the expression, “your love in the Spirit.” But it brings out the other side, Christ as life in us, more fully here than anywhere. Christ is in us, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The way the saint is looked at is as risen; the consequence is, he is not, as in Ephesians, in heavenly places. In Ephesians you have the work of the Spirit of God, and the presence of the Spirit revealing things above, and associating us with them: here in Colossians the saint is dead and risen with Christ, a risen man walking through the midst of this world. In Romans you see a living man actually in this world, as we all are, Christ being his life, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. We find, therefore, in Romans that a man is to yield himself to God, whereas in Ephesians we are looked at as coming from God to show God's character in this world. If you are able to do what is in Ephesians, you will be able to do what is in Romans. Christ had given Himself a dying sacrifice; you are to give yourself a living one. In Ephesians we have, “Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children” (Eph. 5:1); this goes farther. Wilt Colossians gives us is, not heavenly places, but that we are dead with Christ, and risen with Him, and this life is fully developed here.

We see the way the Christian is to live, and that founded on the place in which he has been put by grace. After that he speaks of all things as to be reconciled to God, while the church He has reconciled. First he takes the great truth of what our life is and our walk, and what it is founded on. There is a path in this world, the spring and character of which is that God's will is in it, a path the vulture's eye has not seen, which was perfectly fulfilled in Christ. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6.) The saint is given a path through this world which has nothing to do with the world, but which displays the character of Christ in it. “But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matt. 5:39.) This would not be righteousness, but Christ displayed. You will see this immense privilege of walking down here like Christ, who could speak of Himself as “the Son of man who is in heaven,” who lived a heavenly—more than this, a divine life down here. There was not a single motive in Christ which governed the world, or a single motive in the world which governed Christ. “I will even make a way in the wilderness” (Isa. 43:19), that is the Christian's path.

Sometimes we get stopped on the road. “Well,” I say to myself, “the eye was not single, or the whole body would have been full of light.” It is a path of God. Christ comes down to this world, and He treads a path like which there is nothing at all. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ;” God's will was the motive of everything with Him, this was the very way in which He baffled Satan. He never did anything but because it was God's will, not merely that it was according to God's will, though this was true of course. “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (Matt. 4:3.) He had been owned as Son, and the Spirit had descended on Him (there He makes our place), and then He was led of the Spirit to be tempted in the wilderness. When Satan comes and says to Him, “Command that these stones be made bread,” there was no harm in eating when He was hungry, but He says, “I have got no orders to do it,” “It is written, Man shall

not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." So He does nothing, and Satan does nothing—he could not, for that would have been an end to his wiles. The blessed Lord comes to do God's will, and He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

We see this in a striking instance when Martha and Mary sent unto Him saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." We would have said, "He will be off directly," but He had got no orders to go. "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." (John 11:3-5.) We can explain and understand it now: the raising of Lazarus was to be a last testimony to Him. Such is the knowledge of God's will, not merely doing the right thing. God tests the state of the soul thus. If there is wisdom and spiritual understanding, and we are going on rightly, looking back at something one had been doubtful about, one feels, "I wonder how I could have doubted about it at all."

There is a path which the saint has to tread through this world, which is God's path for him in it. God puts him to walk there to test the state of his soul, whether he has wisdom and spiritual understanding. "If thy whole body therefore be fall of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." (Luke 11:36.) A candle not only is light itself, but it gives light to all around. "In thy light we shall see light." "The spiritual man discerneth all things," there is progress in this surely; the measure of it we get in the next verse, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Suppose I did not know my Father, I should not know how to walk worthy of Him. But the babes do know Him.

A man's object is always what gives him character: if he loves money, he is avaricious; if he loves power, he is ambitious; if pleasure is his object, it is that which characterizes him. The Christian's object is Christ.

We get walking worthy three or four times in scripture. In Thessalonians we have, "That ye would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:12.) "Worthy of God!" think what this is, and that according to the place we are to have with Him in glory, when all is complete. We have another here, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." The divine Man in this world is our example. Then in. Ephesians we have, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." (Eph. 4:1.) Walking "worthy of the gospel" in another passage (Phil. 1) is almost the same. In one sense we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in these three passages.

If we talk of walking worthy of the Lord, we shall be fruitful; "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge, of God;" and our hearts, affections, object, mind and walk formed by that: that I get as the walk of the Christian. Then we have the power he walks in, "Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power;" that is the strength to walk right. Now mark how it works, "unto all patience." We would think it was going to do something wonderful; but it is not energy or will, but patience that is the secret of it all. You want to hurry God sometimes, but you never can. We find this sometimes in the desire for restoring a soul—a right thing to wish; but God must go to the bottom. Take a lovely example of this in the Syrophenician woman. The Lord seemed painfully hard: the disciples say, "Send her away; for she crieth after us;" they said this to get rid, of her, but He did not answer her one word. She had no title, no promises, nor anything else. At last he said, I cannot "take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs:" this brought her to

the acknowledgment of what she was, and of what God was. She insisted that there was love enough in God to meet her as she was. “Truth, Lords yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Then she got all she wanted: Christ could not say there was not. Seemingly the Lord was hard in this case, just as when they sent the message to Him, “Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick,” and yet, “He abode two days still in the same place where he was.”

Patience requires thorough confidence in God: God is working His own work meanwhile, but we must follow Him, not go before Him. If I am “strengthened.... unto all patience,” there will be none of my own will, and I shall be long-suffering to others. Power works in patience, long-suffering and joyfulness. Christ was the “man of sorrows,” yet He could say of His disciples, “That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” “I do always those things that please him;” but He waited to know what the things were that pleased Him.

In Col. 1:9-11 we have the state of the soul; then in the following verses the privileges on which it is based.

What was the first sign of an apostle? “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” (2 Cor. 12:12.) Patience was the first grand Sign of an apostle. You never find the apostles healing a friend because it was pleasant to them. “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick” (2 Tim. 4:20); and Epaphroditus, who had been hunting up Paul somewhere, “was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” (Phil. 2:27.) There is the path of the saint, he is not of this world at all; he is in it, and he has to walk through it in the spirit and character of Christ, with spiritual intelligence of God's will, and having God's strength, doing God's will when it comes. “Let patience have her perfect work.” (James 1:4.) As regards the grace that puts us into this path, you will find it is the fullest that possibly can be. “Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” All the patience and long-suffering are founded on that. Not only has He justified me, and given me a title to glory, but He “hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” I can say God has made me—all Christians I mean—fit to be in the light.

We have seen the path and walk of the Christian; here we see the grace that puts us into it.

The thief could go straight to paradise; he was fit to be there through the work of Christ. We have no more remarkable testimony to the work of grace in the soul than in his case. When the whole world wag against Christ, he confesses Him; when He was hanging like himself on the cross, he says, “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom:” he was certain of that, and when in agony of pain he never thinks about it. You see further the perfect work of confidence wrought in him. How should we like to be remembered, hanging, as he was, there? Yet he was fit to be with Christ in Paradise. He was the one single person that was a comfort to Christ on the cross, the blessed work of His grace surely: He had none other comfort in this world.

“Which hath made us meet;” there we get the blessed consciousness which introduces us into this walk. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” We “were sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord.” Satan is “the ruler of the darkness of this world “: we have been entirely delivered from that, from the darkness of this world, and all that is in it; from Satan, its god and prince. When God was revealed in Christ, He could say, “This is your hour, and the power of

darkness.” (Luke 22:53.) This world—we have ten thousand mercies in it to be thankful for, yet it is a world that has rejected the Son of God, and Satan is over it. “This is your hour.”

My beloved friends, I dread the influence of the world over saints more than anything. The world is so subtle that it will come in at the back door if you turn it out at the front. When one has more children, one wants a bigger house, and so it comes in often; it is not like gross sin which anyone can condemn. How began the world? It ended by turning Christ out of it, but it began with Cain. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and in the land of Nod (Nod means a vagabond) he built a city, and called it by the name of his son. This is just what the world has done; it has settled itself out from God. Then you cannot have a stupid city; so you get wealth—cattle the wealth of those days—and artificers in brass and iron, and musical instruments, the harp and the organ. People say, What harm is there in all this? The harm is this, that, having been driven out from the presence of God, and now, what is worse still, having driven Christ out of the world, man must try to make the world as pleasant as he can, because he is away from God. There is no harm in brass and iron, but there is harm in using them away from God. If I knocked a man down in the street, there would be no harm in my strength, but there would be harm in the use I made of it.

“And hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love;” not only have we got light but love, the two essential names of God. I have got both ac, cording to Christ. While I have been delivered from the power of darkness, I am brought, not simply into the light, but withal into the kingdom where all God's love displays itself in the Son of His love: there I am living. Then he adds the how of it all, so to speak: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Light is a thing of perfect purity: if we have been washed white as snow, the more the light shines, the more it shows what we are. Now we have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love; in Him I have this blessedness; my sins are all forgiven, and I have a perfect conscience, so that I am able to enjoy it. We have got walk founded on that.

We have another immense blessedness here. We have had the character and perfection of the walk of the Christian, and the fullness of the grace we have got in Christ; and now he comes and takes up what God's ways and plans are— “By him to reconcile all things unto himself.” This is not come yet, but we get Christ in the place He holds, and where we are in the order of divine events. “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.” He reveals God, and when I see the created system, He is the head of it; the ground of this is that He is the creator of it. “And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” There I get the blessed truth for us that, while the Son created all things (“By him and for him were all things created") yet He would not take them into possession, till He had His joint-heirs. The time is coming when the created heavens and earth shall be all in order, and Christ the Head of all, as Adam was lord of the old creation. We find the same thing in Heb. 1 “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” He did not take this place simply as God. “Now he that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” He went down into death, in one sense lower than the creature; He went through death, the grave, hades; and now He is far above all heavens, and He fills all, not simply as God, but in the power of redemption. He is head over all things to the church. He has not brought all things

into order yet, but meanwhile where Christ is sitting now is at the right hand of God, “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool;” He has not yet taken His great power, but He has perfected us. “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10) “We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus.... crowned with glory and honor.” (Heb. 2:8, 9.) Part of Psa. 8 has been fulfilled, but not all. This is unfolded in 1 Cor. 15 too. He is now sitting at the Father's right hand, while He is gathering His joint-heirs. He is the First-born of every creature in title. He is waiting till it is fulfilled. “And he is the head of the body, the church:” this is special relationship. He will have the headship of creation, and He is head to the church, but herein He is the firstborn from the dead. There I find the scheme of God thus stated, that Christ, who created all things as Son, takes all as Man, but then He is not only head over everything, but head to the church. That is an immense truth, not only a fact but a truth. The Son of God met the whole case our wickedness had brought in; He has been under death, under Satan's power, “made sin for us.” The position of man in the Lord Jesus Christ is after judgment has been executed; he has entered a place that Adam innocent never had, after death, after Satan's power. He is in this new place with a totally new life, Christ's own life, in that place. “In him was life;” He becomes a man because God's “delights were with the sons of men.” He takes on the cross our responsibility, and, God being perfectly glorified there, He goes into a new place, according to God's glory, that is for us. “For all the fullness was pleased in him to dwell.” If you look at verse 9 of the next chapter, you will see the fact. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Here you get the purpose: that is all the difference. It was not merely a particular individual with a certain quantity of the Godhead—a thought very familiar in those days, but “All the fullness was pleased to dwell in him.”

Then I come to the second thing: He will reconcile these things, but “You hath he reconciled” (we get it again in 2 Corinthians 5). Here we have this blessed truth that this is our present condition of soul with God. I have learned His love; I have learned that my sins are gone; my heart is brought as a present thing into God's presence, and here I am with God, without a cloud or quiver, reconciled to God. “To present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his eight.” This is our condition in the purpose of God: then we go on to our responsibility in connection with it.

We have got back to God with a sense of more love a great deal than if we had never sinned, for we see God not sparing the best thing in heaven for us. Now I can joy in God for myself. You will find warnings afterward; still that is what we have here. You will soon find your conscience and responsibility exercised with what follows here. Not merely are we fit to go to heaven, but when I go to God by Christ, I believe in His perfect love, and I have a perfect conscience so that I can enjoy Him. That is the reason I find a very touching thing in John's epistle. (1 John 4:9-19.) First he speaks of the way in which God's love has been manifested. He has given His Son, given His Spirit to dwell in us, made His love perfect with us, that we may, have boldness in the day of judgment; then he goes on to say, “We love him because he first loved us,” not we ought to love Him. The heart has drunk in all that this love has brought, eternal life, as well as propitiation for our sins, the Spirit given, boldness in the day of judgment, because we shall be like the Judge all this streams into the heart, so that we can say, “We love him because he first loved us.” The sense of this love is reconciliation. If you bear a child saying, “Oh if you only knew my mother, her love, her tenderness, and though I am so foolish, she is always the same;” that child loves his mother, though the mother's love is always the superior. “We love him because he first loved us” supposes reconciliation.

Righteousness shall reign when Christ reigns; righteousness shall dwell in the new heavens and the new earth. The effect of our being reconciled in a state of things not yet reconciled is to put us on our responsibility to go on to the end.

The wilderness is no part of God's purpose; but it is a part of His ways. You will see in Ex. 3; 6, and xv., that God's purpose for the Israelites was to give them Canaan. So it is with us; and He takes the case of the thief to. show that the wilderness is not a necessary thing.

Here we are, going through the world, and with that are connected “ifs.” There is no “if” in the purpose of God, there is, no “if” in the accomplishment of His salvation; but there are “ifs” in the way He leads us, humbling us and proving us. “If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” If you give up Christ, you will never get there! He puts them through the wilderness, where they are tested and proved as to their obedience and dependence on God. There is no” if” as to my being in Christ: I know I am in Christ— “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20); but the moment He takes me as an actual living man down here, He says, “So run that ye may obtain.” (1 Cor. 9:24.) I am set to go through the desert, and if I do not go on to the end, I shall never reach Canaan. What is my confidence? “He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous.” I get Christ the blessed testimony of it; there promises come in. It is not a promise that Christ is my righteousness, but I have promises along the road. In the ways of God He puts us through this world, where we are dependent on His faithfulness to keep us all the way. We “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” (1 Peter 1:5.) We are in danger every, moment, but it is as plain in scripture as A B C, that God will keep us to the end:; but do not you tumble, do not you get tripped. What is the good of saying, “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? (John 10:28.) Because we are in danger of being plucked. “Catcheth” is the same word: “The wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.” I have perfect security in the Lord's faithfulness, not in my own; I get therein dependence on Him. “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not,” He said to Peter, and his faith did not fail. I get a vast mast of what is most blessed connected with this, not merely the fact that eternal redemption has been accomplished, but that there is not a moment that God is not thinking of me! No outward violence can prevail against us, “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand “; and no inward decay, “They shall never perish.”

There is a striking passage, though not nearly so blessed as that in 1 Cor. 1. What makes it so gracious is that the Corinthians were going on shockingly ill. “I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.” (Chap. i. 4.) “Who shall also confirm you unto the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Chap. i. 8.) What does Paul do then He begins to find fault with them, and he blames everything they were doing. We are put through this place of difficulty, exercise, and trial, but we have this word that we are “kept by the power of God:” therefore our responsibility is brought out to be leaning on His grace every moment. I may say to my child, If you tumble you will be killed, but I am not going to let him tumble. You are put through these exercises every day to prove whether you are faithful in leaning on His blessed strength, not on your own, to the end of the journey. God's way is to put us through the wilderness, as He did the Israelites, but He never forgot them, never left them without manna. He puts us through this process in bringing us to glory, that we may know ourselves, but He interweaves His grace with all our trials and difficulties. Not only has God wrought eternal redemption for us, but “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” If I undertake like Israel,

“All that the Lord hath spoken we will do,” I shall surely tumble, but if I say like Paul, “When I am weak then am I strong,” I shall be safe. Paul was in danger when he came down from the third heaven, and the Lord Cent a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him; then he learns that, when reduced to utter weakness, and when be felt his weakness, the strength of Christ was made perfect. We have to go through that—we all have. We are reconciled to God, and His purpose is to present us “holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight;” but we are exercised all the way to see how far we “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” In the desert there are “ifs” constantly. God knows whether we need much sifting like Job, who got a good deal, Satan being let loose upon him; but what was the effect of it all? “Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” There is no uncertainty as to the perfection of Christ's work, and no uncertainty as to His receiving us to Himself in glory; but He wants our hearts to get practically into the sense of constant dependence on Him, with the blessed promise that in this path He will never fail but will keep us to the end. When there is wandering of heart, there is danger directly; therefore we get such expressions as “Keep yourselves in the love of God;” there daily responsibility comes in, and we gain immensely by it, having “our senses exercised to discern good and evil” Paul does not say, “I believe,” but “I know whom I have believed:” the soul finds rest there. We get something like this in the Old Testament in Psa. 23 The psalmist says, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” He does not say, “Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong” —I have great blessings, but it is the Lord Himself who, blesses me. What is the way he learns that? His soul is restored, the Lord spreads a table for him in the presence of his enemies. He had learned Him through all this, and he is not afraid of the power of death, or of the enemy: “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me;” and he knows that God will keep him to the end, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

We get in Col. 1 these three things—

1. That we are to walk worthy of the Lord, nothing short of it.

2. The blessed consciousness that, if it be a question of our place, all is settled.

3. God's carrying us through a road where we are sifted and tried as to the motives of the heart, that we may know what is in our hearts, and know Him too.

It is a wonderful thing that God thinks of our dangers, our characters, and our circumstances. He never ceases to think of us along the road.

Discourses on Colossians 1

It is not the body and its privileges we have here, but the Head and its fullness; not the Spirit, but Christ as our life. But this is quite as momentous. So also we have the walk in view of the hope. We see where the apostle puts us as thus risen with Christ, and yet walking down here, and so a question of finishing our course. In Ephesians we come forth from God, and, being with Him there, show out His character as Christ did. If I say I am risen, let me walk as risen; if justified from sin, yield myself unto God, dead to sin, and alive from the dead.

Verse 4. He had heard of their love to all saints. But one cannot get the knowledge of His will unless it is connected with all saints; for Christ's heart does take in all, and if we do not, we fail to embrace that of which His eye has taken in the circle. (Eph. 3:18.) The moment we get into a risen state, we are all one. We are Jews, Gentiles, all sorts of things, when looked at as men on the earth; but when risen, all that is done with.

There are two things—one may say three—which we have in the resurrection of Christ. First, the testimony of God is to the full acceptance of Christ's work— “God hath raised him from the dead;” and, secondly, the effect of that, which is a new place with God altogether, where neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Adam innocent nor Adam guilty, ever were. It is an entrance into an entirely new condition; we belong to a new creation altogether. This, beloved friends, is of all moment to our hearts—the consciousness of our relationship with God. As to Christ, sins are past, judgment past, death past, Satan's power past, when He rose from the dead. His death had been a terrible testimony to the state of the old man—it was a total breach with man in the flesh. “Let no fruit grow upon thee henceforth and forever.” We never get fully into the consciousness of our proper blessing till we clearly and distinctly understand, not only that we are guilty, but that the tree is bad. God has set-aside man, and in the flesh he cannot please God; he has no actual living connection with Him whatever—no life, no nature, in which he can please Him. (Rom. 8) When we talk of being risen with Christ, we have left all that scene behind us which Christ has left behind; not of the world, as He is not of it, though we have to go through it, of course, and to keep ourselves unspotted from it. Christ got into life again—a totally new state past all these things; we are crucified with Him, dead to sin and the world, and in this new condition in which Christ is now. He was there dying under our sins—we, found dead in them, and now quickened along with Him, with all our trespasses forgiven. In Colossians it is only this change of position, not all that it involves.

The apostle desired for them that they should be walking here as risen men, filled with knowledge, that there might be the doing of His will. There is a path which the vulture's eye has not seen, but which is unfolded in Christ, which He has tracked for us, and “he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” If you look at Christ, you never see one single thing done for Himself: perfect grace, a testimony to the will of God, which is known only spiritually, not legal righteousness. It is such righteousness to be smitten on one cheek, and turn the other? That is the only thing we have now to look for, which will not be found even in heaven—a perfect path in the midst of evil. It is a trying path often: people will trample upon you; but is my object to

keep Christ, or my character? You will soon find in that way what the motive that governs you is. If the eye is single, you will get knowledge from God, as the vulture, the most clear-seeing creature there is. The eye of Christ in us sees the thing that pleases Christ, and, of course, the world cannot understand that at all. They may admire it, for they see the unselfishness of it. The more we go on, and the more evil grows up, infidelity corruption and superstition, the more that faithfulness will tell. The world may not understand why a person gives up all he has, but it sees that he does so—that there are motives which govern the heart soberly and quietly. Bring the word of God to them; they do not think it is a good sword, but it is; for it reaches the conscience, and no man is an infidel in his conscience. In the midst of this poor selfish world, if there is a person who is living entirely for another, they cannot understand it. The fact that they cannot understand it makes them understand it in one sense; they see there is something they cannot understand.

Verse 10. “Walk worthy of the Lord” —the whole object of the Christian in his going out and coming in, in his whole path in life. What a wonderful privilege! A poor creature in myself, but called on to walk worthy of the Lord. Beloved brethren, think of it!

Verse 11. “Strengthened with all might... unto all patience and long-suffering.” What was Christ's life? All patience and long-suffering; everything was against Him, and His path the path of unchanging goodness, of all patience and long-suffering, in passing along. Seek in this world patience and Long-suffering. The world, being a world which will not have the principles of the Christian, will not have Christ; our path in it is patience—patience in service with souls. Souls are full of themselves, but always at bottom there is a want. “Redeeming the time,” not diligence, but seeking opportunities which are given, and being so full of Christ that I do not miss them when given. Patience may seem a little thing, but just try your own heart, and see if it does not test you. Saul waited six days and three quarters, and lost the kingdom because he could not wait the other quarter. He acted for himself. Nature could wait a long time, but could not go through with the thing. Patience acts for God: “Let patience have its perfect work.” Christ never did His own will; you are set to do His will, sanctified to His obedience.

Now the apostle lays the ground which I had on my heart at the beginning; but what I have been saying is of all practical importance. The light is my place. We never can give a right testimony, or be servants to others, till our own relationships with God are perfectly settled. You cannot carry the testimony of God with intelligence unless you know your own place. It is not that you talk about yourself, but can you say in God's presence, “I am thanking Thee because Thou hast made me meet?” The walk is all founded upon this I insist on it, for we all know how it is rejected, but it is the ground on which all Christians are set. You may go through the deepest exercises (the deeper the better), but when brought into your place as a Christian, you give thanks that He has made you meet. That perfect and infinite love has taken me up, a poor sinner, and made me meet for the light. That is where I am—a blessed thought—it is the perfectness of love; God's thought, and He has carried it out. Supposing me to be actually risen, am I not fit for the inheritance of the saints in light? Self-righteousness (which is a very subtle thing) says, “I am not fit.” Why, you do not know yet how bright that light is! But I do know that He, whose love has thought of me, must have that which is fit for His presence, for He is light as well as love, and He has wrought it in Christ. The prodigal was quite as sincere when he set out in his rags as afterward, but he was not fit to go in till he had the best robe on.

Verse 18. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,” &c. Here we are naturally in Satan's kingdom, the ruler of the darkness of this world. A man may not mean wickedness, but the glory of this world—its grandeur—has influence on the heart. Well, it is darkness, simple darkness, and all the time that is spent there is loss, for everything that is not Christ is loss—there is no life in it. The life of Christ in us cannot be looking after wealth, and power, and vanity—the one thing we have to do in the world is to overcome it. The blinding power of Satan is there, but we are delivered from it. It does not say, “brought into light,” but it gives the experimental consciousness of what the light is— “the kingdom of the Son of his love,” it is light. I get out of this darkness, which only ministers to my wretched selfishness, to nothing but self, the very opposite of what Christ was. There is one true, holy, blessed place—the presence of God. I have got into (not merely the light, but) the kingdom of the Son. The One who is the delight of the Father's heart, the sufficient and adequate object of the Father's heart, who satisfies and draws out His love—we are brought into the kingdom of that Son. We have to go through the world, which has risen up because man was turned out of paradise; but I have passed out of it into the kingdom where God's perfect delight in His Son is. We have to judge ourselves, and watch, that it may be effectually wrought in us; but here the apostle is giving thanks that it is, done—that we are brought, even while here, to know we are loved as Christ is loved. He has given us what is sufficient for His heart and our hearts to delight in, and, in the second place, we are loved as He is loved.

“All things were created by him and for him;” but He could not, in the counsels and love of God, take those things without having joint-heirs—His bride. He has come up, after having wrought redemption, not only Head over everything He has created as man, but also Head of the body, the church.

Verse 21. “And you hath he reconciled;” that is more than “made meet” for what God wants, according to His holy nature. We are not simply fitted, but God has reconciled our hearts now in that perfect love which has come out, and wrought all in Christ's death, while the world is not reconciled. The reconciliation of Christians is a present effectual thing, through the knowledge of the perfect love of God, which did not spare His own Son. He has given Him for my sins, blotted them out, and left no uneasiness on my conscience. Not only are my sins forgiven, but I am reconciled to God. Take it up in your consciences, beloved friends. Christ my righteousness, sins all gone, myself loved as He is loved—that is my place. How far can your souls be looking up to God, without one thing to hinder your enjoyment He has brought us to Himself—brought into His presence, in the full sense of the unclouded love of His heart.

Then we get the effect of this as regards the testimony. Paul was made a minister of two things, and so are we, whether in private dealing with souls, or in public ministry. I have learned this love which reconciles, and I will carry it out to every creature. I carry the love of Christ so in my soul, that, if a want comes, I have what will minister to it—so living in the love of God, with the sense of it in our souls, that it comes out naturally. If I meet souls, do I carry God to them? That is the Christian testimony; we carry this in our own souls, as made meet and reconciled. No matter what comes, difficult times, &c., if I can only carry it out, there is that which, if any one has ears to hear, is heard in the heart. I may be rejected; of course, as Christ was, but that is the character of the testimony—the light too, as well as the love.

The second thing is the ministry of the church. This is not to sinners; but you cannot have a due sense of the thoughts and purposes of God in bringing us where He has, without carrying it all with you. The church supposes the fullness of love, and the perfectness of redemption, which breaks through our testimony. If we are conscious of this, that God has called us to be the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, which He is gathering to present to Himself, that love which has been known to us in its fullness will give a stamp and character to everything we say. It would be a gospel which carries its testimony to the ruin of man, but also to the love which is never satisfied till it sets us with the Son. A complete redemption cannot be hid—I cannot preach the gospel without bringing it in. The current of love, which we know, lays the foundation in the heart of all that is built upon it, and it gives another character to the gospel. My being with God, according to that perfect reconciliation, enables me to go out and meet the want of every poor sinner. You may do it in difficulty and trial, but carry that with you, and neither infidelity, nor anything else, can answer it.

Chapter 47

Discourses on Colossians 2: Part 1

There is practically one subject in what I have read, but divided into two parts: one, Christ as contrasted with all the thoughts of the world; and the other, the true place of the Christian as in Him. It is a new place, even in Christ. He begins by pressing on them a warning against all the philosophy and Judaism abroad. They really ran into the same channel; and this is connected with the second point referred to, because they belong to this world. Christ is put, first, in opposition to all that; and, secondly, he unfolds that what is in Christ is in a risen Christ, outside of this world. There are the same things current now, for people are turning back to “the rudiments of the world.” All this infidelity and ritualism have just the same root, though not the same shape; both belong to this world, and are what man's mind and imagination, as a child of Adam, can take up. The contrast is Christ risen—Christ out of this world.

This chapter brings out both. They are the workings of man's mind and imagination—what man can do; whereas the moment you get what God has revealed in Christ, and the place Christ is in, man has nothing to do with it. They are the rudiments of this world: the one is reasoning, mental flesh; and the other is imaginative flesh. This Ritualism—Christ offered every Sunday, &c.—is as if there was not one offering for sin. But I find “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Then it is not perfected! This makes all the difference. My imagination and fancy can take hold of these things, or the mind rejects them; but they are the denial that Christ has finished the work.

We are very little aware (though they are quite different parts of human nature) how it all has to do with man—man not delivered from himself—and having Christ instead: The apostle first warns them, and then shows what the real thing is, that is, Christ in heavenly places. God had taken up human nature among the Jews to see if it could be brought into connection with Him, and it could not. It was, in a certain sense; but God had to hide Himself behind a veil: if there were no veil, you must be able to stand in the light, as God is light. God never came out, but He gave a gorgeous worship, and He gave the law as a more perfect rule for human nature, for man as he is. The question is, has man kept it? No one has. Where a person is going on under Judaism, he will take all the gorgeous part of it, and, on the other hand, be takes the law, without the consciousness that he has not kept it. Of course numbers fear the law when their conscience is awakened; and, where there is truth of conscience under such a system, they are always unhappy. Man's mind takes its own course, and ends necessarily without finding God. “Can man by searching find out God?” Instead of that, you get God fully revealed in Christ, and man brought to God in Christ. Christianity supplants the darkness of the natural mind (I do not say soul), which could have nothing to do with God, add which, take it in its fullest broadest sense, it is necessarily atheism, as it never reaches to God, it confining itself to what my mind can find out; and that is what they were all at here.

The apostle was anxious about them, because they were constantly mixed up with these things—living in the midst of these Greek philosophers. Although he had never been there, yet his heart knew experimentally, by the power of the Holy Ghost, what the snares were, and he says, “I

would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you." He felt the dangers that were there, and he looked on these saints as belonging to Christ, whom he so loved and labored for, and he showed interest in them.

Verse 2. Here I get the understanding of the mystery of God, and that is another thing altogether. It is not the way we are accustomed to understand the word "mystery," as a thing not to be found out; but it is a thing only known by revelation—it is not known save to the initiated. It is that which by divine revelation and teaching we know, and it brings us into a totally new world.

You get, then, another important thing needed. Supposing I was the greatest scientist in the world, there is not a bit of love about it: it is connected with nobody, and there is not an atom of soul-work in it. Therefore God cannot be known, for God is love. Faith gives us an inlet into all the things that love has done. Science is as cold as ice—dead cold: you cannot let a bit of feeling in. There is no relationship with anything in the world or any One above it. (Ver. g.) But revelation lets in "To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God" —God the source of their life, God the One who dwells there by the Holy Ghost among them, and gives the feeling that flows from the relationship into which they are brought. The mind may get developed, but there is no moral [motive?] in it—it is not in its nature. The Christian acts by a motive. Science does not touch the ground that the soul is on. What has feeling to do with the discovery of how the physical nature works? In Christ I learn the blessed truth, that God dwells in me by the power of the Spirit in the divine nature, and. I have communion with the Father and the Son. I get into a new world altogether.

Then I rise "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." Understanding of what? Of how animals were born? No; of the hidden mystery. I get my heart opened to see all the scope of God's plans and counsels in Christ. You get the "full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22.) (that is not science!) that "he that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true." Science says, "I think this, and I think that" —such is all it has. I find adequate certainty about all common things, but if I have the testimony of God, I get the positive certainty of faith—the only certainty we have. I have set to its seal that God is true—He cannot but be true.

I get another "full assurance," and that is "hope" (Heb. 6:11), for there you have the affections engaged, and the things realized. It gives much greater reality—the very acquaintance imparts great reality. I am going to be in the same glory with Christ, and that is the full assurance of hope. Am I going to be there? Yes, of course, if you are a believer, and you have the earnest of it in your hearts. "Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" —that is the full assurance of hope.

The third thing goes much higher— "Full assurance of understanding" —for it is part of God's plan and counsel in Christ; and if we are not there, Christ's glory is not complete, and it cannot be otherwise. "We have the mind of Christ." If I have the full assurance of hope, then I see these things as a part of God's plan and Christ's glory, and that is the full assurance of understanding.

"To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, wherein are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." There is nothing so certain in the world as the revelation of God, known only by redemption. Now you belong to another world: these things (philosophy, Judaism, &c.) do not belong to the world I am in. Of course there is God's creation, but it is His first creation; it passes away, or we perish from it. It is a wonderful creation, but that is not being reconciled to God, and

being in the new creation. In this mystery are all God's wisdom and knowledge—all summed up—all His counsels there, to which the natural mind has not even an entrance, and never can, for “they are spiritually discerned.” It rests on the revelation of God. The soul finds its affections in the new creation; it has a world it belongs to, and “they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.” You get the figure of it in Abram. He had not so much as to set his foot upon; he was not in the land, but he belonged to it, and that is just where we are, “As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” The world attracts Lot's heart in the character of its efforts at grandeur; but Abram was a stranger and pilgrim, and he says, “If thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” Lot goes down to the plain just ripening for judgment, and pitched his tent near Sodom; then he gets nearer and nearer, till he is snatched out of it. As soon as Lot had gone down and chosen this prosperous place, then God says to Abram, “Lift up now thine eyes,” &c. As soon as he had completely given up the world in heart, then the promised land rose up before him. He realized the thing that was promised to him. It was separation to God in faith. He got the fall assurance of hope.

Now he goes on to show where the Christian is, not what he is yet. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” It is Christ up in heaven in another world. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Here I find the actual starting-place, and this is, that in Christ all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is revealed; I have the perfect revelation of the fullness of the Godhead in Christ. I have nothing new to look after (save, of course, to know it better), for I cannot go beyond the fullness of the Godhead, and it is revealed to me. In Christ, in that Man—more than man, for He was God too—has been the revelation of the /illness of the Godhead. It requires eyes to see it; but to faith, which saw through the veil of His humiliation when here, there was not a trait in His character, an act in His conduct, or an expression of the feeling of His heart going out to the misery around Him, that was not the revelation of the Godhead: the Father was revealed, as in John 14, all was revealed, and nothing else to seek after, except to know it better.

Then I get the other blessed side (ver. 10), “In him dwelleth all the completeness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him” (just the same word in the original). Yes, and I say I am complete iii Him before God—God is completely revealed to me in Christ; but what about you? can you stand before Him? I am before Him, complete in Christ, with not a single thing wanting. This makes it such a full statement of what the mystery is—the positive revelation of all the fullness of the Godhead in One who has come close to me in love, that I may know He is love: When Christ was in this world, He did not seek anything great or grand for Himself. What did He seek? Sorrow, poverty, misery. That is what God has been doing in this world—perfect love (and power too) relieving distress—love that brought down perfect goodness to where I was; that is what God is to me. Perfect goodness in the midst of all the sorrow and misery of this world, and the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily! Ah, poor science! it is a long way off from that. It can tell me about protoplasms, but about divine love never!

The mystery of Christ shows me this completeness without going to outside things—not, up in the clouds to reach it if we can, but brought down to me here. I am complete in Christ, but as I find God perfectly revealed (none of us can measure it, of course, or even go through it—we have to search it out, and grow in it), then I find this on the other side: How can I stand before Him, and grasp all that? Are you fit to be in His presence? Yes; I say, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which

hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." That is the place you are brought into, lust as the completeness of the Godhead was brought to us in Christ. Then I find that I am complete according to all God's thoughts. Just as God stood in Christ before man, man stands in Christ before God. It is not merely philosophy spelling out what has been all around us since the creation, it is the One who created it all. And besides this, I find the personal blessedness in it. I am complete in Him, I have everything I want, and that I want for eternity. "Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one" —all one set. What life have I got? Christ. What righteousness? Christ. What glory? Christ. Just in one position and state. How can I tell how much God loves me? This I can tell you (or rather Christ has told us), that you are loved as Christ is loved. And we know it now. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it," &c. He dwells in us, and the Holy Ghost brings down this love into our hearts; "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

Now the apostle turns to a special thing which was their difficulty then, that, while he gives the whole scope of God's mind in the mystery, he goes down and deals with this fleshly religion. The Colossians were accustomed to be in the midst of these things. The Jewish system was bringing out for us whether man in the flesh could have to do with God. How many souls there are now under the law in their hearts (they are lawless if they are not)! You must get the knowledge of sin by the law, if rightly applied. It is man, as responsible man, getting a perfect rule of what he ought to be, and circumcision is merely the expression of that death of the flesh. All that was shadowed forth in those things you have in Christ.

The apostle turns more to details to show where we are as Christians. (Ver. 11.) A totally new thing it is—the putting off the body of the flesh. They never had circumcision in the wilderness, not till they crossed the Jordan—a figure of our dying with Christ. Gilgal was the place where they rolled away the reproach of the world. I get the same here. Before it was a circumcision made with hands—now without. I have the true circumcision. Instead of the mere outward ritual of the thing, I have the thing itself. I am complete in Christ. How so? Why I am dead and gone! I have put off the old man altogether. I am not speaking of carrying it out: this you get in 2 Cor. 4:10. A risen Christ is my life, all connection with this world is gone. I am dead to sin, and alive to God. I have put off the body of the flesh, I have died with Christ. I reckon myself dead. I have got a risen Christ as my life; to faith then I have done with this flesh—done with it altogether. I have got this new thing; I am in it (of course I am in this poor earthly tabernacle still, but) I do not belong to this world; I have died through the death of Christ. It is not merely saying you must die—saying "you must" does not give a thing. If you have died with Christ, you are risen with Him—you have left it all behind. It is the very character and meaning of baptism. I have died, I am baptized to Christ's death. Here am I, a living man, and I go through death with Christ (an outward sign, of course). A person who has gone with Christ into His grave, and come up out of it again. He passed out of the condition He was in here as a man on the earth into a totally new place—God raised Him from the dead. You then get, "Wherein also ye are risen with him," &c. As a Christian you are risen; I have got into this new state. I say that is myself, for I am a Christian.

And now we get much further light on our condition. "And you being dead in your sins." (Ver. 13.) I was living in sins in the other, but the truth of "dead in sins" goes a good deal farther. Alive as regards my sins, but dead as regards God. This goes farther, and takes up the nature that likes doing them. There is not one single thing in your heart with which God could link Himself. "They

that are in the flesh cannot please God." There is nothing in heaven your nature would like.

I get now, not merely "quickened," but "quickened together with him" (ver. 13); because, supposing I am alive, I may be spiritually alive, or I may be in Rom. 7. Any one there says, "I think Christ is precious to me, and I love His word, and His people," but He is examining himself to find out if he is in the new creation. Like the prodigal, he has not met the father; but that is not quickened together with Christ—quickened, no doubt, and when I speak of being quickened in that way, it is the divine operation of a new life in my soul. But quickened together with Christ is different. Where do I see Christ Himself? Not as quickener, but as quickened. Christ as man has been raised from the dead. He died under our sins—for them—He went on unto death for us, and God has raised Him up, and, supposing I am a believer, I am raised up with Him. If I look at myself, it is as raised with Christ, as it says here, "Quickened together with him." It looks at Christ as a dead man, but that in coming down to death He put away my sins, and therefore I am raised with Him. It is not merely the fact that I have life; I have life in a new condition where Christ is. I have got into a new place before God—Christ's place—and all my sins are left on the other side of Christ's grave. I do not own the old man, it is the horrid thing that has been deceiving me.

There are two more things I would just mention. There are these ordinances—all "blotted out." All the things the flesh can do in order to gain acceptance are dead in the flesh that did them. Where do I find Christ now that we are risen? Where do I find Christ in the Lord's supper? It is His death. "Bringing Christ into the elements," as people say; there is no such thing, for it is a dead Christ. The shed blood shows forth His death, and there is no such Christ now. After His resurrection He is alive, death can have no more dominion over Him. And so baptism, as to its signification, it is unto His death. I have gone down with Christ to death, and I am risen with Him.

Only one thing more. In order to bring us thus complete in Him, there were other things against us—these "principalities and powers." (Ver. 15.) Christ has destroyed Satan's power in the cross; I was a living man in sin—that is gone. Then all these ordinances I was bound to—they are gone. Well, then, Satan's power (not that he has not power) Christ has triumphed over him, "Through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil;" so death has lost its power too. The cross of Christ has closed the history of the old man, and of all its associations. I was a slave of sin, "I am quickened together with Him." A slave to ordinances, they are "nailed to his cross. A slave to Satan, his power is destroyed. I am risen with Christ beyond these things, and that is where the Christian is. I am going to have an everlasting holiday; I have it even now in spirit. I am going to God's rest in heaven. I do not keep days, for that is going back to heathenism. Do you think the sun going round will make them keep days in heaven? It is an everlasting holiday; it is only in our hearts now, for if we follow Christ, we learn its sorrows and griefs too, for He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We are taken out of all the speculation of philosophy, for we are in a world into which it cannot get.

Now, beloved friends, are your hearts ready to accept such a Christianity? The flesh clings to what the flesh likes—clings to the world, and that which Satan has power over us by, and therefore there is still the combating. But are you content with this? I do not talk about realization, but are you content to take that path which Christ walked as your path?—to take up your cross daily and follow Him? It looks bitter to the flesh, for it is in another world that the flesh can have nothing to say to, even in thought. We shall fail in many things, but are you content to have done with the

world into which you were born—to be dead out of it? It is the character and essence of what Christianity really is. My place is as a Christian come up out of Christ's grave. Are you content to take such a Christianity as that? You will never escape the wiles of the devil—either philosophy or Ritualism—you have not got what takes you out of their sphere and dominion. It is the wiles of the devil we have to stand against, not his power—resist him. We have still that allowed in us, in our lives, which Satan can use and get a hold of. You say I must have done with this world that does not want Christ; but if I am risen with Christ, I say I have done with it. The more we go on, the more we shall see it is what is needed. If we are not using the power of Christ in that way, we shall not succeed. If we are risen with Christ, there is a world that the life belongs to, and a world that the flesh cannot touch. Is my heart living for the world where Christ is gone, or for this world?

The Lord give us to see Him so precious, that those things that were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. It is all very easy with a single eye, but “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” If Christ is up there, then, of course, our hearts will go after Him. It must be a thorough thing.

Chapter 48

Discourses on Colossians 2: Part 2

We see in this epistle that Christ is all: there is life in Him; then we see the object into which this life grows—the child grows up into that. We get, further, all the scene into which Christ has entered, as the child grows up into the scene around him. Christ is all, and He is in all too. Then another thing, which we are all conscious of—the way in which He has met our need as poor sinners, the work of Christ which He has wrought for us all alone; all that meeting our consciences, and the effect of it too, which is that the Christian is looked at in two different ways—as a sinner saved, and as one who stands in the system and circle of God's purpose; they are two very distinct things, and the way of treating them is distinct too.

There are many thorough and devoted Christians who do not get beyond this first thing that. God has done; but there is another thing—the thought and purpose God had in doing it, our portion looked at as connected with the Second Adam.

He is our Savior as regards the first man, looked at as responsible man, but behind all that, and beyond all that, there is the purpose of God, in which we are looked at, not as in the first man, but in the Second. You get the old man looked at (vers. 12, 18), one dying for our sins, standing in our place as guilty sinners, saving and justifying us; and then you get the second point, “quickened together with Christ.” Whenever he speaks of quickening in these epistles, it is not merely the fact of having life; He looks at us as dead in our sins, not responsible people, but dead, and God not dealing with a responsible man, but a new creation, totally new; it is quite a different aspect, though they run into one another. I have died in Christ— “in which things ye walked when ye lived in them,” and death had to come in as to that life.

There are two things in connection with that, though he does not go much into the second in this epistle. First, we are a new creation, then there is the sphere in which this new creation has its life. Our conversation is in heaven. As to myself, I know that in me dwelleth no good thing, but I am placed, like Christ, before God; He has said, “My Father, and your Father;” as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly—that takes another scope altogether.

We come in as guilty sinners. If I merely get hold of the purpose of God, without conscience being reached as to sins, there is no truth in it; I must know what I am in myself before I can know what I am made in Christ. That is the point I had in my mind, which I desire to have your hearts turned to—the difference between saving a sinner, and one whom Christ is not ashamed to call a brother; that is not true about sinful Adam. Looked at as new creatures, we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. In Colossians he does not go much farther than that. A new creature which grows up as a child does in the sphere in which it lives, in which all its thoughts and affections are developed.

Verse 2. You do not want the wisdom of the world here; the life is of God. We are passed through this world, left here for exercises and trials, much to learn and much to unlearn, but still we get this sphere into which we are brought by grace, as well as the nature which is capable of enjoying it.

Verse 6. So walk ye in Him. If Christ is our life, let us walk in Him, the heart not getting out of this sphere which belongs to the new creation. You must all know, if you know anything of your own hearts, that double-mindedness is a great snare, even in the most sincere. We are constantly surrounded with that which belongs to the old man. I am not talking of sins. Take an unconverted man—his heart is like a highway for everything that comes before him in the world. That is an extreme case, but for us there is the danger of distraction, politics, all the things going on around us, and the heart is not living in the sources of strength, it is double-minded—I do not mean in will, but that which determines the conduct of a Christian is not there, it is not the strait and narrow way for his heart, but that running through his mind and heart, which saps the spiritual strength, and the manna is light food for him, not sweet as honey, but light food. That is the danger of distraction, and so he says, “Beware.”

Verse 8. “Not after Christ.” That is the turning-point. The world has its principles, its rudiments, and all these things that distract us belong to the world's estimate of things, and we do not suspect danger. People are talking of things around, and we are drawn into the ordinary conversation, and we come out with the consciousness that we have been unfaithful to Christ, and our spiritual strength is weakened. When the people were thinking of the leeks, the onions, and the cucumbers, they forgot they had been making bricks without straw in Egypt. A glorified Christ on high is the testimony that the world would not have Christ, and it goes on with its own rudiments and principles. Look at the prayer in Eph. 3—what infinite blessedness! the poor world has not got that, and there you get the sphere of the life.

“In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” I get this wonderful central object, that where all the fullness of the Godhead is, it has all been in a Man: how little our hearts reach up to it! He says, “Strengthened with might,” that we may. But there it is for us, and in us too we can say in one sense; but that which He looks for is, that, having got in a Man, the object of the Father's delight, all the fullness of the Godhead, I should feed upon that with joy. If my soul has really felt and seen the fullness of the Godhead in Him in this world, if my eyes are open to see what He was there, I find this wonderful thing, a Man who is much meeker than I am, who thinks about my feelings much more than I do about His, and He is here close to me—a Man much more true, humble, gracious, affable than any other; and now we are united to Him where He is. You find what people do when they are settled in the truth of justification—they go back, and feed upon the Gospels, He becomes the food of the soul, and its object, and we find this unspeakable truth, that He who is sufficient for the Father's delight is sufficient for mine—my thoughts poor enough, but His perfect. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;” that is what is before us in “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” and this truth was the very first one that was attacked, And this is the reason of one of those cases of gracious thoughtfulness which we get at the well of Samaria: “If thou knewest who it was who had come down so low as to be dependent on a woman like you for a drink of water”

He was utterly alone in a world of sinners, and then worked redemption, and now we are brought through the power of redemption and the Holy Ghost to see Who He is.

He never gives up His Godhead place. It does not cease to be condescension when the thing is complete, and instead of waiting on our infirmities, it is bringing us into His blessedness. What are all the distractions of the world in the face of such a thing! It was His intention we should walk by

faith; when He speaks of sight, it is the sight of heavenly things, but it is equally true we cannot live by sight here.

Verse 10. If the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, we are complete in Him too—complete according to God's mind, in Christ before God. What is the measure of that completeness? Christ. And what is that “in Christ?” God looked down at Christ; looks at Him now, He is all the desire of His heart, and we are complete in Him. All that satisfies God's delight, His spiritual judgment (if I may use such an expression of God), He also brings us into (of course, He keeps His Godhead). All His thoughts as to righteousness, holiness, love, are satisfied in Christ, and we are complete in Him. What a place, beloved brethren! And it was brought down to us in perfect grace where we were; and, on the other hand, there is all that God's heart and righteousness could delight in, and we are in that, Christ the measure. God had His measure for man, that was the law, what the first man ought to be, but here it is where all God's thoughts are satisfied, not in the first man, but, in His own wisdom, in the second Man.

He applies it now in detail. We see how God takes us up as poor sinners, to redeem us; first, as regards His dealings with us where we were; and then taking us in our lowest possible condition as dead in sins, we see what He has brought us into. Here I get the putting off, the circumcision; that is no part of the purpose of God. It is not pat off outwardly, it is the discovery, not of certain things we have done, but of this old stock, the flesh, which is enmity against God, a positive thing in me, to which death must be applied; it is in grace, for it is the death of Christ. I find the evil thing, the Flesh, lusting against the Spirit, and the only remedy for that is death; to reckon ourselves dead, that is our place as Christians, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I get the figure of that here in the putting off of a thing always evil in its nature. If I try to keep it down, as not knowing it is dead in Christ, it will be a laborious effort, in which I can never succeed; but if I see it is dead with Christ, I see it is a question between Christ and God. “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” as does not talk of forgiving it; it was an evil nature, and He condemned it in death.

But in all this God is dealing still with the old thing. First, I need to get my sins blotted out as guilt, but when I want, in honesty of heart, to walk aright, I find this—I died there; I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; and I say, It is not I, it is only sin, and that was crucified in the cross. But then all that deals with the old man, It is the necessity of my condition, but not the purpose of God. Many, alas have not even learned that. They see their sins are forgiven, but not that they have died out of that condition, so as to have done with it altogether. I am entitled to reckon myself dead, and then I get in Christ, who has redeemed me by the Holy Ghost, power against it; but still that is all about the old thing. I get this death to sin, and resurrection. too, but still dealing with the old thing. But then, when I come to the new thing, I can look at it in another aspect. It is stated in this epistle and in Ephesians. In Ephesians it is more as to its nature, “which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” God's own nature reproduced, it was manifested in Christ, the pattern and fullness of it. In Col. 3:10 it is expressed a little differently: “Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” I have got to know what love is; I know what righteousness in the divine sense is, and I know what holiness is. If I am chastened, it is that I may be a partaker of His holiness: “renewed in knowledge;” I press that, for while Colossians does not put us so much into the new sphere, I am renewed in knowledge, He has brought into our souls the knowledge of what

is pleasing to God, a new nature, associated with God in its very being and nature.

Supposing for a moment that I have known justification, have known the old man dead, I get another thing, “dead in your sins.” (Ver. 18.) When I come to know myself, I see that, spiritually speaking, I was dead, not a living sinner dealing with the old thing as bad, but I am dead in sins; my starting-point is total alienation from God; it is not the things I have done, nor the evil nature that did them, but no one thing in my heart that answered to God, and when the only thing that answered to God's heart was here, we would have nothing to do with Him. I have got on to another ground now; I have found out that, in respect of God, I was dead in sins; but then, when I was lying, in a spiritual sense, dead in sins, Christ came down to the cross, and He died for my sins, and I get Christ, not as the quickening Son of God, but I get Him quickened, and with that alone in scripture the new creation begins. When speaking of the lusts and sins of the old man, I say, You must die; but now on this ground I am totally dead, not a movement of my heart towards God, and nothing could stir any movement. It was tried, God, in His love, sending His Son, and what it woke was hatred.

I am quickened together with Him, an entirely new thing, which I had not before, Christ now the only life I have. God's power has come in, and taken me spiritually out of that state, as He took Christ out of it, and has put me into Christ, not yet with Him. I am created in Christ Jesus, and so he says, If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation: our faith ought to realize it, for we are not there actually yet.

In this new creation we are sitting together in Christ, but it does not go so far as that in Colossians; He makes me a partaker of His own nature; and that is the only thing I own at all. What is the first man? What does he belong to? To the world, of course. This makes one of the difficulties of the Christian. I cannot expect the world to see what I see. But there is a path the vulture's eye hath not seen, and He does help us through these difficulties. We have to go through it, but this is not the world, the now Man belongs to.

As dead in sins, we are totally away from God. Do not we know it, beloved friends? Take the most respectable, decent man in the world—the things of Christ have no interest for him—he is dead towards God; he may be intelligent, honest, &c., but you never get Christ in his heart. It was just the same with ourselves. It is not a question of reprobate criminals, but we were dead.

Supposing I get a dead man, is there any motion in his heart towards another? No. Can you produce any? No. You may galvanize him for a moment, just as striking impressions may be produced, but he is dead. But I get this unspeakable grace, that Christ came down here actually to death. God quickened Him and us, and I am a partaker of the divine nature, a totally new thing—the second Adam, not the first—a man that belongs to God's new creation, because he is a new creation. We never know thoroughly our blessing until we get hold of that; the Thorough consciousness of what we were as dead in sins, the grace of Christ in coming down here, and therefore we are totally and actually raised out of it into another world. God has a new creation, of which Christ is the Head, He sitting now at God's right hand alone, and we strangers and pilgrims seeking a country, Christ the ensample, and we have to follow His steps, the path which none but the spiritual eye can see through this world. A new man, created of God, the life I have now got as created to satisfy Himself and all that He is. When we were these poor wretched sinners, guilty, away from God, it was in the purpose of His heart, ordained before the world, unto our glory. I

cannot enlarge upon this now perhaps could not do it properly if I tried. But there is that sphere we belong to altogether, though left to go through this world.

Beloved brethren, as born of God you belong not to this world at all, but to the world where Christ has gone to prepare a place for you, and from whence He is preparing you for the place. When dead in sins, He has quickened us together with Christ—the divine grace of the Son of God, who became a man on purpose to die, and came into our death and sins, made sin for us, and He is gone to be the beginning and the Head of this new creation. Our every-day trial is, how far we are living in this new creation, our conversation in heaven.

There are these two things: the nature you have got, “created after God in righteousness and true holiness;” and then, where will that find what will satisfy its affections? It is revealed to us in Christ, and the Holy Ghost down here has brought these things out before us, “that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

We have to see, beloved brethren, how far we are not only keeping out the evil lusts of our hearts, but as new creatures are living in the new creation of God. I may be a babe in it, of course, but the affections of the babe are as true as those of the old man. How far is your conversation in heaven, where Christ is gone to prepare a place where you may be with Him and like Him? your hearts in love and thankfulness to Him who loved you, living in the things He died to bring you into.

What I desire your hearts to study in scripture is this—that while there is this reckoning ourselves dead, those is the other aspect, that, dead in sins, we are created anew in Christ Jesus. You are a new creation as to state and condition, but how far are you living in the sphere it belongs to? It is a wonderful thing to think God has created us thus, Christ the attractive point there, the power of it all; and what is this poor world to me?

The Lord give us, beloved friends, as quickened together with Christ, all trespasses forgiven, to see what it is to have our conversation in that which we belong to.

Discourses on Colossians 3

We get here the great groundwork of Christian life, and the development of Christian life itself, both negatively and positively—what we put off, and what we put on.

It is of all moment for us, not only to understand it as stated in scripture, but to have the statements of scripture transferred to our hearts and consciences, that we are in an entirely new creation, “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” So the first man was made in the image of God, though now a lost ruined creature. In death and resurrection man gets a new place altogether, not only quickened, but quickened together with Christ. A man may be quickened as to the state of his mind, and yet think he is alive in the world, which is the very thing we are not. As to our condition before God, we do not belong to the life that is on this side of death. A new life may be given, and the man left down here; but Christ is looked at as a man who has died here, after having come into our place, taken the judgment, the cup, and gone away beyond it; and this is our place; not as to our bodies, of course, for we have the treasure in earthen vessels, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our bodies; but our place in faith and in life is Christ's place, the second Man's place, and not the first man's. If our bodies, it is the first; if our souls, it is the second. We are taken out of the old place by redemption. I repeat it, for it is very important for the apprehension of faith, that Christ the Son, a divine person, communicated life, but Christ died, and now we are quickened together with Him. The place we were in by sin and disobedience, He was in for us, and having perfected the work needed to redeem us, we are taken up into the place where He is, and when He comes to raise the dead, we shall be there actually. Now it is putting on the character of Christ, then it will be actually the thing in glory.

All through, the teaching here is not simply that we are born of God, but raised with Christ, He as man actually thee, and it is the basis of Christianity to understand it, and the love that gave Him too. We have to watch and deny the ways of the old man; he seeks a place in the world, likes consideration, &c.; but Christ took the lowest place, and calls us to follow Him. As to our place with God, it is as near Him as Christ is. “If you died with Christ, how can you be alive spiritually in this world?” It is very strong as to a Christian's place; the world is always soliciting the Christian back into it; it is an immense system which Satan has built up to act on the flesh and to hide God. This cannot satisfy conscience, and therefore, when a. man's conscience is awakened, he bows his head as a bulrush—saying, “Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” and gets under ordinances. He has not got out in spirit and state from this world—not dead to it; it is the religion Paul had when he was Saul the Pharisee. An unconverted man can do these things better than a converted one, for the latter has too much thought to be satisfied, though he may be doing it. He may go on his knees, and be vexed and angry if you do not think well of him for it: he is making out his religion as a living man, not as a redeemed man.

Man is a religious animal, it is a necessity of man's heart. His reason may reason him out of the want of God, but there it remains at the bottom, and breaks out again, as it was after the French revolution, It is part of man's nature to have to say to God; it is the consciousness that he cannot

supply his own needs in this world, and must turn to a God above him. It may be miserably corrupted, but man wants help, he wants to look up. The devil used this to let him make gods of his passions; but in man's nature is a craving after God, and man, when not set free by the work of redemption, will be religious; it is Pharisaism—there have always been Pharisees. It is just ritualism, alive in the world, and subject to ordinances, not dead with Christ. (Chap. 2:21,22.) I may fancy there are precious mysteries in these things, but they are all to perish with the using, and therefore the old nature makes its religion in them. “A shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” They go back to the shadows, as if they were something real, and are subject to ordinances; man's will is in it, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. It is to the satisfying of the flesh. Who was satisfied when the Pharisee thanked God he was not as other men are? To whose credit did it go? To God or Christ?

Supposing I were to fast seven times a week. Well, I think myself better than the man who only does it six times; it is satisfying the flesh. Supposing it is prayer (I need not say prayer is the most blessed privilege a man has); but if he says so many prayers, the one who says five is better than the one who only says three; it is satisfying the flesh, though neglecting the body. That is, as regards being dead with Christ, I am clean out of it, I have left it all behind; what is it to me if I am dead? No good thing in you at all, for the religious doings of the flesh are flesh still; it is merely saying, I am not dead with Christ. What, as Christians are our greatest privileges may be used in this way.

Chapter 3:1. If risen with Christ, you are not in the world. If I have got this Christ-place, that I have died to the world, making Christ my life, I reckon myself dead, and alive to God, not in Adam, but in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a great thing for the believer, it strikes at the root of a number of things in detail as we go on. Am I, a living man as born of Adam, to question my place with God as such? or am I dead with Christ, risen with Christ, and having my place, with God as such?

“Where Christ sitteth;” there is one Man who has gone there, a blessed Man who loved me and gave Himself for me. I am a risen man, knowing redemption, forgiveness, and my affections resting on Him up there. I see Christ on high. “Set your affections on things above,” &c. He is looking for the state of the affections here. Having the consciousness that Christ is my life up there, my heart follows Him. A dead man cannot have his affections on things of earth.

Verse 3. Another thing which comes out most blessedly here is our complete thorough association with Christ. What is true of Him is true of me. He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one. Christ is dead, we are dead: Christ is hid in God, our life is hid in Him: when He appears, we appear. “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” There is this blessed identification with Christ, our sins put away; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall bear the image of the Heavenly. “As he is, so are we in this world;” not that we are actually in the glory, but it is our place before God. It gives wonderfully settled peace, beloved friends—all sins completely blotted out; but that is not all, there is another thing—in what kind of a way am I going to be received, supposing He had forgiven us, and left us here to go on as best we could? That is not what He has done. “Accepted in the Beloved” —that is what a Christian is. What the flesh has done is blotted out, and put away, but then we are in Christ, “as he is, so are we” —the positive side, in short, not only the negative—loved as Christ is loved, “the glory thou hast given me, I have given them.” “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the

love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them," that is, now. The world will know we are thus loved when it sees us in the same glory with Himself.

Christ was totally alone with God when He was made sin for us, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, and when that was done, sitting down in glory, He sent down the Holy Ghost to give us the consciousness that we are in the same place.

You find many such passages, as in 1 Cor. 15, if Christ is not raised, we are not raised. He was really a dead man, and if I am not raised, Christ is not raised. We get all in this blessed association with Christ. But where it pinches is, if that is true, he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked. That will not do with the world. It pinches our poor wretched hearts if the flesh works; but when the heart is on Christ, it is freedom and blessed liberty; but it is a hard thing to the feeble heart that I am to be like Christ down here. I know I am going to be like Christ in glory, to bear the image of the heavenly, and so thorn is one object on earth to win Him, and to purify myself even as He is pure. Beholding the glory of the Lord, I am changed into the same image.

Here is the groundwork which is thus laid: dead with Christ, risen with Christ—not there yet, of course, but our affections set upon things above, not on things of earth; they cannot go together: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Our affections follow Christ where He is actually gone; our hearts have got into the place where He is risen in glory. How far have our hearts got there? We have actual acceptance, we know we are in Christ before God, but how far are our hearts content to follow Him, as He said, "Follow thou me?" A very strong word, it is as taking us right out of this world—a full and absolute object for the heart. There is a way the vulture's eye hath not seen, the following Christ, the one thing God delights in.

In verse 5, &c., you find more fully than anywhere in scripture what this life of the Christian really is. But it is "members which are on the earth only." But mark this, the moment I am here I have power, which in the flesh I have not. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in my members to bring forth fruit unto death. The renewed man under law has no power; when dead and risen with Christ we get power. "Mortifying" is putting to death. Scripture does not say "dying;" but we are called to reckon ourselves dead because he has done it, and has become our life, and then I say to the flesh, I do not know you, I have had enough of you; I am dead.

Colossians gives the fact, Rom. 6 faith's estimate of it; 2 Cor. 5 is practically carrying it out, and so death works in us, and life in you; there is power, the power of Christ.

Verse 6. Unbelief is not the only ground of judgment. The world is condemned as such for having rejected Christ, but judgment is for works.

Verse 7. "In the which ye also walked some time when ye lived in them." They are not supposed to be in them now, that they were in Christ; they had walked in them, like other Gentiles.

Gross things come first, what is plain and evident; but he does not stop there, for he will not have the flesh stir. How is it that you get angry? Is it not this, that the flesh is not subdued practically? Impatience—where does that come from? You say, "Oh, but it is so vexing, so provoking." Would Christ be impatient? And you have Christ's life. "Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the

old man and his deeds." I get three characters of sin—devil sins and brute sins; corruption; violence in anger and malice; and then, added to that, "Lie not one to another," with the ground of this, "seeing ye have put off the old man."

And now we have the putting on. Mark the measure of this here, "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." My standard of what is good is spiritual knowledge of God's nature. We are renewed in knowledge. I say that does not suit God.

If I take the character and image, I see that manifested in a Man, in Christ. In Ephesians it is, "Be ye followers of God as dear children." He takes the essential names of God, light and love, and in both cases he takes Christ as the pattern. A person says, An imitator of God! how can I be that, a poor worm like me? But what is your pattern? Christ—that is the way we are to walk. It is not simply what is claimed from man under the law, but my walk is to be the expression of God, and I see that in Christ—love manifested in the midst of evil. It is not, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, but, the world being an evil world, you must go and show out God in it as Christ did—"made partakers of the divine nature."

Verse 11. It is not said here, Christ is all in all, though that is very well in its way, but it is something more here, which is very important. Christ is all; no object but Christ. And what does that mean? The cross, perhaps; we may have to go through it. He is in all, the power of life, and the sole object of life. When it is affections, He is all, everything, to me, and in me the power of divine life too.

I have here also a most important principle: if I am to produce these fruits, and walk in this way, as He tells us, and there are a thousand different details in which it comes in every day, and all day—well, I go as the elect of God. If I send my child out, I say, Walk as my child, and he must recollect that he is my child; if he has lost the recollection of it, the whole nature and character of the walk is gone. Be imitators of God as dear children; do not forget that. So here, Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved. Just think, if I carried that with me all the day long! Here am I, the elect of God: God has chosen to delight in me. He will surely make us know our own nothingness, but there is the consciousness of this love, just as a child knows its father's affection, not at all that be is worthy of it. Separate to God, and loved of God, I go through the world in the blessed sense that God, in His sovereign goodness, has taken me into His delight. We find all these things are said of Christ. Was not He the elect of God, One chosen out of the people? Was not He the Holy One in the fullest sense? Was not He the beloved One, the beloved Son, all His life sanctified to the Father in an absolute sense? And He says, Walk as such. You cannot do it unless you have got the motive, that which moves the affections, though there may be duty. We are to walk through this world, not to attain anything, though I shall get joy and blessing; but, having got this place, there is the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new. Being in that place, and having that life, I put on the things that become it— "meekness, long-suffering, humbleness of mind, lowliness." He always took the last place; when rejected, He said, "Let us go to another village."

"Forbearing one another, forgiving one another." Did not Christ forgive us when He was insulted, spit upon? Yes, and you go and do that too. If you look at 1 Cor. 13, you will find there is not one atom of activity spoken of there as to charity, but it is all self-denying, meekness, patience. If you know what self is, you know that is where we are tested. I must bring not merely kindness into the path, but the divine element which checks anything that is contrary to holiness, while humble, lowly, &c. It has with it the divine thing which cannot acquiesce in an evil to itself; love, the bond of

perfectness, will put it all in its place. The moment I bring God in, I bring in what has a claim upon the heart, in thorough consistency with the One who says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” If your heart were always perfectly peaceful, quiet, and gentle, how many things which provoke would not be there. It gives, too, calmness of judgment, so that we know what to do. Christ's peace was never disturbed. You never find Him in a position where He was not Himself; even in Gethsemane, when in an agony, He turned round to His disciples, just as if nothing had happened, and said, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” He goes from one to the other, just what He ought to be with His Father about this dreadful cup, and just what He ought to be with His poor disciples in love to them. Of course we fail, but that is the principle.

Verse 16 is not merely negative, nor the putting on the character of Christ, but the unsearchable riches of Christ, the soul opening out on all that belongs to the Christian; “teaching and admonishing one another.... singing with grace,” &c.. Not merely knowledge, but the affections expressed as human beings do express them, and as they will be expressed in heaven—“singing,” the word giving the knowledge of all things, and then melody in the heart.

“Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” How can I bring Christ into the common things of this world? Whatever word comes out of your mouth, or whatever ye do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. You say, Is there any harm in that? Can you do it in the name of Jesus? if not, do not leave Christ to go and do it without Him. Are you going to see that Exhibition? Why not? I cannot go in the name of the Lord. I take the common things of life purposely to make it simple. Do you smoke? No, I cannot smoke in the name of Jesus. I do not mind what it is—everything in word or deed. The gross things of evil all cast off, and then what would be called by man indifferent things. It is an indifferent thing if I put the book this way, or that way; but supposing my Father held very much to my putting it this way, and I do not, you may say, Well, I do not know about the book, but I know where your heart is. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” If you make a law, it will be very hard, but if Christ is everything to me, it will be easy. If I love my father very much, I shall take great care to put the book as He likes.

Then another thing that marks where the heart is— “giving thanks.” These wretched things, which distract the heart, and force the Holy Ghost to be judging, are not there, and He becomes the Spirit of joy and thankfulness to God, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, which constantly goes up for everything in thankfulness to God in the sense that He is the Author of everything. Even sorrow is blessing: it is more profitable to be in sorrow than in joy. We can give thanks, if really the love of God is in our hearts, walking as to everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, no distraction in the heart; where there is that, the Holy Ghost necessarily becomes a rebuking Spirit, instead of a Spirit of joy and thankfulness.

Are we in His favor which is better than life? Our lips shall praise Him. The Lord only give us, beloved brethren, to walk in that way, confiding in divine love, and seeing the proof of it in the love that gave Himself for us, kept privily in His presence from the provoking of all men, to go through a world of confusion and restlessness with the peace of Christ in our souls.

Chapter 50

Conversion and Salvation

It is important to ponder deeply the difference between conversion and salvation. I have already spoken on this subject, but it is one that is so much neglected, and Christians are so accustomed to be content with a low state of soul, and are so uncertain with regard to salvation, that I shall take the opportunity of adding a few more words. Cornelius was already converted; his prayers and alms were acceptable to God. He was to call for Peter who would tell him words whereby he might be saved. God had been working in his soul, but he did not yet know the value of the work accomplished by the Savior. It is the same in the case of the woman in Luke 7; she loved the Lord deeply, had felt the height of His grace and the depth of her sins; but knew not that all was pardoned. The Lord tells her so. The prodigal son was converted, confessed his sins, and turned towards his Father, but he was not yet clothed with the best garment. His Father had not yet fallen on his neck, he knew not His love; he hardly hoped to be admitted as a servant, and was not in a fit state to enter into the house. Every privilege awaited him, but he did not possess them.

I doubt not that He who has begun the good work will continue it till the day of Christ Jesus. As long as a soul reasons about its state, seeks to know whether it is saved or converted, and judges by its own heart of what is in the heart of God, it is under law; salvation for such an one depends on his own state, not on the love of God and the efficacy of the work of Christ. He may perhaps say he is truly converted; he feels the need of salvation, and believes that others have found it; but he does not himself possess it; just as Israel was not out of the land of Egypt till the sea was crossed. Two things, which cannot be separated, are necessary; faith in the work of Christ, and the knowledge that it is finished. I say they cannot be separated, because, when we believe in the work of Christ, and by faith trust in it, we are sealed by the Holy Ghost, we enjoy peace (the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts), we are reconciled with God, and in Christ are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and we know it by the Holy Ghost given to us. In spirit we are in the Father's house, partaking of the food with which He nourishes His beloved children. Not only has the heart turned towards God, but Christ is our righteousness, who also appears for us continually before the face of God.

Chapter 51

To Correspondents

The Invercargill Circular Of April 1878.

The recent New Zealand Circular has appeared in this country, and indicates such an advance in the writer's soul that, if strengthened in faith to walk consistently with its avowed principles, he cannot abide in the ranks of neutrality, but must seek his place with those branded as Exclusives. He owns that he wrote erroneously in his former tract (entitled “Discipline and Position,” &c.) on the question of wicked association, which is the hinge on which the controversy turns. He dwells on the incompatibility of fellowship with evil and Christ, as in 1 Cor. 8-10, and the still deeper sin of countenancing those who bring not the doctrine of Christ, as in 2 John. But he is, in my judgment, mistaken in grounding the answer of God to this solemn question on the omission of ε■ς σ■ in Matt. 18 as read by Tischendorf in the eighth edition of his New Testament, following such slender evidence as the Sinai and Vat. MSS., two cursives, and fathers who cites loosely and insert as well as omit.

The mass of the uncials and cursives, and every ancient version known, save one, as far as I can speak, add the words, as Tischendorf did in his valuable seventh edition, and almost all editors, save Lachman, including one so extreme as the late Dr. Tregelles, disposed as he was to the narrow line of a very few witnesses of extreme antiquity. Dean Alford even suggested hierarchical reasons as the motive for the omission, in order to enlarge the church's discipline; but this seems questionable, especially as the Latins, ready enough for practice of that kind, give unanimous testimony to what limits the scope to individual trespass.

But surely the writer will see on reflection, that if we disown rightly (as he allows) an assembly which receives or retains those whose walk or doctrine denies their profession of Christ, it is a plain duty to refuse everyone who intelligently upholds or winks at that “wicked association.” Satan would be pleased indeed at high-sounding abstract condemnation in word, coupled with allowance of the evil, by thoroughly responsible souls who help it on. He does not appreciate the difference between the mere religious systems which never took the stand of owning the Spirit's presence to carry out the Lord's will in their midst, and those who owe their rise to the determination of combining holy claims with unholy associations. We have always made allowance for the ill taught Christians in systems as unintelligently but honestly framed as themselves; and for dealing in grace with ignorance; was express provision made in the abused Bethesda Circular. But it was soon discovered that many pleaded ignorance who knew far too much for their integrity or the Lord's honor; and this did lead to caution in wise men, as it engendered suspiciousness in weak men. But it would be folly to place the companies of those who gather to the Lord's name (however loose, neutral, open, or whatever they may be called) on the same ground as the ordinary denominations. It would be their deep dishonor if it could be done righteously, and they really wished it themselves, for it is to avoid the consequences of unfaithfulness in favor of their friends—the essence of party work and worse:

One can only pray that the writer may see this for his own clearance, therefore, and not let “holding the principle of believers' fellowship” as he calls it, swamp the maintenance of practical holiness in the assembly, the Lord's name being bound up with it. The open meetings cannot enjoy the allowance made for ignorance which one accords to a sect, together with the privileges and responsibility of an assembly met in the Lord's name, and recognizing the one body and one Spirit. If they were denominations, like a Wesleyan Society, the English Establishment, or the like, one might receive godly individuals at such, without question; but not so since they have assumed the place of owning the Lord's presence and the free action of the Holy Ghost, which makes every intelligent person among them solemnly responsible after another sort. For honest ignorance we should still make allowance wherever it exists. Now it is for intelligent but willful partisans that the plea is usually set up: is this really defensible? Is it loyalty to Christ? What is more deplorable than this thick-and-thin support of friends in the things of God? It is of esteem among men, but an abomination in His sight.

The writer acknowledges also that the evil is immensely aggravated by full testimony and patient admonition. Any evil might enter any assembly; but it is the want of genuine zeal in judging it scripturally for Christ's sake, which is so fatal that no assembly ought to be owned if it distinctly abandon this paramount duty. The deliberate acceptance of evil, the persistent failure to clear itself, ought to unchurch; and those who, with conscience before God, leave such a defiled meeting, are the very inverse of schismatics, if they also hold fast to the one body. Nor is it a sort of clergy, (that is, men here or there, who set up to an exclusive right to judge these questions,) who have to decide this, nor other meetings in the neighborhood, but saints in the circumstances who have to act for God in their own duty, with the interests of Christ and the church in their hearts.

There are other points, and not without moment, in the Circular needless to notice. Only let the writer beware of being influenced by the imaginary difficulties of ad infinitum contact with evil, which speculative mind's urge to destroy conscientious action. No sober mind but rejects a theoretical association extending through endless ecclesiastical receptions and ramifications. If he believes we are right in refusing a sound man who cleaves to and justifies an unsound or wicked association, he surrenders the principle of “Open Brethren,” and is bound to act accordingly. The more devoted the saints may be individually, the worse is their sanction of what is unholy. The writer endorses this himself, which is really the principle, and defines the position, of the so-called Exclusive Brethren.

Chapter 52

God's Dealings With David

God does not set David at once in the height of power, as He did in the case of Saul. He must make his way by grace and faith through all kinds of difficulties; and, although filled with the Holy Spirit, he must act in the presence of a power devoid of the Spirit, and which God has not yet set aside. He must be subject and be humbled, be must feel his entire dependence on God, that God is sufficient in all circumstances; and his faith must be developed by trial in which God is felt to be all. Beautiful type of One who, without sin, journeyed through far more painful circumstances and not only a type, but at the same time a vessel prepared by God for the Holy Spirit, who could fill him with sentiments which, while describing so touchingly the sufferings of Christ Himself and His sympathy with His people, exhibit to those who were to tread in weakness the same path as Himself their resource in God. For one cannot doubt that the trials of David gave rise to the greater part of those beautiful psalms which, depicting the circumstances, the trials, and the complaints of the remnant of Israel in the last days, as well as of Christ Himself (who in Spirit has identified Himself with them, and has undertaken their cause), have thus furnished so many other burdened souls with the expression and the relief of their sorrows; and although their interpretation of these psalms may have been incorrect, yet their hearts were not mistaken.

Chapter 53

The Day of Atonement: Leviticus 16

It is of some importance to see, and I therefore remark it at the starting-point, that atonement differs sensibly from redemption. In the book of Exodus stands the great type of redemption, and in Leviticus of atonement; the truth in both centers in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament redemption was the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh and Egypt. In His mercy God interposed to set free the people from the house of bondage, and as the passover set forth its righteous ground in the blood of the lamb, so was there the figure of Christ's death and resurrection in the passage of the Red Sea, or rather of death with Christ, and hence of faith living to God. But this is not so much what is taught in the book of Leviticus, as a sacrifice for sin perfectly glorifying God within the holiest, and a testimony to the people without that their sins were confessed and borne away to be remembered by Him no more.

On one day alone every year in Israel there was a sacrificial work done which had for its object to fit the people and the priests for their respective measures of nearness to God. It was now a question, not of enemies, nor even of Israel's being delivered, but of conciliating with God's holiness and righteousness a people guilty and defiled. Could He own in living relationship a people with sins and transgressions upon them? Were they by these defilements to be utterly incapacitated in the person of the high priest from coming into or standing in the presence of God?

Atonement met their need and His glory; for therein God proposed for that very people while in the wilderness—the place where uncleanness abounds and men are always exposed to it—to provide a way worthy of Himself and suited to them whereby their representative might approach Him. He proposed Himself to give them a ground of access to His sanctuary, and this in such a way that there should be no lowering of His character on the one hand, and on the other no denial of their uncleanness, but both known far better and more deeply felt than before. There was such a laying bare before God of their evils on that great day as was never witnessed on any other of the year. But the same institution which exposed did also cover them, at the same time judging and canceling their guilt, and this, one may add, by the most unsparing dealing on God's part and the most solemn confession on man's. Nevertheless that judgment fell not on the guilty but on a God-appointed sacrifice. This is the truth with which the chapter opens. Here of course it is but a figure; but the figure of a most blessed and efficacious reality, of the utmost interest to us to whom God has now revealed its fullness in the death of Christ. For this very figure of atonement in Israel the Spirit of God takes up in the New Testament to show, not merely that we have an atoning sacrifice no less than they, but that theirs was but a feeble shadow and not the very image, of what grace has given us now in the one offering of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Heb. 9; 10)

I shall pursue the chapter just as God's word has given it. He communicated it in such a way as to be not merely a most solemn rite for Israel, but also evermore for our instruction. Assuredly too it will be a profit to Israel, in the day when their eyes are opened to recognize in the crucified One the true Son of David, and they cast away every rag of beggarly elements that they may follow Him. This favor is reserved for them beyond all doubt; but in this very chapter, as is now somewhat

known, we can read our distinctive portion as Christians, if not as the church, a foreshewn blessedness which they are not to taste even in that day. It is revealed so distinctly, and at the same time so simply, that any child of God, no matter how little instructed, should be able to discern it with his own eyes and feel it in his heart. The goodness of the Lord has thought of us now in this chapter, not merely of the people as they shall be restored by-and-by, but of those who are being called by grace while Israel are no people at all.

For I may assume that you are aware how for two thousand years and more the children of Israel have ceased to be the people of God; and you ought to know also (I am obliged to say this, for some may not know it) that they will yet be restored to that position. The scriptures that predict the sentence of Lo-Ammi (not-My-people) are equally explicit that the title they have lost is to be given back to them by God's grace. Hos. 1; 2 Not less distinct is the testimony of the New Testament in Rom. 11. Is God doing nothing meanwhile? Has He left an unoccupied blank between Israel's ceasing to be His people, and their final blessing and glory in their own land? I speak not merely of “the times of the Gentiles” which span the interval; but within these He has brought out, founded on accomplished redemption in Christ, the mystery hidden from ages, Christ given to be head over all things to the church which is His body. By the one Spirit sent down from heaven all that believe in Christ are now baptized into this one body. Thus, within the Gentile parenthesis of judgment on Israel, there is an inner one of heavenly blessing, through association with Christ at God's right hand. The typical intimation, to go no farther, of our chapter teaches this, not merely leaves room for better than Israel's place, but in a measure shows it fulfilled during the present period only, besides pointing to the future resumption of their title by the children of Israel.

In many ways, therefore, is the type of the atonement day instructive to all who can read it in the light of a dead, glorified, and returning Christ. What gave rise to the ordinance of atonement day in Lev. 16, was the death of the two sons of Aaron. They had presumptuously trifled with the presence of the Lord, and they perished. Aaron is now informed by Moses of the way in which he might safely, as the representative of the people, draw near the presence of God.

It is clear that in this we cannot regard Aaron as in analogy with our Lord Jesus. Types must be taken not merely as resemblances but as contrasts. It is of the nature of a type that it never rises to the fullness of the truth. No shadow could ever match the Savior. Hence we must remember that, although there are certain intimations of truth in all these types, yet (as the apostle shows us) they all fall short. What in the type was done once a year is accomplished in Christ's death, once and for over, as far as we are concerned. What was formally outwardly effected by the washing of water in the case of Aaron points to the purity of Christ's person of human nature in Him as well as divine. Christ was the Holy One at all times. There was no such thing as a process to fit the Lord Jesus for His work. He was a divine person and needed nothing from without. In Aaron's case there was a process of cleansing. It was only this that could give a feeble intimation of what was absolutely necessary in order to atonement, namely, One who is Himself spotless. Such was Christ, “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” He was not made holy, or harmless, or even separate from sinners; He was so. He was made higher than the heavens. This language views Him as a man, a servant, and a victim here, because of which He is now exalted. It is in connection with what He was made that His exaltation is spoken of. Where only His own divine glory is the subject, there is no word about exalting Christ; but if He goes down, then He can be lifted up; and He did first descend that He might ascend far above all

heavens. His resurrection, &c., like His death are not of Himself alone, but for us. In His humiliation for God's glory and in His love He was laying a foundation for the blessing of others; in His ascension He was triumphing righteously for others too. He was made sin on the one hand, and on the other He is made Lord and Christ and far, far more. He was made flesh, He became man; but there was no sin in Him. Sin does not, as philosophers and heretics taught, necessarily belong to humanity. When God made Adam at first, there was no sin in him. Sin came in by listening to Satan, but Christ ever obeyed and ever abode the Holy One of God.

Atonement is for sin and for sin alone—no doubt in the first aspect of it for the glory of God, for sin was an outrage on God Himself here below, quite apart from anybody being forgiven or saved, and the Lord Jesus in this very chapter is shown, in type, dying as the primary truth that God might be glorified in respect of sin. Hence the blood was carried in and sprinkled in the holiest. But we must not overlook the necessary limitations of types, indeed there is no part of scripture where there is greater danger to those whom the apostle Peter calls “unlearned and unstable.” Men see enough to invite and exercise their thoughts; but Christ as fully revealed is the one safe-guard. Human intellect never can be trusted; and for this reason its natural and invariable tendency is to exalt man: the object of God's Spirit is to glorify Christ. We therefore need the Spirit of God to keep us right, otherwise we exalt ourselves instead of Him; and self-exaltation cannot but depreciate Christ.

Here then we find God laying down moans by which there should in future be no such thing, either as ignoring sin, or as involving judgment in drawing near to Him. It had been fatal, not merely to Israel, but even to Aaron's sons. How could a sinful man venture into the presence of God? The very priests had not completed their consecration before two of them died, and the other two were in danger of dying. So we learn in chapter x. Now God sets forth in type by what means guilty men, a people who own their uncleanness of all sorts, may nevertheless, in the person of their representative, draw near into the holiest of all. This is what comes before us in the type of atonement day. “Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place with a young bullock for a sin-offering” —that is the first thought— “and a ram for a burnt-offering.” There is no coming short of blessing, no incompleteness in the thoughts of God. He would not be content with merely meeting sin; He would give in type the sign and means of acceptance; not merely blot out the consequences of evil, but invest us with conscious favor in drawing near to Himself. How full of grace He is! How bent on the blessing of His people!

“He shall put on the holy linen coat.” In this we have the character needful for approaching God, what was displayed outwardly to the eye in Aaron. What did not man, what God, see in our Lord Jesus? “He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen miter shall he be attired; these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.” A sinful man, Aaron needed thus to have all the consequences of sin removed, as far as that could be done figuratively; needed to have himself invested in a way fit for the holy presence of God. These were holy garments, not the garments of glory and beauty, but specially holy for this day and work.

The sixth verse shows another marked contrast between the type and the Antitype. Aaron has to bring a sin-offering “for himself;” but this were impossible where Christ is concerned. Needing no offering, He could be exclusively for others; He had neither defects nor wants of His own. His love

therefore could be occupied with God and us, without thought of Himself. “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live” [not merely “by,” which is far short of the truth, but] “on account of the Father.” What a glorious picture of One who had not an object apart from His Father, nor a motive for anything that He did What was the effect of it? The most perfect outgoing of affection—holy and gracious affection—ready to respond to every call, a poor sinner, a leper, a paralytic, or a blind beggar of the city, or a babe in its mother's arms. He was here a divine person, as open for every cry of need, as able to meet it in the power of God. He lived on account of the Father. He came down for the purpose not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him; so that, whosoever came, He welcomed. If He had lived for Himself, He might have preferred this one to that. But no! If the Father brought any, this was enough; if the Father drew, He received: “him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out; for I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” There met love and holiness; among men but entirely set apart to God, and the effect was blessing flowing out around Him. He was, as scripture says, consumed by zeal for His Father's house. An insult to Himself He ever bore with perfect patience; but He could not tolerate any affront to His Father. He never scourged one who spoke against Himself. But when He saw what grieved His heart in His Father's house, He at once drives out what was a disgrace to God and destruction to men. Indeed the two things go together, whatever man may dream. And what will His God do in the day of retribution to those that despise Him?

We see then in the type that the high-priest offered his bullock for himself as a sin-offering, but in Christ, just because His offering was not needed for Himself, it could be perfectly for others. This contrast is warranted, not merely by the general truth of scripture as to the person of Christ, but by the direct and positive statement of the Holy Ghost in the epistle to the Hebrews. He contrasts the Lord Jesus with Aaron in this respect. It seems strange a Christian should need to be recalled to it now. But some have been drawn into license in their thoughts and language as to Christ, than which nothing is more dangerous.

In the beginning of Heb. 5 the apostle is not describing Christ but the Aaronic priesthood, with which he proceeds to contrast the Lord Jesus. Aaron was taken from among men, an infirm man himself, he could feel for others. But to apply such words to Christ is serious indeed. The Spirit really contrasts it with Him. Christ was the Son of God, as is elaborately proved in this chapter, in order to be priest (though no doubt He must also become a man); so that, instead of deriving His honor from the priesthood, He conferred the highest on it. Quite the reverse was Aaron's case, whose honor it was to be called of God to the priesthood.

The Lord Jesus was the Son of God who glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but, called of God after the order of Melchisedec, gave priesthood an honor it never did nor could otherwise possess. There was found for the first time a priest, not only perfect according to God's mind and glory, but consequently of unfailing avail for man.

In verse 7 we have another offering, and an offering of a kindred character. Only in this case there is not one animal only, but two. “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for Jehovah, and the other for the scape-goat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which Jehovah's lot fell, and offer him for a sin-offering; but the goat on which the lot fell to be the scape-goat shall be presented alive before Jehovah, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scape-goat into the wilderness.” Here is a marked difference between the two goats which

together constitute the sin-offering for the children of Israel. The difference is told out in the fact and name of the two lots. What can be plainer than Jehovah's lot, and the people's lot? The reason too is most important; yet, spite of this early teaching of the Spirit, it has been constantly forgotten.

For what do we find even among those who really preach most earnestly, and are, by the grace of God, blessed to souls? What is the character of their preaching? Is the first place given to God's glory? Do they start aright from Jehovah's lot—how Christ has glorified God? Not so. What they continually iterate and reiterate is what Christ is for man. Consequently there is the tendency to dwell most on the circumstances in Christ's work which move the feelings, which bring out the incomparable patience and grace of Christ towards man. They see and press sufferings from man and on behalf of man. It is quite otherwise in what the Holy Ghost shows us here. He begins with what was for God. The first lot was Jehovah's, not the people's. In evangelical preaching the one thought ordinarily is the people's lot. The value of Jehovah's lot as distinct from the people's is not known. Not but that they believe that God was needed, and had, as their divines commonly say, “satisfaction.” Is this denied? Surely not; but there was really a great deal more. What I would now point out, however, is that, in the teaching of the Holy Spirit, Jehovah's lot is put first, while in the common teaching even of beloved men of God it too often has no place at all.

I am not speaking of ritualists. We may pity their self-complacency, while on ground of extreme danger, groping with their tiny tapers, where God alone can give light as He has given it most fully in Christ and His word by the Spirit. I am speaking of such as are generally held up as the soundest preachers now and for hundreds of years. And I affirm as unquestionable, that Jehovah's lot has no such distinctive place in their preaching, as God's word laid down even in the law of Moses. The people's lot is all but exclusively dwelt on, and consequently the great point in the minds of these preachers of grace is the removal of the iniquity and transgressions and uncleanness of the people. But in the death of Christ there is incomparably more. He did bear our sins in His own body on the tree. This is most true and exactly what is conveyed by the people's lot. But what is taught by Jehovah's lot? There you will find a great and general defect in the gospel preached by those reputed to hold the doctrines of grace. And this goes far to explain why we so seldom hear of the “righteousness of God.” God's own glory in Christ's work with respect to sin is not understood. Hence, habitually the most learned of their theologians question what is meant by such expressions as “coming short of the glory of God.” The uncertainty of their maturest men even on these capital points, which every Christian should know clearly, is truly lamentable. Why is it so? Mainly because they slip over the truth that answers to Jehovah's lot—that side in Christ's work which secured in the first plane the glory of God.

Let us listen to the words of our Lord Jesus: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” Not a word about sinners, though no doubt this never could so have been, had there not been sin: but it is not the first thought. How was He glorified? By being seated on the throne in heaven? By being lifted up on the cross on earth. It was the moral glory of Him who restored what He took not away; who gave up everything that God might be vindicated; who not only surrendered all, but suffered to the uttermost, and this not in the first instance to save sinners but to glorify God about sin. True, He did save sinners; but the prime thought with Christ, as in all His life, so in His death, was Godward. You do not see the difference? It is really immense, and of all possible moment. During His life it was the Father that He was pleasing in all the affections and all

the obedience of the Son. But then came the otherwise insoluble question: Would He endure the judgment of God? Would He not merely abandon everything, but be Himself abandoned of God and suffer that He might be glorified where He had been dishonored, in the place of sin? He had been glorified throughout the life of the only obedient One who ever walked this earth. But would He glorify Him by bearing that which was most hateful, not only to God, but to Himself the Holy One of God? The answer is, He gave Himself up for His glory, and so passed under, not merely death, but also divine judgment. In His case judgment came before death. And such is the meaning of that most wonderful scene, where all is wonderful, at the close of the life of our Lord Jesus. Wherefore was that strange, that infinite, abandonment of Himself? That God, in all His moral being, His truth, love, holiness, righteousness, and majesty, might be glorified.

There is another thing. “If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself.” The glorifying of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God was the answer to the moral glory we find in His cross. “And shall straightway glorify him.” God did not wait for the restoration of His kingdom to Israel. He raised Him up and set Him at His own right hand, far above every name that is named. This was the answer to the cross, the only adequate answer to the Lord's giving Himself up to the judgment of God against sin. I say the judgment of sin, because therein the question is not yet raised as to who is to be saved. The matter in hand was God's glory in presence of sin. And so we find our Lord in John 10 saying, not that He was loved because He laid down His life for the sheep, but, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” None doubts the delight of the Father in His dying for the sheep, but apart from that work, for surely in the absolute laying down of His life, there was manifested perfect confidence in His Father as well as devotedness to His glory. He would lay it down and take it again; and on this account the Father loved Him. Surely this should—could—not be forgotten by our hearts if we love God and feel how He has been outraged by sin. To lay down His life because of the glory of God; to show the most absolute confidence in God and the moat complete surrender and self-sacrifice for God is of an essentially higher character than any application of His work to bear our sins and secure our pardon. Putting the people's lot first—that is, making what Christ suffered for us the principal or only thing—is not only unscriptural, but an essentially God-forgetting and selfish consideration. It is the outcome of that natural instinctive egoism which, even when we are awakened and in some degree instructed by the Spirit, is apt to rise so readily to the surface in us. How inveterately the heart turns to think, if not what we are to do, at any rate, how things affect ourselves in the first place! One easily understands it as being natural. Still it is incomparably more blessed to estimate God's side of Christ and His work confiding in Him about ourselves without question. If God proposes aught for our learning, it is well to weigh it; but if God gives, it is according to His own thoughts and heart, and this will always prove the best portion. Be remembers our every want as well as His glory; and this finds its fullest illustration in the death of Christ as scripture puts it.

We look then first at Jehovah's lot. The first goat was in respect of that which, having been compromised by sin, and had to be cleared. And if we look into the New Testament, we shall find that this has a marvelous effect which could not be shown in the Old. You are aware that there was no such thing as the going out of the message of grace to men during the period of God's special dealings with Israel. But when our Lord died on the cross, He died not merely for “that nation” (the old people of God), He tasted death for every man. I know there are many Christians

who would narrow this if they could. How few are those who really believe there was such largeness of grace in God's mind. But it is vain to resist scripture. Our wisdom is to learn, and we cannot learn except by subjection to the word of God. We may understand it little at first; but the path of wisdom is to bow and accept even what we do not comprehend. We shall understand better as God sees to His glory who never forgets, and as we are fit for it.

In Rom. 3 we may see this truth in distinct reference to the very type before us. “God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiatory [or mercy-seat] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God,” &c. I do not quote the A.V. in the word “propitiation,” as it is translated in our version, but have given you what I believe to be the truer idea, as it also stands in the Authorized Version of Heb. 9:6. Here there is clearly a reference to the first goat in

Lev. 16; in the second there was no blood shed whatever. The whole point in the second is that the goat was presented alive, and sent away into a land of forgetfulness to be seen no morn. But the first was killed, and the blood carried into the holiest to be sprinkled there, and on the altar, “To declare his righteousness.” Up to this time man's righteousness had been in question, and man completely failed, never more so indeed than in the cross. But in that cross of Christ God established forever His righteousness. There Christ who knew no sin, was made sin, and so glorified God perfectly, even as to sin. It was God made Him sin; and I understand thereby, that God charged Him with all its consequences as far as this could be done by imputation to the Holy One, who suffered for sin as really, yea, far more perfectly, than if it had been His own. Christ went down as truly and unsparingly under the divine judgment of sin, as if He had been Himself guilty. He was so completely charged with sin that God dealt with Him not only in death but in judgment. For nothing more distinctly marks judgment than God's forsaking one. If you say it is also marked by punishment, what punishment was not there? He was bruised and wounded, and He had stripes, by which, I do not mean, what He received only at the hands of man, but above all from God.

When it is said, “By his stripes we are healed,” is it credible that a saint could believe they refer to His being scourged by the soldiers? These figures so multiplied in Isa. 53 express not merely of what man did to Jesus, but what He suffered from Jehovah, when He laid the iniquity of His own on the rejected Messiah—figures taken from what is common among men, but above all to express that which He Himself inflicted. It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, it was He put Him to grief; and it was for the transgression of His people that He was stricken. He bare the sin of many.

So in Rom. 3 the death of the Lord Jesus is to declare God's righteousness. Now that Christ had done this work, it remained for God to show His estimate and acceptance of it. What is God's measure even now of His value for what Christ suffered? That every believer in Him is justified, their guilt gone at once and forever It is no longer then a question of man or his ways, but of Christ and His death. The believer has, at God's call to him as a sinner, given up all pretension to do anything for God or himself, and found in Christ redemption. God found His all in Christ, even for the lost in His death, and proclaims this truth to man that believing he may be justified. Thus God's righteousness is declared not only in receiving Christ to His right hand, but in the justification of the believer. God set such a value on Christ's surrender of Himself to death for God's glory which sin compromised, that man's righteousness is not now in question but God's. The justification of the

believer is a question of God's marking His value for Christ's work. This is connected first with “the remission of sins that are past,” meaning not our sins in our past lives, but the sins of the saints in times gone by, which had been passed over in anticipation of the work of the coming One. I repeat, “the passing over” of these sins; for the word here used is peculiar, in fact never found elsewhere in the New Testament. It is not exactly remission, but pretermission. In fact, God forbore to judge. From Old Testament times, God was waiting for the work of Christ, and, because of that work, He passed by the sins of the elders who obtained a good report of all that believed on Him who was coming. But is this all we enjoy now? Far from it. “To declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth on Jesus.” (Ver. 26.) There is not a word about “forbearance” here, the work being now accomplished and indeed accepted. The difference may be compared to that between a creditor who had every confidence that the debt would be paid, and therefore forbore to press for payment; and that creditor when he has received payment of the debt. In this case we do not speak of forbearance, but of acknowledging that payment has been made. God is now “just, and the justifier of him that believeth.” This is the gospel of God.

But remark also in connection with this what is found in verse 22. “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” This also has its place in the type; we can at any rate connect the two. The blood, whether of bullock or of goat, which was put upon and before the mercy-seat, could not be limited in its value typically before God. Certainly we learn from the apostle that the testimony to the blood of Christ was meant to go out far beyond those that believe. The righteousness of God is “unto all,” without restriction, though only upon all them that believe. There are two things, therefore; the universal aspect, and the special effect. Its actual efficacy is only on those who believe, but the rights of the blood of Christ demand that the gospel should be preached to every creature under heaven. It is due to Christ, and His blood, that every poor sinner in the world should be met by the message of God's righteousness in the gospel, a righteousness which condemns not but justifies all who believe. But what would be the effect of this alone? Had there been no more than the gracious message presented to all, not a sinner would have been saved. Just because we are sinners, and such by nature, we give God credit for no hard ways with us who deserve condemnation, instead of saving grace. We believe not Him, but our own competence, instead of our total ruin. Because a man is a sinner, he is an enemy of God. He may be ever so decent a man in his way among men; but the moment you measure him by his conduct towards God, you come to another conclusion. He is found totally wanting; he has not a right thought of God, nor a true judgment of himself, nor sound sense of what he needs, still less of what is due to God. Hence had God done nothing more than send out to all the good news of Christ's sacrifice for sin, infinite as it is to all, not one would have been saved. There is naturally in us such a repugnance to face our true state before God, such a shrinking on the one hand from the conviction and confession of our sins and guilt, and, on the other, such indisposition to believe God's grace and submit to His righteousness, that not a soul would bow to His message. Was it not so once with every one of us? I speak to you that believe. Were you always believers? Why were you not? Christ's blood had been shed ages before we were born. Why did we not believe the first time we heard the gospel? Because we were not wretched and guilty only, but self-willed, haughty, and rebellious sinners. How came we to believe at last? By some goodness or truth in us? In no wise, but because God's Spirit wrought to make us sensible of our evil and of His good; brought us down in our own eyes and exalted God's grace to

us in Christ. Thus facts agree with the written word, and there is a further dealing of God essential to the saving of every soul, the intervention of the Spirit with us personally by the truth to make us feel and own our sins and sinfulness in presence of His love and thus bring us to God by the faith of Jesus. For naturally every soul is either opposed or indifferent, and in one or the other way shows that carnal mind which is enmity against God. But we are not to suppose that this resistance always takes the same form. All have gone astray, but every one in his own way. The same particular manner of unbelief is not found in all. The calm unbelief that thinks highly of itself is quite as offensive in the sight of God as the bold unbelief that openly despises the scriptures. When the grace of God works personally, the result is that we break down in repentance and truly believe.

First, then is the righteousness of God unto all without distinction: and this answers not to the people's, but to Jehovah's, lot. The sacrifice of Christ has made it consistent with God's character to send out the gospel to every one. It is another thing where the word takes effect, and His righteousness is “upon all them that believe.” There is a gracious result produced, according to God, and by His Spirit they believe. To believe on Christ is as truly given as to suffer for His sake. (Cf. also Eph. 2:8.) The one is just as much the fruit of God's grace as the other. No soul ever believed savingly till it was given of God to believe. Not one of us ever would have believed on Christ's name, unless also born of God. It is not a question therefore of God vindicated alone, but of our being quickened also. We had still been lost, had God merely sent out the message announcing His love in Christ's death, addressed to our responsibility. It is of grace alone that any believe. I know that men as such would deny this, because they think more of their own character than of God's. But if a man really judges himself in the light of God, he will find little difficulty in believing that he is as bad as God says he is. What we find here is, however, Jehovah's lot in the first instance; we shall, by-and-by, see the people's lot.

In verses 11-14 a fresh distinction is brought in. But first there is the fullness of the fragrance of Christ. We must remember that it was not the offering of Christ made Him fragrant, it was what attached to His own person. He was ever the Father's delight. Not a particle in Him offends God. The Son became a man, the Word was made flesh. He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, though for that reason not sinful flesh. On the other hand, neither is it true that He was merely in the likeness of flesh. He was made really flesh, but when “sinful” is added, then only in the likeness of it. He was really and properly a man, and He is so still. His being risen from the dead does not in any way detract from His real humanity. He is man and will be so forever. He is much more, we know; He is the Son of God. That blessed One deigned to be a man, but a man without sin, and so He could be made sin. He never was made sin before the cross, but He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, the moment He entered the world.

In this type then we see a beautiful testimony to the fragrance of the Lord before His work on the cross. The blood for others was not presented till after the incense had been brought in and had ascended to Jehovah. Then the blood of the bullock is brought in and sprinkled once on the mercy-seat, before it seven times—a perfect witness. Next, “he shall kill the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock.” Why are both the blood of the goat and the blood of the bullock thus sprinkled? I know there are those who find in the death of Christ nothing but God's providing for His church. But there is more every way. I have already shown that the first requisite is for His own

glory. But even when we restrict our thought to man, I deny that it is only for the church that Jesus died. The blood of the bullock and the blood of the goat were not two offerings for the same class. The difference was made too precisely in the type, to allow the thought of mere repetition in the antitype. As the priests and people differed, so yet more what was represented. There is one manifest enough instance how loose and incorrect are the notions of theology. I am not aware of any theologian that ever lived who distinguished rightly the truths taught by the bullock and the goat. Perhaps one may say so after having read more than most. So far as my memory serves me in recalling the ancient fathers—both Greek and Latin—and modern theologians in our own and other countries, I fail to think of one who makes the obvious distinction. Do I mention this for the purpose of showing that any of us now understand better? God forbid such a thought! I say it not for exalting men now above those of the past, but to show how rich and deep God's word is, and that theology is an empty thing after all, for it cannot explain even the simplest scripture about the death of Christ.

What then are we to learn from this double presentation in type of the offering of Christ? Why the bullock and the goat? The New Testament enables us to answer this very simply. Christ was to die “for that nation” —Israel— “and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad.” Thus two distinct objects meet in the death of Christ. First, we see His people—then rejecting Him. Yet He died for them. But who were the children of God that were to be gathered together? This is going on now. It is not merely saving souls, but gathering together God's children. The saved are gathered together in one. Hence, every Christian owns as a brother (and, according to the epistles, as a member of Christ) a believer from the ends of the earth; the truth of which relationship makes it so offensive to hear people talk of this church and that, forgetting that, if scripture should decide, there is but one. Whether in John's writings, or in Paul's, we find always of course the same substantial truth, the unity of those now gathered by the Spirit of God. Indeed the word of God by no apostles allows the splitting up of this unity into various distinctive bodies or sects. Not that there may not be ever so many meetings, even in one city, as in Jerusalem or Rome; but there was maintained the testimony to unity not only in each place but all over the world.

We do not of course hear of this unity in the type, but when the antitype appears. But we might see that Christ's work goes on beyond “the people” to those whom the priestly house represents now brought into blessing, as the people will be by-and-by through the death of Christ, While Israel are still the rejecters of Christ and therefore themselves rejected of God, God is gathering together in one His children who formerly had been scattered. Instead of being hidden among Jews and Gentiles, and mixed up with them, they are now called out to form a distinct company. “And, being let go, they went to their own company.” (Acts 4:23.) Instinctively believers had begun to ant on the truth. So again, if they went to another place, they found children of God gathered together as such, and companied with them. This had never been the case before. Where they went, the preaching of the apostles, &c., was used to gather them. What brought them together'? The power and presence of the Spirit who gave them the knowledge that Christ had died for this very purpose. How wise, full, and precise is scripture. We little know its worth.

Here then we see not the unintelligence of man, but the work of God; His provision for man's necessity—and this in two distinct aspects—the bullock and the goat. Now let us, marking what the blood of the bullock is for, search the New Testament for divine light on all. “And Aaron shall

bring the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself and shall make an atonement for himself and for his house." (Ver. 11.) It was for the priest himself and for his house.

The Epistle to the Hebrews states expressly that Christ's offering was not for Himself, but it shows also a priestly house for whom it was. There were those that God gave to Him, as it is written, "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me." The true Aaron has a house and a family now on earth—Christians! He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And hence one object of this epistle is to prove among other things that now not only are our sins forgiven, but we have a title to enter into the sanctuary. And who can enter into the sanctuary but a son of Aaron? There was nothing so characteristic of the Aaronic family as entrance into the holy place. An Israelite could not do so; he could only go beyond the court of the tabernacle. The Hebrew believers, or Christians, are invited to enter not into the holy place only, but into the most holy. The privilege of a Christian is beyond type of Aaron's eons, just as the glory of Christ is beyond Aaron. The apostle can say, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." Who are meant by "brethren?" Surely not the early believers only, but every child and saint of God now. All these are "brethren," and exhorted now to draw near with boldness into the holiest. And that he means nothing short of the holiest of all is evident from the words "through the veil." Therefore it was that, when Christ died, the veil was rent from top to bottom. It was to show that there was an end of that which kept man outside. The believer can now go into the presence of God. Of course it. is by faith, and by faith in the blood of Christ. What characterizes a Christian according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, is this right of entrance into the holiest. He is not merely one of the people but a priest, yea, is more free of the holiest than Aaron. Men, women, and children who believe on the Lord Jesus, are Christ's house, and associated with Him.

And here let me say that we must never confound priesthood with ministry. They are quite distinct things. Every person who can draw near into the holiest is a priest, but not every person is a minister. A minister of the word is formed by the Spirit bestowing a distinct gift of Christ. Ministry is a matter of the sovereign choice of the Lord among the saved, and depends on a gift which the Holy Ghost imparts. It is quite a distinct thing from priesthood. So that I trust I may say without offense that Luther was entirely wrong in his idea of a Christian democracy. If all are teachers, it is hard to know who are to be the taught. If God had been pleased so to constitute His people, of course one would have heartily accepted it. But it was a confusion of thought, however great and good a man he may have been.

Aaron's house, then, was the priestly family, which typified the whole Christian family. For them the blood of the bullock was shed. For whom then was the blood of the goat? For the people. "Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people." (Ver. 15.) Further we read, "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place until he come out." There He is now in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not men. He is gone in not with the blood of others, but with His own, and that not merely for us who believe and who have now the incomparable privilege of entering in spirit into that sanctuary "whither the fore-runner is for us entered" —but for the people. You may ask, why have we such a privilege now? why cannot the people by-and-by in their time of blessing have the same? Because it is not the same thing to believe in a rejected Christ, as to welcome One who comes forth in manifest power and glory. God puts special honor on those who believe while He is

hidden from the world. Surely those who see Him by-and-by will be blessed, but “blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.” This is our portion, the portion of those who now by the sovereign grace of God are severed from the world to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to pursue with the heart's delight the path He has traced into the very presence of God, knowing that there He has sat down for us and that we may now freely draw near where He is.

But He will come out. Has He come out yet? No. Now mark the difference and what fixes the true interpretation of the goat. I said that the goat is for the people as distinct from the priestly family; that is, for those who are to believe by-and-by, in contrast with those who believe now. And this may be made perfectly plain, spite of every prejudice. “And he shall go out,” &c. (ver. 18), just as we know the Lord Jesus Christ is coming from the right hand of God in heaven.

There is not a creed in Christendom that does not own His coming again. Not that I cite creeds as any authority: but to those who value them more than I do I do say they habitually teach that He is coming again. That is what answers to Aaron's coming out in the type. “He shall go out unto the altar that is before Jehovah and make an atonement for it.... And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.”

When the Lord does come, He will come to reign over this world, to take the lower heavens and the earth under His own power and rule for the glory of God. We find in the Epistle to the Colossians that He by the blood of His cross not only made peace, but is to reconcile all things whether in heaven or on earth. This corresponds with what we have here. The blessing of all creation coalesces with the forgiveness of Israel.

“And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar he shall bring the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.” Remember this is after He has come out of the sanctuary. Are the Christians waiting for our portion? Are we looking for the Lord Jesus to come out and take away our sins then? What sort of doctrine would this be? You know well that what the gospel proclaims is, not that the Lord is going to do something for our sins then, but that He has already done it perfectly and forever, and that He is gone into heaven where we now draw near through the rent veil, which is characteristic of Christianity. He is to come forth and be seen by His own people, the Jews; and there applies the live goat.

Why is it put after His coming out? The goat already was slain is the type of the work done for the people, the live goat of its future application to them. The reason why the latter is put at the end of all is because God foresaw that the time when the people will be brought under the effect of the work of Christ is not while He abides in heaven but when He comes out. Then the Spirit of God will be poured out afresh upon the people broken down under a sense of their sins, and learning that the very One whom they despised, and hated, and slew, is the Redeemer, the Lord God of Israel; learning too that He will forgive them and put away all their most grievous offenses in that day when He returns.

This is predicted plainly in Zech. 12. It is precisely what we have here in the scone of the scapegoat: not of course, the actual work of suffering for sin, but the application of it, when Israel comes under its efficacy. The work was His death. Here it is their really learning that in consequence of that blood-shedding their sins are completely gone. It will be a work of divine grace in their souls.

But it is worthy of all note that in the case of the sacrifice for the house of Aaron there is no second animal. There is no scape bullock. There was a bullock slain just as the first goat was, but there was no live bullock sent away into the wilderness! Why is this? We who are represented by those for whom the bullock was offered are not looking for the Lord to come out for the application of the work like Israel in the day of power and glory. We wait for His coming, but “apart from sin unto salvation.” For our bodies are to be there brought under His power as now are our souls. We now hear the grace of God in the gospel, and we are led, though often through a certain conflict of unbelief which afterward is made profitable to us, into full peace and liberty by Christ's work. We have not to wait till He comes out again to know our sin blotted out and gone. Instead of waiting without till He comes forth, we follow Him in where He is gone. This is the essence of Christianity. We enter into blessing where He is, in heavenly places. The Jews, on the contrary, wait for Him to come out and bless them on the earth. They will then see and believe. We believe without seeing. Consequently we, looking by faith into the sanctuary, do not require to see a visible and separate sign to show all our sins confessed and put upon Him and borne away. We rest simply on the blood that went in before God. Nothing can be more marked or more beautiful than the difference in the type between those who believe now, and those who in that day will look on Him whom they pierced.

I must close without entering into details. I will add just one point more, and that is, the state of cool that is produced even in those who will then rest on the atonement. This is very important. There is a certain state of heart that goes along with the knowledge of that infinite work of the Lord Jesus, and the man whose heart is not wrought upon suitably to it is not a true believer. What is that state of heart? I will answer in the words of the chapter. “In the seventh month, in the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls and do no work at all.... It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls by a statute forever.” (Vers. 29-31.) It is a beautiful fact found elsewhere, that on this same day the jubilee trumpet was sounded and everything was rectified, every man was reinstated in that which was his own. But there was exercise of heart too. First, his soul was to be afflicted in that day, not to be merry. Wherever there is genuine faith, there is genuine repentance: where souls do not feel their sins, it is vain to look for the remission of them. Instead of talking lightly of receiving the word with joy, there is deep self-judgment, resting on that most solemn, humbling scene, where the Lord Jesus died for us. Secondly, there was no pretension to work on that day, it was to be a sabbath-day, the work was Another's. There was no thought of their doing anything towards atonement, but real brokenness of spirit in the presence of such incomparable mercy.

May God bless His own truth, and make us feel more and more how complete it is, how every part of the Old is bound up with the New! The man who understands the New best will most value the Old.

Chapter 54

Deliverance: Part 1

Rom. 8:1-4.

The beginning of Rom. 8 is the full answer to the cry of wretchedness in chapter 7: “O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” There are three great parts in the deliverance: first, the setting free of the soul at the commencement of its career; then practical freedom in its course; and, finally, ultimate deliverance for the body in resurrection at the coming of our Lord. What concerns souls pre-eminently, in the first instance, is that spiritual freedom, without which there can be no practical power, any more than in the service of the Lord, or in worship. Hence it is this first part of the deliverance that it will be my main business to dwell on at present. Not that the application to practice is not of the highest moment; but we should remember that practical freedom and power depend on this primary deliverance. Again, final deliverance must not be supposed to be forgotten; but that is a question of the Lord's intervention by-and-by, when there can be no possibility of a flaw. Now there may be first, failure, in appreciating the soul's deliverance, as in verse 2; and, secondly, in turning practical liberty to the Lord's account in walk. But when the Lord comes to quicken these mortal bodies—and they are called mortal in contradistinction from the soul—no failure will be possible. It was not necessary to call the soul immortal, because immortality is essentially bound up with its nature.

Let us, then, turn to a little consideration of the first grand truth, the setting free of the soul. And this remark may be made at the threshold, that the deliverance in question is quite distinct from quickening. Rom. 7 is the strongest possible proof of this; for we have, from verse 7 onward, exactly the experience of a man quickened, but not delivered. We see there a soul going through much painful exercise inwardly, ending in the cry, “O wretched man,” &c. It is not a careless or unawakened person, but neither is it one delivered. There are two errors to be avoided here, over-rating and under-estimating the condition of the case in Rom. 7. These two mistakes carry away far the largest part of Christendom, and perhaps of real Christians. There are those who consider that the soul in this distress is unconverted; and one reason why they do so is, because in the progress of its exercises it says, “I am carnal.” But such an inference is unwarranted, and arises from confounding carnal with natural, which is ignorance of scripture. There are three classes, and not two only; there are natural, carnal, and spiritual men. Now Rom. 7 describes the intermediate class; the person there is neither natural nor spiritual. This is where the great mistake is made, and by none more than by the theologians. They confound a carnal with a natural man, supposing that “carnal” means one dead in trespasses and sins. But in 1 Corinthians this distinction is plainly drawn. In chapter 2 the apostle, speaking of the natural man, declares that he “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” In chapter 3 he takes up the other term, and distinctly tells the Corinthian believers that they were carnal; not, of course, natural, but “carnal.” They were believers, but in a wrong and low condition. They ought to have been, but were not, “spiritual.”

Thus every believer is not by any means a spiritual person. For this reason the apostle, in addressing the Galatians, says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” He did not mean by this that every believer is a spiritual man, but, on the contrary, distinguishes certain believers more fitted than others for the delicate work of restoring a man who has slipped aside. And who are they? The men who know best the hateful evil of flesh, as well as what is of far deeper moment, the grace of God. These can therefore feel for souls ensnared and drawn away from the Lord. A carnal man knows God and himself so partially, that he is unfit for such work. He would err, either on the side of easy-going amiability, which would slip over sin, or in overwhelming harshness. The spiritual man, by grace, holds the balance even. He would condemn the wrong, but also meet the soul in a restorative grace.

This distinction appears everywhere. Among believers, who does not know some spiritual, with not a few carnal? As believers, they are no longer natural, but they are not therefore necessarily spiritual. Not that they have not the Spirit, but that they do not walk or judge in the Spirit. The possession of the Spirit does not necessarily make a man spiritual. The Corinthian saints clearly had the Spirit, but there was unjudged activity of the flesh in many. There is a shade of difference between the word, and the sense, I also think, in Rom. 7, compared with 1 Cor. 3, which does not call for notice now. It is only one letter, and the Authorized Version always translates both as “carnal.” Do not suppose that we are going into critical points now; but it surely is of interest and importance to apprehend the difference between being born of the Spirit, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in me. A man may be born of the Spirit, and yet may require to have the Holy Ghost given to him. Now the word in Rom. 7 does not necessarily suppose that the Spirit is there, the word in Corinthians does. However this may be, we may now turn to the fundamental Christian truth of present deliverance.

In Rom. 7 a struggle is described, and fully argued out; but this conflict supposes life. While a man is dead in trespasses and sins, there is no such conflict. Mark the language of this soul. He has a hatred of evil, and yet falls into it; he loves what is good, and yet fails in doing it. It is a state, not of natural wickedness, but of spiritual powerlessness. At Corinth the fleshly activity of the intellect overruled the mind of the Spirit in too many saints. Here it was a dead weight of evil within, that always dragged him down when he wanted to do the will of God. He is like a person in a quagmire, not drowned, but sunk deeply, and struggling; yet as soon as he gets one leg out, the other is more deeply in. And so his state is most miserable. This increases, though with growing discernment of himself, until he turns to Christ. It is not a man who has not seen Christ, but one who, looking to Him, thought it was enough for all need, and never expected to find, as a believer, evil continually within him. He wakes up at length to the humbling fact that there is this constant inward evil ever seeking to break out, and that having the blood of Jesus for his forgiveness does not fully deal with the ease. It is a question, not of pardon only, but of deliverance. “wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me?” He has life, and the law has probed him as born of God, and killed him in conscience. It is far from true that he is dead in trespasses and sins; but an awakened conscience has given the law killing power, and he is slain in the conviction of sin, which he had not been if an unconverted man. The unconverted knows nothing of this inward exercise and soul trouble. Here I am obliged to part from my Arminian friends, who generally regard this latter part of Rom. 7 as a description of the natural man. “I am carnal,” says the apostle. They are wrong.

But on the other side are those who tell you that this is a description of a spiritual man in as blessed a state as he over can expect here. The apostle, they argue, says, “I,” and from this they infer that he means himself personally, and, moreover, in his then spiritual state. Just as if we did not often see the apostle using the first person singular to put a case. Nothing is more common, even in the language of every-day life. You hear a person who is unmarried say, “I as a husband,” or “I as a father,” would do so and so. The speaker does not assert that he is either, but merely uses himself as an illustration. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle speaks of transferring to himself and to Apollos a case which really was meant to apply to others. But we have the beat reason for saying that this mast be the case in Rom. 7. The same epistle goes on to say in continuous argument, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” He could not be spiritually both a slave, “sold under sin,” and made free at the same time.

Therefore it is clear that the latter part of Rom. 7 does not describe the state of the apostle himself at the time; and the Calvinistic view, that the condition of soul there exhibited is the normal state of the Christian, is just as great an error as the Arminian notion that it is the description of an unconverted soul. The fact is, that both Calvinists and Arminians confound the carnal with the natural man. They have not seen the distinction that scripture makes. Appeal to any of their writings you please. Though acquainted with their best writers at different times, I believe that, without a single exception on either side of the controversy, they both confound the carnal and the natural man. I do not say this in any way as a reproach, but for the purpose of our learning the truth more fully and exactly. To omit this distinction obscures the whole subject.

It confounds things that differ, and you never can mistake scripture without being involved in serious consequences. The natural man and the spiritual man do not comprehend all possible conditions of soul. There is the natural man who has not Christ at all, the carnal man who has Christ, but is not yet delivered from himself—there is such a thing possible in believers—and the spiritual man. In the intermediate condition, as I may call it, there is always a craving after that deliverance which is not possessed. It was this that led to the movement, which we all remember, a few years ago regarding what was called” the higher life,” and “holiness by faith.” All that was just a yearning after deliverance. Now I shall endeavor to show that we need only what is in the Bible, not new views. We want rather to be delivered from speculations, and to be more deeply grounded in the imperishable truth of scripture.

The experience of the soul is a valuable thing, and that the state described in Rom. 7 is one of no little moment to pass through. No soul ever values freedom, without having known something of bondage. And I very much question whether those that slip over this seventh chapter ever really know what it is to get into the eighth. In the proper experience of every believer there is a most seasonable breaking down of self, which is the consequence of measuring ourselves before God. We have to learn a grave and important lesson from God in this way, and it cannot be learned by a mere effort of the mind, nor is it without practical working in the soul. Here we have the process followed out in detail. The apostle takes up the case, supposing a person who was quickened but who had not fully learned himself. How is this necessary lesson learned? He tries to do what he knows he should and what he desires, but he breaks down; he tries again, and breaks down again. He betakes himself, of course, to prayer and reading; he tries to better himself by fasting and other forms of self-denial; in short, everything is tried except the one and only right way. He

has not yet learned this—to abandon himself, and rest in another. No doubt he himself is proved and discovered. God has not let him try all these ways of his own without profit. He gets humbled about himself as a saint, learns to distrust himself, even as a converted man, and is thus fitted to receive more and more from God of the value of Christ. The truth is, that the effect of sin is far deeper than men suppose. Life and forgiveness are not all that is wanted. Both are given in the gospel: but besides there is present deliverance. And this deliverance comes after there has been practical proof, not merely that we are sinners, but that we are without strength, which is a deeper thing. Here the soul is brought to the pass; “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” He looks out of himself; there was the turning-point. He had looked to. the Lord to find life and forgiveness; but when he had Christ, he thought, “Surely I shall be able to soon now happily glorifying the Lord.” He finds out his weakness, he struggles and strives, but finds it out more and more. At last he looks about himself, and not his past sins only, to Christ, and this is the consequence, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are In Christ Jesus.”

The first part here stated of this deliverance is, that grace puts us in a new place, or position, in which there can be nothing against us. At once we see the contrast with Adam. It was not merely that the first man fell, and that his children were sinners, but the whole thing is involved, and involves them in condemnation. In contrast, then, with fallen Adam stamping the fall on all his family, there is another, or second Man, and last Adam. What is His position? Risen and in glory. The apostle does not pursue all the consequences here, but particularly presses this, that Christ is dead and risen. He is not merely an expiatory sacrifice, but a dead and risen Savior. And thus He is applied to the condition of the man who believes in Him. Nothing so frees from claim as death. Have there been debts? Death cancels them. Claims? Death comes in, and dissolves their force. Do I deny, then, the responsibility of the Christian? The very reverse. But his responsibility is not that of a man naturally, which comes to an end in death (not his own, but Christ's, and the believer's with Him,) and where man ends, the Christian begins. The Christian, therefore, is baptized into Christ's death. It is thus a dead and risen Christ that characterizes Christianity. A living Christ was what the Jew wanted. They would have liked a mighty Messiah born in the world to lead them on to victory and supremacy. And this is very much what many Christians think and crave after. But it is not Christianity, which is founded on the death of Christ; and He is risen.

Therefore it is that the Christian now is not merely forgiven, but identified with a dead Christ; and the consequence is, he is dead to sin. Such is the argument of the apostle in Rom. 6. The Christian is likewise dead to the law. I know there are those who tell you that the law is dead, but they are quite wrong. The law, far from dead, is a living and killing power; and you must therefore pronounce death, not upon the law, but upon yourself. (See Gal. 2) God gives the believer in Christ to take the place of being dead, both to sin and to law: but is this all? Surely not; it is only negative. No, he is in Christ Jesus, the One risen from the dead. The Christ that the believer possesses is One who, after His death, not only for our sins but for sin itself, passed into resurrection life, and that, too, as a life-giving Spirit. Who receives this life? The Christian. As a believer in Christ, and submitting to God's righteousness, he has received new life and the Spirit, and consequently his position is in Christ Jesus. Therefore he partakes of all that Christ is, as risen. All His blessedness—not speaking of Him as a divine Person, the eternal Son of God, but as Man risen from the dead—now attaches to every believer in Him. And for this reason it is that the apostle says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” You

might as well talk of condemning Christ as of condemning the Christian. Since Adam's fall, the curse rested on him and on all his seed. So now, since His death and resurrection, the favor of God rests just as thoroughly on Christ and all who are His. For in point of fact they are in Christ as men naturally are said to be in Adam. No doubt it is a mystical way of speaking, but it is a real thing. The expression is a figure, but the fact is certain. Are the effects of connection with Christ less real than of connection with Adam?

What a blighting thing is the unbelief that perverts and distorts, or destroys, the force of such deep realities! Do you say they are not facts? Are the only facts things that you can see and feel? Are you a positivist? Is there nothing real but sin and misery? Is God nothing? or are you as unbelieving, or worse, than a Jew or a heathen? Is not Christ as real as Adam? I admit the reality of sin. Alas, we know it too well! We know it even as natural men, and we felt it even when we were carnal—if indeed we are spiritual now. Let us search and see how far our souls have passed out of human thoughts, for this is carnality in a Christian. The Corinthians were in that state; they allowed the thoughts of men to sway them. We are called, on the contrary, to enter into the revealed truth of God. We are said to “have the mind of Christ.” The Corinthians, as all Christians, had the title to this, but did not make it good; they had the ground, capacity, and power, but did not use what they had, through value for the world's wisdom—surely an important distinction, and a common danger.

Here, then, is the first clearing of the Christian position. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” It is not merely no condemnation for this or that—for particular acts or things—but no condemnation whatever; it is absolute. Were there no faults or blemishes? Too many and grave; but for what did Christ die? And Christ is risen, and there is no condemnation. Are you still afraid to rest in Him? Better not be distrustful of Him or the word of God; far better to believe it, and be afraid of ourselves. This is both wiser and humbler. I know there are many who read the word of God, and hesitate to accept the clear and absolute language of scripture. But we ought, in this respect at least, to be calm and confident. Remember that I am not now resting on an isolated bit of scripture, though a single text is stabler than heaven and earth; I refer to what is the very back-bone and substance of this epistle. I am not pressing you with a mere fragment of scripture, torn out of its place and context. I leave that to others; and there are plenty who preach thus on scraps. Beyond controversy, the apostle is sheaving that believers have an entirely new position in the dead and risen Christ. They are as truly partakers of the acceptance in which He stands risen from the dead, as men naturally inherit the condemnation of the first man. No condemnation can any longer touch His person who secures the Christian. We are in Christ.

Chapter 55

Deliverance: Part 2

Rom. 8:1-4

The apostle gives two conclusive reasons for this “For,” says he, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made me free from the law of sin and death.” Before saying more, perhaps one ought to explain why the last clause of the first verse is quite ignored. It is not scripture. The same clause is scripture in the fourth verse, but not in the first. It is as perfect and divine in the one case, as it is wrong and human in the other. But the monastic scribes who copied for us the writings of the apostle seemed to have thought the first verse as it stood meager, and rather dangerous too, and so did their best to improve and guard it by this addition. Was not this rationalistic? Rationalism does not mean conscience judging what is wrong, but man presuming to judge where he should believe and learn of God. Any attempt to mend the scriptures is about as bold and bad rationalism as can be. You may find it in a monk just as much as in a monkey-loving professor. No doubt the monks included many a rationalist of the middle ages; I leave you to judge who are such now. In the first verse there cannot be a question that the words referred to are a mere human accretion. Ask any one entitled to speak: Mill, Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf or Tregelles, will tell you that the clause is an interpolation. They rejected it, not because all, or any of them, liked the truth resulting from the true text, but because they were honest men, and competent scholars, and stuck to the best witnesses. In the Catholic Greek Testaments of Munich, 1847, and of Dublin, 1860, you will find the same thing; the clause is omitted, and quite correctly, spite of the Vulgate. So also Bishop Wordsworth and Dean Alford, in their editions of the Greek New Testament, omit it.

Do not mind what people say about, “peculiar views.” For that is just what I eschew, at least as much as they. I want to help souls more fully into the truth, which surely ought not to be “peculiar.” I call human views, old tradition or modern speculation, peculiar, if not wicked too. But I do not call it peculiar, and I hope you do not, to adhere uncompromisingly to the words of the Holy Spirit, and to seek the genuine, simple, and sure sense of God's word. The true form of the verse, then, is, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” The apostle so speaks without the smallest qualification. If you add, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” if you translate it more correctly as not “who,” but “if,” “when,” or “because they walk not,” &c., you bring in another idea—walking in the Spirit, not standing. It would amount then to this: that there is no condemnation to them if they walk in holiness. But this were to mix up the walk with the position, the effect of which is that you can never be sure of your position. All is plunged in uncertainty. Place in Christ and walk in the Spirit are two distinct things. I do not know what a man's position is by looking at his walk, for he may often shift and move. The walk is surely of the utmost importance. But the first verse of the chapter speaks only of position, and if you bring in walk there, the position is unsettled, and the truth is spoiled.

When you speak of walk, you bring in Christian responsibility (which I entirely admit); but if the apostle is teaching “no condemnation,” how can our conduct, our desert, our possible faults be

introduced? Do not faults deserve to be censured? Whose walk is such as to claim “no condemnation?” If the walk is mixed up in the question, it is impossible for one over to know it. The word is thus made void, the apostolic comfort is also nullified, and people get to a religion of doubt, in consequence of this confusion. They find themselves on a quicksand instead of a rock, and miscall it Christianity, whereas it is so far a mere consecration of naturalism. The object of the verse is to show the rook on which God has placed His people.

Surely there is a walk that suits people placed in that position, and scripture furnishes abundant instruction as to it. But the first need is to know that I am placed by the grace of God where no condemnation can reach us. This gives solid peace, and becomes the means of power to the believer. Do we want to know the ground of it? The answer follows. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Mark the precision of the language. It is “the law of the Spirit of life,” meaning that fixed principle. Let others boast about the law of Moses; the apostle says, this is the law for me, a Christian. Has Moses delivered you? He could only condemn. “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” This is the proper starting-point of the Christian, the soul set free. It is a place of deliverance that nobody ever had till Christ died and rose again. And it is a remarkable fact that our Lord acted on this truth on the very day He rose from the dead. He never did so before, coming into the midst of His disciples, He breathed on them the breath of His own resurrection-life. His own people were plunged into the deepest distress by His death on the tree; but He imparted to them life more abundantly than before His death. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” While He was here, He was no doubt the life of the believer; but risen from the dead, He gave life more abundantly.

It is familiarly known that some apply His in-breathing as if it meant inspiring the disciples to write the scriptures, as others take it to be power to work miracles, and so forth. The truth however is that it means neither one nor other, nor anything but what is said here: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Therefore it was that He said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted,” &c. They were to go forth, as in Christ, in the power of the Spirit. They were to take Christ's place in this world; dead to law and sin, and alive from, yet among, the dead. The world outside is the place of death, not of life. The believer owns this, but thanks God that there are some living among the dead. And whence comes this life? From Christ risen—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It was not a life breathed into any before He rose from the grave. If it had been before the cross, it would never suit a sinner to receive it, any more than God to give it; nor could it be a guarantee of deliverance. But when the Lord Jesus went down into the fight, the rule of that war was, that those who tarried with the stuff should share just as much in the spoils as He that went down to battle. Such was the law of David; and it is the way of a greater than David. He alone fought the fight; but we reap the full fruits of His victory. Grace has set me in this position, so that sin and death are no longer a law to me.

Sin is not a law, because I am no longer sold under and in bondage to sin; I am inexcusable if I do sin. There is no such necessity if I come under grace. If I fail in prayer and vigilance, I am sure to sin; but I ought never to be unwatchful, and so never to sin. No Christian should deny this. A Christian may sin, and a Christian does, if he is not walking in dependence on God. He is only kept so long as his life is practically one of faith. “The life that I now live in the flesh,” says the apostle, “I

live by the faith of the Son of God." Where one walks in the Spirit, the believer does not sin.

Sin, then, is not a law to the Christian, but what about death? Must not we all die? This is exactly what unbelief says—that we must all die. "Surely," some untaught soul cries, "you have not the face to say that we are not all to die." Men are so appointed, but not Christians. We shall not all sleep, but all be changed: I believe because God says it. "We shall not all sleep." The moment Christ comes in bodily presence, not a Christian falls asleep; on the contrary, those asleep arise. We are changed without dying. I say therefore that death is not a law to the Christian. He is not doomed to die like a man naturally. It is quite true that death is the common portion of humanity, as such, but not of God's children. "It is appointed unto men once to die." But, as said before, a Christian is not a mere man. He is already delivered, taken out of the lot of sin and death in which all mankind are naturally. We enter in Christ a supernatural state. Do you shrink from the supernatural? If you believe in Christ, the Son of God, you must accept its fullness, for surely He is so. And on all who are His He imprints His own incomparable blessedness, as He is their life and righteousness. I quite admit that we may die, just as we may sin. But I deny that either the one or the other is a necessity for the Christian. When life in the Spirit was given, there was power against sin, and when Christ comes, death shall disappear for all that are His. It is the effect of life in Christ, the life-giving Spirit. When my soul sees Him, my soul gets life; when my body sees Him, my body will be immortalized and transformed. Such is the Christian's portion, and he should enter by faith into the blessedness of Christ's triumph now. Consequently we are entitled to have peace, joy, power, and conscious victory now.

But along with it must be kept up the exercise of self-judgment; for if we are in Christ for no condemnation, Christ is in us for the continual detection of the flesh already condemned by God, that the walk should be truly in the Spirit. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness." As surely as Christ is ascended and the Holy Spirit now given, the two sides for the Christian are inseparable for privilege and responsibility. Even as our Lord said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you;" and what God has joined, let not man put asunder.

This deliverance has a great deal to do with a man's being spiritual. One may doubt that a person can be truly spiritual, in the scriptural sense of the word, before he is delivered. Not that a delivered man will necessarily always walk as such, because we are liable to be off our guard, and turn aside. What may not a Christian be dragged into when he forgets the Lord? But certainly the consciousness of deliverance by Christ's death and resurrection is a weapon of great power. Like Goliath's sword in David's hand, none is like it. Nevertheless, one needs dependence, as much after being delivered as before.

Could God condemn the life that is in Christ? But this is the life the Christian has. Do you suppose Christ's grace shown in that act was limited to those who lived then? "Because I live, ye shall live also." Was this true of the disciples alone? It was a sample of what He has done for and gives to every Christian. I speak not of walk, but of what is at the bottom of it, when I say it is life in Christ. In Adam I have the natural life, which is alas! depraved, proud or vain; willful and selfish. And where do I get the life that hates these and all evils alike? From faith in Christ. It is no credit to the receiver. It is all and solely of the grace that was in our Lord Jesus. The risen Savior has a family instinct with the same life that was and is in Himself. And the life is that, of One risen from the dead

after all judgment was undergone. This last is the point the apostle adverts to next. “For, what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” (ver. 8.) God has already executed sentence of condemnation, not on us (else we should be lost forever), but on Christ. The cross of Christ was not merely blood-shedding as the final answer to the various sacrifices; the explanation, after long waiting, of why it was that God attached such importance to the offering of a bullock, a lamb, or a goat. Surely it was not with slain beasts that God was occupied. He was giving sensible signs of the One sacrifice—presentiments of His Son that was coming. He was setting plainly and distinctly before the eyes of a dull people that One who was to shed His blood for the sins of men.

But more than this: that One was to bear the judgment. There are two things appointed of God to men because of sin—death and judgment. Christ bore judgment as well as death; and the consequence is that the believer now receives a double blessing. Not merely has he life, in contrast with death, and pardon through that blood shed for the remission of the sins of many, but also deliverance in Him risen, and no condemnation, through the condemnation having fallen wholly on Christ. This the law could not do. It could condemn the sinner, and nothing else, because it was a good law. If it had been bad, it might have let off bad men. The law was therefore powerless to deliver; it condemned, and only could condemn, the guilty. Had this been all, we were hopelessly lost. But sinners were the very people that God intended to save by grace. In Christ He would save sinners, but condemn sin. The law could not deal with sin apart from the sinner. It dealt with a sinful man for his sins, and the end could only be death for him. But it could not execute judgment on the nature, any more than extricate the man himself. Whereas “God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [that is, as a sin-offering] condemned sin in the flesh.” The Son was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in sinful flesh; else He must have suffered for Himself, and could be no unblemished victim for others. It was not in the likeness of flesh, but really in flesh, He came.

How guarded is scripture! How much better than any formula, even the so-called Athanasian! What a meager effort at symbol is the vulgarly styled Apostles' Creed! No wonder Whiston and other Arians could admire and use it. But the word of God is divine light to deal with man's heart and conscience.

Look, then, at the truth of Christ as presented here. God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. He was the Holy One, and yet became a man—as truly man as He was God. He, ever Son of God, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was born of a sinful mother, so that none could have known, except by the revelation of God, that there was not the same state of humanity in Him as in her. It was a revelation, distinct and positive, that He was the Son of God incarnate, not the son of a human father. He was the Son of God and the Son of man as born of Mary, but certainly not Joseph's son, save legally. The Gospels, though some with more particularity, affirm distinctly, making it blasphemy to deny it, that He was Son of God in the supremest sense.

That Blessed One came “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin.” Mark this last, for it means as a sin-offering. “For sin” is its technical expression in both Old and New Testaments. It was to deal with “sin,” not merely sins, that Christ was sent; to meet and remove that dead weight which, in Rom. 7, the believer discovered—to have the root, as well as fruit, wholly disposed of. The burden

of all fell on Christ. Sin in the flesh God condemned in His cross. It is not pardon that is wanted for an evil nature, but condemnation. Pardon for sins one does want, but condemnation, unqualified judgment, of the nature that produced them. And in order that you or I should be saved, that condemnation must fall, not on us, but on the Savior. This is exactly what God has done. The condemnation of sin in the flesh, and by an offering for sin, fell on the only One who had no sin in Him. If there had been sin in Him, I say not done by Him, then condemnation must have fallen on Him for Himself. Such a falsification of His person was the peculiar and fatal error of Irvingism. In that system, in order to make the Lord Jesus sympathize with us as much as possible, He was made to have fallen humanity. It was taught that He had taken into union with the divine nature, not merely human nature, which is true, but fallen and peccable, which is a ruinous lie. If it had been so, Christ Could not have suffered for us, but for Himself. But being the Holy One of God, the only One in whom was no sin, He could suffer, not only for sins, but for sin. Consequently, in executing judgment on Him crucified, God condemned sin in the flesh.

And what was the moral end of it, as here shown us by the apostle “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Ver. 4.) Here comes in the walk of the Christian, in its proper order and only true plate. When the Christian's standing, by grace, in Christ is a settled fact, when consciously delivered, in a new life by the Spirit, when he knows his nature judged in the cross, then his walk according to the Spirit follows. And do you not know how, when you are not happy and free, everything goes wrong? You are tried with, this and that, vexed with circumstances and with other people, and, most of all, if you told all out, with yourself. Such is the condition of the soul in chapter vii. But now see here the efficacious excellence of what, God has wrought and gives in Christ, Not only are sins forgiven, but the evil of flesh is already dealt with in His death. So that one has not to wait for one's own death for deliverance. To faith the believer died with Christ, is alive in Him to God, and is therefore entitled to be no longer a self-tormentor because of the total ruin and corruption within. The old man is as surely condemned in the cross, as the sins of the believer are washed away by the blood of Christ. He submits to the humbling certainty that the nature is hopelessly evil, but accepts the blessed truth that it has been already condemned by God in Christ's death. No part of scripture, no rite of Judaism, ever taught that man's nature gets better; Christianity sets forth, even in baptism, that it is judged and set aside forever in Christ. It is only the fond fancy of a Brahminist, or of others hardly less dark in principle, this notion of improving the flesh. It is the religion of human nature all over the world. But any effort to deliver myself, as it begins, so can end, only in a religious imagination. It is by righteousness and in Christ, not by power, that victory comes over self. To trust oneself is not to be delivered, but only deluded. Whereas, in the sense of total weakness, and ruin, and evil, to rest on Christ dead and risen, is to find myself in Christ, and “no condemnation” my portion.

But we do well to mark the ground of “no condemnation.” First, God has given me a perfectly new life, the life of Christ risen from the dead; and this He cannot surely condemn. The life of Christ is the. Christian's life, to which no condemnation can attach. But what about my old and evil nature? God has already dealt with it, having executed sentence of death on it in the cross of Christ. Thus God gives the believer a new life, which cannot be condemned, and has condemned the old man, out and out, in Christ's death. Therefore now no condemnation falls on those that are in Christ Jesus. This is the truth for the soul to seize, a spring of confidence for going on with God (Rom.

7:7-23): a wholesome, but painful, discipline, a transition state, during which the soul, desiring what is good, because converted, learned its utter powerlessness, because it was under law, and did not yet submit to the sentence of death. Now it bows experimentally, and sees itself by faith delivered according to the import of Christ's death in His resurrection. Thenceforth all is clear as to present as well as past, as to what you are, no less than as to what you have done; and this, not at all because of what you were or are, but on account of Christ, whose death settled all questions for you, and in whom you now live—alive from the dead to God.

Hence the righteousness of the law, instead of being a claim against you, and so condemning you, is now fulfilled in you, which is more intimate than by you. Knowing God thus, you cannot but love Him; and, loving Him, you love your neighbor also, and even your enemy. By the grace of God you are able to rise above the evil to which you once succumbed. If the believer loves God and his neighbor, is not the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him? I do not admit such a thing as a Christian, in whom the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled. The grace of God has wrought this immense change. The vain or proud man, who made himself his center, but now a believer, and in Christ, has his heart drawn out in true love to God and love to his neighbor. And no wonder, when one is by grace so blessed! There is nothing that tends to practical holiness so much as being, not pardoned only, but made perfectly happy by and in divine love. One does not become holy first, and then happy, but if made happy, practical holiness follows. I speak now of what is wrought by God and His grace in the believer. But Christ is all—not only He dying for us, but we living in Him risen.

Thus, as we see, this subject has its practical side. Grace has wrought in Christ for us “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It is carefully added afterward, that, though one be delivered, he may not always walk in the Spirit. He may yield to the flesh, and prove its bitter consequences. Who knows sorrow so humbling as that of the unfaithful Christian? His is not the same wretchedness as that of Rom. 7 but of a still deeper kind. What anguish, after such mercy and grace, after knowing such a God, to have forgotten and dishonored Him, grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and brought shame on the name of such a Savior! How exceeding sinful does sin then appear in my eyes, and what self-reproach for having yielded to it! Chapter 7 describes the exercises of one quickened, but not delivered in chapter 8 he is delivered, and consequently knows far deeper affections, nominally in good but it may be as to evil, if he sin.

There is thus and thenceforward the constant necessity of discerning between flesh and Spirit. The flesh is the old stock, but there is a new graft inserted. The old stock was nothing but a crab-tree, which, no matter how cultivated, would only bring forth Grabs. Its nature is not changed, but a good tree is grafted into it. Still, if the old stock is allowed to bear at all, its fruit is, and must be, bad. The point, then, is not to tolerate the least sprout of the old stock. Cultivate the new graft, and let it bear freely, but do not spare a single bud of the crab. This is just what we have to do with the old man—the flesh. Walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. They are contrary to each other, that ye may not do the things ye would, says Gal. 5 And this is practically carried out by applying the blessed truth, that I am entitled to reckon myself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. It is a part of what grace teaches, and enables me to hold fast, being, we have seen, involved in the declaration of baptism. Otherwise what means it? Is it merely the application of the blood of Christ that makes a Christian? Did not Christ come by water and blood? We are not

baptized in water, not blood. We needed not only His death for us, but ours with Him. Faith in His blood gives remission of sins. But His death writes God's sentence on the flesh, treating it as a thing done with to faith. But Christ is risen, and we are in Him accepted according to His, acceptance. Is this what men present or believe? Is Christianity short of it?

Chapter 56

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is a recital to the people, not simply a reiteration of the commandments. Hence in its solemn reference to the commandments the addition of motives, which, clearly are no part of the commandment. Unbelief is blind, as well as bold and bad.

Chapter 57

Thoughts on Deuteronomy 16

There is this beautiful and important feature in Deuteronomy—that the Spirit of God presents throughout not only the test, but the motives, of obedience. Thus one main object of the book is to strengthen the people of God in a spirit of obedience to the Lord. For this reason, too, we do not hear so much about the priests and the ritual system. It follows hence that Deuteronomy, more than any other of the five books of Moses, puts the Lord and His people as near as possible into proximity to each other. Instead of weakening, it really strengthens obedience; and the same book, which most of all insists on subjection to the Lord in heart and ways, shows us the Lord and His people as much and as closely together as could be, till the veil was rent, and resurrection laid a now ground for nearness in Christ.

Concurrently with this we may notice in the chapter before us that the three greatest feasts of the Jewish year are set out in their moral and distinctive import. They were the feasts at which it was compulsory for every Israelite to appear. He must go three times before Jehovah in the year, these occasions being the passover, the feast of weeks, or Pentecost, and that of tabernacles.

Now I would desire to make a few remarks on these, not as entering into the exposition of the chapter, but as contributing to our joy and fellowship hi the Lord. However precious the passover may be—and it is the foundation of everything—we do not, for all that, find joy especially connected with it. It was a feast undoubtedly the starting-point thenceforward of all the rest, and so momentous a feast that, if a man did not observe the passover, he was to be cut off: it would have been useless for him to attempt to keep the others. We are thus taught by it the fundamental and indispensable place given to the sacrifice of Christ. For the passover, as all know, represented Christ slain for us.

This is the necessary basis of everything. It is not only that God was dishonored if this was not kept, but the Israelite had not a holy or a righteous ground for any connection with God, unless he had eaten the passover. So imperative was this, that, even where circumstances made it impassible for the time (as, for instance, where some were defiled at the appointed season in the wilderness) the Lord provided that it should be kept a month later; but it most be kept. No one claiming to belong to God can be entitled to any other privilege without participating in the sacrifice of Christ.

But it is not the paschal feast which produces fullness of joy, although there cannot be true joy without it. The sacrifice of Christ brings before us our captivity to Satan's power through sin. It is therefore most humbling, whatever the mercy in it and the divine judgment from which it exempted us; and joy simply at the sacrifice of Christ would be quite unworthy of its depth, character, and associations. There is much that is searching and humiliating to us; there is the solemn thought of the power of evil, and God's controversy with it; there is God's coming out to deal judicially, though arrested by the Lamb's blood in the case of Israel; yet, for all this, it is more a feeling of deep anti grave thankfulness in the presence of God which becomes the soul that ponders on the sacrifice of Christ. Hence, though the passover is the greatest of all feasts, joy is not mentioned here. The

Israelites were told that it must be kept, and how. “Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction (for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste), that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days, neither shall there anything of the flesh which thou sacrificedst the first day at even remain all night until the morning.”

Thus real self-judgment then must accompany our resting on Christ's work, as the Israelites then ate the bread of affliction; with Christ's death for us is the sense of sin, and shame, and humiliation. Repentance goes along with faith. They are to “roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.” Still, no joy is expressly mentioned; indeed all that is said seems rather to suppose conscience at work than outflow of heart, for it is added, “Thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents.” It is not so much communion bringing together the people of God; but each one retiring, as it were, to his own home, that he may think both of what he was, and of what God had done for his soul. It is the individual, occupied with mercy to himself or his own, that is alone mentioned in the feast of passover.

When we come to the feast of weeks, or of Pentecost, we have an altogether different state of soul. There we read, “Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God, with the tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.” No doubt it was a statute in Israel that there should be the free-will offering at every feast, because there is nothing that so draws the heart out towards nevi as the sense of what God in Christ has been to our own souls. The passover, however, is not named, except in a general way: to each feast they were not to porno empty. But at the feast of weeks we hear of overflowing grace. “Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy. God, with a tribute of a free. will offering of thine hand.” All was given to Him, no matter what might be its object. “According as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.” Now here we have liberty of heart going out in free-will offering in the sense of Jehovah's blessing. The passover only rises above the removal of judgment. There is personal security from the Lord. But here He has blessed already— “according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.” Along with this, too, there is joy that spreads all around. It is not going to the tents now in the morning, but “Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there.”

It is not only being happy, but making happy. This is what eminently ought to characterize us. No doubt fop us Christ has been sacrificed; He is our passover, with its resulting feast of unleavened bread, as we are told in 1, Corinthians, v. But then we are keeping the feast of weeks too. Indeed, if there be anything that characterizes the Christian and the church more than another, it is that we have already the liberty in the Lord. It was literally to the day at this feast that the Holy Ghost was given. “When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.... And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Thus, as the death of Christ was the accomplishment of the passover, so in the gift of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled the feast of weeks. Now follows joy. No doubt there was the solemn preparation for the joy, and therefore it is of all consequence that we should hold fast this too. If we had only the sacrifice of Christ, I do not think it would become us to surround His table.

with the same blessed spring of joy in the Lord that our hearts do know in measure at this time. For Christ is not merely dead, He is risen, and the Holy Ghost is sent down to let us know the light and joy that fill heaven at receiving Jesus, the Conqueror over sin and Satan, and withal shedding abroad God's love in the hearts of all those washed in Christ's blood whom He is coming shortly to receive unto Himself on high.

But meanwhile, though we are on the earth, we are entitled to the joy of heaven. We look within the veil by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and as our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, our joy may well be full. Our God and Father would have it so. “Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maid-servant.” —not alone every soul belonging to us, but even those that do not, the desolate and sorrow-stricken, the poor and the stranger, “the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there;” for the grace of God goes out to bring in others to share the blessing.

But there is another association too that we find here emphatically. “Thou shalt remember that thou west a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe to do these statutes:” that is, it is the power of the Holy Ghost that both keeps before us what we were—the mighty deliverance Gad has wrought for us—and that also reminds us of our responsibility to do nothing but the will of the Lord, now that His grace has thus dealt with us. The grace of God teaches us to obey, not to relax. It is a law of liberty.

But there is more that remains. The Jew had another great feast—the feast of tabernacles;. and although the time of that final ingathering be not yet come, the Holy Ghost shows us things to come, and brings us into the things that are not as though they were giving us anticipatively to taste the joy of the future glory. When the harvest and the vintage are come, it will be joy indeed, all joy: not merely a tribute of free-will offering according as Jehovah has, blessed, but joy assured, and because He will then have blessed in all the increase and in every work. Of this we have the Spirit and the earnest even now.

Thus we have in these three feasts the grand distinctive blessings that belong to the Christian: first, the sacrifice of Christ as the ground of all deliverance from judgment, and the introduction into all the blessing that God would afterward bestow; 2nd, our present place of union with Christ through the Holy Ghost, and the joyful deliverance which belongs to that place, and a deepened sense of responsibility because we have not received “the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind;” and then, 3rd, there is the earnest of the coming glory given to us now. We are not merely delivered ones, but we look for glory along with Christ, and taste its sweetness already. Hence it is said in the First Epistle of Peter that” the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on us.”

May the Lord grant that, with a solemn remembrance of what the Lord has suffered for us, but with a bright and blessed Sense of the liberty into which the Holy Ghost has led us, as a present thing, we may be ever vividly anticipating the glory into which Christ will lead us at His coming, already sons of light and of the day.

Chapter 58

Fragment on Discipline

It is well to remember here that Christian discipline has always the recovery of the soul for its object. Even if the Offender should be delivered unto Satan, it is for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord—a most forcible reason for exercising this discipline, according to the measure of our spiritual power; for we cannot go beyond that. At the least we might always humble ourselves before God, in order that the evil may be removed. To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the church is to be guilty of high treason against God; it is taking advantage of His love to deny His holiness, despising and dishonoring Him before all. God acts in love in the church; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness: otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

Chapter 59

Divine Life

There are three especial privileges and their effect in divine life—obedience, love of brethren, and confidence in God, all manifested in Christ. So in the temptation, and in death as in life, loving His own. Love is the divine part properly, the love of God shed abroad, the spring being God's revelation, and this by the Holy Ghost given. Christ was it in the world. God was in Christ. There the human aide is obedience, God's will the motive as well as rule, Christ's obedience, to which we are sanctified. Confidence is the natural fruit of this revelation of God in the dependent creature, only it is but as walking in obedience, and not grieving the Holy Spirit, that we have this confidence. Not that there ever should be doubt of His love, but not liberty in love with Him. Obedience (righteousness) and love are the two figures of divine life, both prevailing in Christ. Thus love to the brethren is the divine side, which is not without importance. It is love to God, the reflex and outgoing of the sense of divine love in the heart; God in us, and so known. “As my Father loved me, so I you: abide in my love.” As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. But this is really a weighty proverb. Love never fails.

Chapter 60

The Lord Standing or Sitting on High: Acts 7 and Hebrews 10

THE Holy Ghost opens heaven to our view, and enables us to contemplate that which is found there; and forms us on earth according to the character of Jesus. As to the change that took place in the progress of God's dealings, it appears to me that it was the realization by the Spirit of the effect of the veil being rent. Jesus is seen still standing; because until the rejection by Israel of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, He did not definitively sit down, waiting for the judgment of His enemies. Rather He remained, in the position of High Priest, standing; the believer with Him on high by the Spirit, and the soul having thus far joined Him there in heaven; for now, by the blood of Christ, by that new and living way, it could enter within the veil. On the other hand, the Jews having done the same thing with regard to the testimony of the Holy Ghost that they did with regard to Jesus, having (so to speak) in Stephen sent a messenger after Him to say, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” Christ definitively takes His place, seated, in heaven, until He shall judge the enemies who would not that He should reign over them. It is in this last position that He is viewed in the Epistle to the Hebrews; in which consequently they are exhorted to come out of the camp of Israel, following after the victim whose blood had been carried into the sanctuary; thus anticipating the judgment which fell upon Jerusalem intermediately by means of the Romans, in order to set the nation aside, as it will be finally executed by Jesus Himself. The position of Stephen therefore resembles that of Jesus, the testimony being that of the Spirit to Jesus glorified. This makes the great principle of the Epistle to the Hebrews very plain,

The doctrine of the church, announced by Paul after the revelation made to him on his way to Damascus, goes farther than this; that is, it declares the union of Christians with Jesus in heaven, and not merely their entrance into the holy place through the rent veil, where the priest only might go in previously, behind the veil which hid God from the people.

We may remark here, that the sanctuary, so to speak, is open to all believers. The veil indeed was rent by the death of Christ, but the grace of God was still acting towards the Jews, as such, and proposed to them the return of Jesus to the earth, that is to. say, outside the veil, in the event of their repentance, so that the blessing would then have been upon the earth—the times of refreshing by the coming of Christ, which the prophets had announced. But now it is no longer a Messiah, the Son of David, but a Son of man in heaven; and, by the Holy Ghost here below, an opened heaven is seen and known, and the Great High Priest standing as yet at the right hand of God is not hidden behind a veil. All is open to the believer;. the glory, and He who has entered into it for His people. And this, it appears to me, is the reason why He is seen standing. He had not definitively taken His place as seated (ε■ς τ■ δινεκ■ς), on the heavenly throne, until the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Israel of His exaltation had been definitively rejected upon earth. The free testimony of the Spirit which is developed, here and afterward, is highly interesting, without touching apostolic authority in its place, as we shall see. As to the Jews, till the High Priest comes out, they cannot know that His work is accepted for the nation; as, in the day of atonement, they had to wait till he came out that they might know it. Bit for us the Holy Ghost is come out while He is within, and we do know it.

Chapter 61

Due Spirit of Discipline

“Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.” This blessed word holds good at all times and under all circumstances, whether the discipline be individually or corporately applied; whether, passing on New Testament ground, we take 1 Cor. 5 or Heb. 12. Our Father never departs from this principle, never uses the rod, save under the prompting of perfect love. Holiness is the end, love the motive. Moreover, true discipline is but one of the forms of the activity of true love. It is good and wholesome to keep this in mind. Correctness of judgment and tenderness of heart should be blended in us as they are in our God. All that is right must be learned from His ways, and ourselves in subjection, so that we may not neutralize that which is of Him by the adjunction of that which is our own. “Neutralize” is not an adequate expression, for positive harm may be wrought by doing right things in a wrong way.

The manner in which discipline is to be exercised in the assembly is plainly laid down in 1 Cor. 5, as well as the full measure of the Lord's requirements; but we must place ourselves behind the scene, as it were, to see the spirit that suits such an act. Not until we come to 2 Cor. 2 do we learn what it cost the apostle to write, under the dictation of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 5 Not until the saints were themselves broken under the sorrow could he make them understand how much he himself had suffered. It is not merely a question of the Corinthians humbling themselves for the sad and gross evil immediately connected with them; but there is a deeper and wider truth, which is, that those who are right should teach the wrong ones their proper place by taking it themselves. Paul—the right one—is the first to enter into the sorrow, with a breaking heart, that he might draw the Corinthians where he was, and that they might, in their turn, draw the guilty into the same. Paul had chiefly to do with and to say to them; they, I submit, to, the culprit himself, their grief being, more than anything else, calculated to touch his conscience, and win his heart back to the Lord. It can never be only an act of putting away, although there must be that, as due to the holiness of the Lord; but in that act is involved a question of eating the sin-offering in the holy place, confessing the sin in self-judgment, and ever keeping in view the ultimate restoration of the soul. Sever 2 Cor. 2 and vii. from 1 Cor. 5, and a deal of mischief will arise. Saints will form themselves into a court of justice, to pass sentences right and left, without the consciousness that each sentence strikes upon them, and brings them into the punishment. These are the words of the apostle, as to what he felt at the time when he wrote the first epistle: “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you, with many tears;” and this is the record of the effect produced upon the saints by the spirit of his letter: “For, beheld, this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly soil, whet carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yes, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge!” The only way to a godly clearing of ourselves is by godly sorrow; without this, none of that.

This is an unchangeable principle with God. As in Israel of old, so in the church now. When the ancient people had crossed Jordan, and seen in the fall of Jericho how Jehovah dealt with the enemy, they came before Ai to be broken down, They, like the Corinthians later, had lacked “carefulness,” and by their indifference to evil within, room was left for Achan to lay hold of the

accursed thing. And the record is striking. It does not say, “Achan,” but, “the children of Israel committed a trespass.” All were involved in the deed, and the people judged before the culprit himself. This is not easily accepted nor entered into, even by Joshua. Sad indeed were his words on the occasion: “Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!” That is, we do not like the principle of discipline that strikes the many even before the guilty one is. reached. And not only was this the case when things were in order, and the people one, as under Joshua; but also at the end of Judges, when the tribes lived practically isolated from each other, and “there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” —a principle which must lead to fearful wrong. A molten image in the house of Micah, and, worse yet, the connivance of a Levite with idol worship, were sad enough; but not until the downright evil of apostasy, the sin of Sodom, and that which brought the flood upon the earth (Gen. 6:12), had been confronted, was the moral sense of the Israelites roused, and then they “gathered together as one man.... unto the Lord in Mizpeh.” The voice of Mizpeh, or sentinel, seems to say, Be on the watch. And now that Jehovah has got them together once more, He must carry out the principle of old—strike the many before the few, and at the cost of forty thousand of their own did they learn their connection with the iniquity of Benjamin. Nay, more: “All the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord.” Only after this painful, but wholesome, ordeal could God side with them, and fit them to deal in righteousness with “Benjamin, my brother.”

Christians on the wilderness side of Jordan cannot see nor acknowledge this principle—they are not in the place where it is carried out; but when we stand on Ephesian truth, whether or not the church has been faithful to its calling, whether in Joshua or in Judges, we must keep in mind that God will act with us according to what he is, and also to what we ought to be. C.

Chapter 62

The Epistle of Christ: 2 Corinthians 3

What I desire in reading this chapter is to set out, as simply as possible, what the testimony of the apostle was in it, for this reason—that it is a chapter which tells us what the ministration is with which the apostle was entrusted. He spoke of God, from God, and in the sight of God. This was saying a great deal; and so he knew they were a savor of God to them that believe and to them that perish. Paul was a chosen vessel, in a particular manner, in a special character different from the others; none of them spoke of their apostleship as he did—indeed he speaks of being a fool in boasting. He was converted by the Lord of glory from the glory; the other apostles were led up to the glory, but it was Paul's starting-point from which he began. He began with the knowledge that the church, in all its weakness and trials, is one with Christ; and the epistles are full of this great truth, which seems to us a very high subject; but he began with it. He was not, like Peter, a witness of the sufferings, and a partaker of the glory which should follow when Christ is to be revealed. He begun with being a witness of the glory, and became afterward practically acquainted with fellowship in the suffering. Hence, in presenting Christ in all His glory to the Gentiles, he could not say, as Peter did to the Jews, that they had rejected Him, for the Gentiles had no Messiah, whilst he could speak to them of their thorough wickedness, and of the vanity of their minds. Paul was not accredited of the apostles at Jerusalem—he had no authority from thence, and this he presses on the Galatians, and goes on to say, “Be as I am, for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.” He was as free as any Gentile.

Did Paul need letters of recommendation from the Corinthians, or to them? The answer is in the well-known words, “Ye are our epistle written on our hearts.” Their existence was a proof of his service: there was the epistle that recommended his ministry to which his heart turned. They were in his heart; he could not say this in his first epistle, because he was grieving on their behalf; but now, through Titus, he had a good report. Such had been his solicitude about them, that he could not stay at Troas, though a door was opened to him to preach the gospel; but because he got no tidings of the Corinthians, be was quite cast down. The Lord was thus exercising His servant; but when he got to Corinth, his heart was relieved, and now he can speak with all openness. This he could not before, though he did not hide their privileges from them; for their standing in Christ was untouched; but there could not be joy in the saints, the confidence of love towards them in the Spirit, when they were walking disorderly.

Paul preached Christ at Corinth; and because the church at Corinth was a manifestation of Christ, his epistle became the epistle of Christ manifested by them—not written on tables of stone, but in fleshy tables. Any gathering of the saints, however feeble, is the epistle of Christ. We shall see how forcible this description is, if we think what an epistle is. The church was a recommendation of Paul, because they were an epistle of recommendation of Christ to the world. The world reads, and ascertains what Christ is, from the lives of the saints: I do not say that they might not learn it from the word. Just as the ten commandments were the declaration of the mind of God, so the church is the engraving of Christ to be read of men. We see the amazing force and importance of this, that we hold the place of the commandments under the Jewish law. The law was the

declaration of God's mind in what He required of man.

Christ was not what God required (except indeed that He put Himself under the law, and perfectly obeyed it), but Christ was what God gave to man; and so is the church the manifestation of the grace of God. It is good for our souls to dwell on what it is to he an epistle of Christ, though I am sure we can none of us express the greatness of the calling. I would refer to a great fact in the life of Christ—that He never, in one single act, word, or movement of His heart, did a single thing to please Himself. So Paul said, “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself;” taking what the Christian is, as such, not merely the standard we realize. This is the usual way of scripture, to speak of our high palling, not of our actual walk. Jesus said, “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do.” (John 12:14,) This was obedience flowing out of love, and manifesting love. Nothing ever moved Him from that. The temptation to move from obedience to a commandment might come in a very subtle form, with all the ardor of affection, as when Peter said, in answer to the Lord telling him about His sufferings and death, “This be far from thee, Lord.” It was affectionate in Peter, but the Lord would not own him, for it would have been to turn from obedience to God. And what does Christ say? “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

Jesus loved Martha and Mary, but when their brother was dead, instead of showing His sympathy at once, He abode two days where He was. He remained to show the glory of God. Another thing to be remarked is, not only that Jesus was heavenly in His nature, but that as the Son of man, He lived in heaven— “The Son of man which is in heaven.” The whole spirit of His mind, the tone of all His feelings and thoughts, was heavenly. If there is any motive in my heart which I could not have if I were in heaven, I am not like Christ.

All the grace that was in Him was brought out to meet man's sorrow and misery, and to bear our every earthly circumstance. I have often found my own failure—when the motive was right, the manner was wanting in graciousness: but not so was Christ. He was always seeking to promote the glory of. God, but never did He in manner, on any occasion, depart from the spirit of grace. We often are not close enough, in our communion with God, to have confidence in Him; we become impatient, and we resort to means that are not of God, as Jacob did, who had not confidence enough in God to say, He will secure the blessing. Would not God have made Isaac give the right answer? Surely He would. So we often feel by not waiting upon God, who will bring the thing to pass most surely, though we know not how.

It was this in the sorrowful case of Saul—he would not wait, though Samuel came at the end of seven days, and Saul lost the kingdom. And those who really are the children of God always sustain loss when they depart from confidence in God. Christ was always trusting in God, and always waiting on Him, and He was ready for every sorrow and misery—to bring out the resources of God to meet every necessity. It is touching to read Matt. 5. Every beatitude is a living portrait of Christ. Who so poor in spirit as Christ? Who mourned as Christ? Who so meek? so hungering and thirsting after righteousness? His whole life was hungering after righteousness. The Life was the light of men. And, further, Jesus was the victorious Man over all opposition, even though it were death itself. There is a great difference between good desired and power. The quickened soul may say, “O wretched man that I am,” but we cannot be the full epistle of Christ unless we exhibit

power over all obstacles, even death. Death is given to me. The believer living in the power of Christ's life has entire power over death. The Lord Jesus, amidst all His zeal, never failed in love. There is no motive in love, though there may be joy in its exercise, and this is our triumph.

If I look for a motive, it is not love: therefore love enables a man to meet all trials. It might be that a man spat in his face. This makes no difference, for love abides; because it never draws its strength from circumstances, but rises above all circumstances. Nothing can be presented to a saint which can separate him from the love of God. The love which he enjoys triumphs over all circumstances. If we do not show this heavenly-mindedness, the love which is of God, doing nothing from any motive but obedience to Him, we are a false epistle of Christ. If I were walking lowlily, unless I could show out Christ, I should be nothing. So Christ; He gave no answer when God gave no word. If, in passing through this world, we stop whenever we cannot see how we may so walk as to please God, we should stand still and wait.

The letter was what was closely brought out in the Old Testament of God's requirements from man. The law on the ten tables of stone was glorious, because it was the voice of God, and God can do nothing but what is glorious; What are the two things contrasted here? The ministration of death, and the ministration of righteousness. If the Lord shows out His claims over man, no man can dare approach.

“The letter killeth,” or pronounces death against the transgressor. The law condemns, and pats a curse upon all who break it. Then the man says, I have no life, and if God requires that I should keep the law, I am condemned, for I have not done it. Oh, the madness of those who seek to draw near to God by a ministration of wrath and condemnation!

The transition from the cross to the glory has left nothing between them, thus bringing righteousness, as it were, in my Head. When Moses went into the holy place, he took off the veil, and put it on when he came out to the people. So, when Israel turns to the Lord; the veil will be taken off their face.

We may, as I have said, be humbled through failure, but it is a poor way of being driven to God; for it is because we are not humble we get into the failure. Let us walk heartily resting on the power there is in Christ, and we shall be humble. The Lord give us always to recognize the power there is in Christ.

Chapter 63

Epistles of Paul

Roman, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians were not addressed to assemblies. Why? It is not only a chronological mark, though it be the last ones which do not speak of churches, which were addressed in the midst of his active ministry and moving among them.

When, as a wise master-builder, he had laid the foundation, he was still the immediate responsible caretaker of those he had founded. This public ministry was closed when he wrote to the Romans. He had never been there. It was not the case of a church he had founded. It is, before he went, an elaborate treatise on justification, and the position of the Jews as a people in reference to the “no difference” principle.

To the Philippians, though to a church he had founded, the epistle was a thank-sending for their love, showing also what walking in the Spirit really is, and its power. It is the experience of the individual in the power of the Spirit of God. It was no ordering of a church, but individual walk, and he a debtor to them for their care of him. It was therefore necessarily to the saints, not to the church, though their church order is specifically recognized.

We have still Ephesians and Colossians, the former the mystery, and, as supposed, a kind of circular, and of universal character, a thesis for all that could enter into it; and the latter (Colossians) life as it stood in the believer connected with the Head, whose fullness is largely brought out, as the doctrine of the body is unfolded in the Ephesians. The Holy Ghost shines out in Ephesians, life in Colossians, the last developed here, as contrasting in Ephesians between the old and the new man.

Philemon has a character of its own; it is to an individual, and the church in his house is added.

Thus it is Romans, and the three written in captivity in Rome, which are not to churches. It is another character of ministry. If this thought be just, we get two very distinct sets of epistles of Paul, his church ones, and his general or treatise ones, the personal ones being apart from both.

Chapter 64

Fellowship, Not Independency: Part 1

In looking a little into the subject of fellowship, there is no thought of trespassing on the truth of the believer's individual responsibility to the Lord, which is so often brought before us in scripture. On the contrary, there can be no doubt that true fellowship in the Spirit flows out of personal dependence on the Lord, and felt obligation to His claims.

It is interesting to observe that, when the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, a new and distinct character “of things was produced. Among others, we read of saints being in “fellowship.” This was not known before, because redemption had not been accomplished. At Pentecost believers were baptized into “one body.” People on earth were thus, by the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, united to a Head in heaven—Head and members forming one body. Before this, they had individually been partakers of life, and were children of God. Christ was not ashamed to call them “brethren.” Then, however, they were by the Holy Ghost, united to Christ, and to one another, in a divinely formed unity. All being partakers of resurrection-life in Christ, redeemed by the same blood, formed into “one body” by “one Spirit,” there was now a basis and a power by which saints could act together, and continue in a fellowship, such as never could have been known before. Hence we read that believers “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship.” (Acts 2:42.) It is not by this implied that their individual responsibility to the Lord was lessened, for, when after this Paul addressed the elders at Ephesus, before he admonished them to care for others, he said, “Take heed to yourselves.” We find also when writing to Timothy about his ministry, he says, “Take heed to thyself, keep thyself pure.” This has always been the way of truth. Service must flow from personal piety. In olden time it was said, “Greater is he which ruleth his spirit, than he which taketh a city.”

Christian fellowship is then the result of the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, consequent on the accomplished redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its activities are therefore spiritual. Fellowship is free and unfettered in its operation, but gives no license to levity or pride. It is serious, and gives none occasion to the flesh. It is a divinely wrought work.

Friendly intercourse and associations even among Christians may be far short of this. It should be guarded against, especially in the present rage for confederacies of almost every kind. Gatherings of Christian people may be but spurious imitations of being gathered to the person of the Son of God. To sympathize with one another because we are in Christ is connected with very different motives and objects from those which come of mere benevolent and philanthropic energies. Neither is the bestowment of gifts in a patronizing way fellowship, for it gives credit and importance to the donor; but to minister as from the Lord and to the Lord, as caring for His members in sympathy with them as members of His body, is a different thing, and brings glory to God. The more we are taken up with Christ, as He is revealed to us by His word and Spirit, the clearer will be our discernment of things, and the truer will be the course we pursue. It cannot be otherwise. We do well to remember that it is easy to descend from fellowship in the Spirit to ordinary habits of human intercourse. How cutting was the rebuke of the apostle to the Corinthian saints when he

said, “Are ye not carnal and walk as men?” May we be kept walking in the Spirit!

Every believer is, by grace, brought into this fellowship. He is introduced into it by calling. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:9.) By fellowship we understand partnership or joint participation. Communion and fellowship are generally the same word in the original. It is really a wonderful character of blessing and privilege, and for present exercise and enjoyment. The apostle John begins his first epistle by the presentation of the person of Christ, “that which was from the beginning.” He explains that he did it in order “that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Brought as we are, in Him, to God who is light, and where the blood assures us of perfect cleansing, we walk in the light as He is in the light. By the Spirit we enter, in measure, into the Father's thought and estimate of His beloved Son—His glorious person, offices, and accomplished work—His joy and rest in Him; as well as the Father's love, purposes, and ways toward His children. We enter too, in our measure, into the Son's love to the Father, as well as His perfect love to us. We thankfully consider Him in His obedience unto death, His rejection, His triumphant work and glorification. We delight to think of His loving care, as Head, for every member of His body, and to have fellowship with Him in His varied ministries for their edification. We look off unto Him the glorified Son of man with adoring praise and thanksgiving. Thus, in some feeble degree, we can say, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The apostle does not say, Our fellowship ought to be, but “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This is fellowship indeed. Walking in the light (not as some say, up to our light, but) as He is in the light, we enjoy it together, “We have fellowship one with another.” It is true that fellowship may be interrupted by sin, but then the advocacy of Him who is the righteous One, based upon His work of propitiation, produces in us by the Spirit self-judgment, and the confession of our sins; and, by the application of the word, we know such cleansing as restores our souls again to this blessed fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are called then unto this fellowship, sustained in it by divine power, and restored, when we have got away through sin, by the advocacy of Jesus Christ, and the washing of the word. Nothing less than our knowing the Father, and our holy association in love with Him, could suit His gracious heart. He has made us children, and given us the Holy Ghost that we might participate in His thoughts and joys. This is our present happiness, and it is made known to us that our joy may be full. (1 John 1:4.) And could the Holy Ghost give us lower thoughts and feelings than those which are according to the Father and the Son? Impossible. We may be feeble in our apprehensions of them, or the Spirit may be so grieved and hindered by us that we do not enter into them, but this is a different matter. “The communion of the Holy Ghost” we are entitled to know now, as much as the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God.” Wondrous fellowship. (See 2 Cor. 13:14.)

While the truth of our individual responsibility to the Lord cannot be too firmly held, yet nothing can be more contrary to the Lord's mind than independency. The idea is fatal to the manifestation of the true activities of the church of God. It is opposed to keeping the Spirit's unity, and it ignores the practical action of one body and one Spirit. Independency is the refusal of the communion of saints which is wrought by the Holy Ghost.

At the Lord's table fellowship is particularly expressed. (1 Cor. 10:16-21.) The cross brings before us the ground of fellowship, and this is, doubtless, why it is here, not the body and blood of the Lord, but the blood and body of Christ, and why we have the cross mentioned before the bread.

The blood is the basis of this divine order of fellowship, and known only to those who know the peace-speaking power of that blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins. It sets us before God on the ground of thanksgiving and praise. Hence we read, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” It is fellowship. “We bless.” Though our histories may be all different, we were all sinners, we, all needed atonement; but now, through the accomplished work of Jesus, all are set on the ground of worship and thanksgiving to God. While thus consciously brought on the ground of peace made, and the title to glory given, we bless God, we thank Him together, we worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus. The weak in faith and the strong, the elder and the younger, find here a common ground of fellowship and praise. “Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” Oh the blessedness of this divinely established fellowship! By the one loaf on the table, the character of our fellowship is set forth. It is the membership of one body. It is unlike anything that has preceded the calling out of the church, or that will follow it, for there are not many bodies, but “one body.” True, in eating we “discern the Lord's body,” we feed on Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, which we also, members of one body, in breaking and eating the same loaf express as our fellowship, or joint participation, in Him: “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Because we, being many, are one bread [loaf], one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread [or loaf].” Thus every time we surround the Lord's table, and so remember Him, we express both the ground and the character of a divinely-wrought fellowship upon an accomplished redemption, and through the gift of the Holy Ghost. The principle of independency is the complete denial of this, whether looked at as the act of one person, or of several confederated together, on some other ground than the practical acknowledgment of one body and one Spirit, while holding the Head.

It is well to remember that the precious truth of one body formed and energized by one Spirit is not merely to be expressed on certain occasions, but is that which should mold and fashion all our ways in relation to Christ and His members. We need every member of the body, and each member needs us, for we are hound up together in mutual care and activity for each other's good. We are members one of another. While each is dependent on the Head, and is never right unless right with Him, yet it is through the various members that the Head acts for the edification of the whole body. “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” (1 Cor. 12:14-22.) Nothing then can be more clearly taught than the distinct place of service which is assigned to each member of the body, so that no one member can do the work of another, but all are needed. While each too is entirely dependent on the Head, the body is edified by that which every joint supplies. Nothing then can possibly be more at variance with the truth of God than the principle of independency. Nothing can more effectually deny the true way of edification in love. It dishonors Christ, grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit, and turns the soul, from the authority of the word and dependence on the Lord, to some form or other of denominationalism.

The importance of saints being practically established in this divine order of fellowship so weighed on the heart of the apostle Paul, that when he knew that saints were defective concerning it, it caused him great anxiety. This was the condition of the Colossian believers. He had learned from Epaphras of their conversion and of their love in the Spirit, and he rejoiced at their steadfastness in the faith, and their orderly walk; but they were not practically established in the truth of holding the Head, and thus were more engaged as individuals, than knit together in the endeavor to keep the Spirit's unity. Paul was deeply exercised about this. He was in an agony. When he writes (for he had never seen them) he says, “I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God.” (Col. 2:1, 2) This he knew was God's will. It is that which the Spirit has formed. We are not called on therefore to make a unity, but to “keep” what God has wrought. We are to endeavor to keep the Spirit's unity in the bond of peace, one body and one Spirit, and with all lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love. (Eph. 4:2-4.) Nothing less than this could satisfy the heart of the apostle, because he was assured it was the character of things which God by His Spirit was now working. No individual state can compensate for lack of this. Hence, while the apostle could thank God for the faith and love of these Colossian saints, and could be with them in spirit, joying and beholding their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ, yet he had no rest concerning them, but was in great conflict and prayer, that their hearts might be so established in the mystery of God; that they might know the comfort of fellowship in being knit together in love, and the practical acknowledgment of it. (Col. 2:1, 2.) This, and the other scriptures we have referred to, show how contrary to the Lord's mind is practical independency in a member of the body of Christ, and how impossible it is to enter upon the present character of blessing which God gives, when there is not the endeavor to keep the Spirit's unity.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 65

Fellowship, Not Independency: Part 2

Continued from page 250

Nor can the ruin of the church, looked at in its place of responsibility on earth, its almost endless divisions, and increasing confusion, be rightly pleaded as a reason for acting on the principle of isolation, and individual loneliness, much less for the formation of human confederacies and associations not according to the Lord's mind. For God has given us the Holy Ghost, and revealed in His word, that He has formed a unity of all believers in Christ. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” This unity we are enjoined to keep. This unity is as true as ever for all the members of the body of Christ, before the eye of God; though, as to its manifestation before men, where is it to be seen? Alas! how very opposite it is to this divine character. Still, the principles of God for our guidance during the interval of our Lord's absence have not been changed because of man's failure. The injunction that we should, with all lowliness, be “endeavoring to keep the Spirit's unity in the bond of peace” has never been abrogated. The faithful are to act on it as much as ever. It is simply a question of carrying out the will of God. If one true Christian can only find another to act with him on the ground of “one body and one Spirit,” these two persons would be so far carrying out the will of God, even if there were no other persons in the world so doing. It is not setting up the church again, nor reconstructing what has been practically broken in pieces; but, while owning humbly its departure and ruin, such take the place of acknowledged weakness, and cast themselves on the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord. They are obedient to His word who is holy and true, and, however few they may be, they stand for the true character of the church of God—“one body and one Spirit.” Such know that God is faithful, His word as true as ever, His Spirit abiding, and that the Lord Jesus is still in the midst of two or three, when gathered together to His name. They know Him as Head of the body, the Sender of the Holy Ghost, the Son over His own house, and soon coming to take us unto Himself. Of course if others are found acting on these truths in other places, all such companies of saints become practically one; they rightly own that the only ecclesiastical association which God has set up on earth is “one body” united to Christ the Head in heaven, formed and energized by “one Spirit.” This is true all over the earth. God looks down from heaven and beholds this “one body,” formed by “one Spirit,” however man may have defaced its manifestation by endless divisions, and untrue associations. This only is the divinely-ordered character of fellowship, consequent on an accomplished redemption, and the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Gifts indeed have been bestowed by Christ the Head in glory, and for what purpose? We are told they are for the edification of the body, and that the body is edified by that which every joint supplies. Sign-gifts were necessary at first, such as miracles and tongues, as witness of the power of God to them that believe not. But these soon passed away. Apostles and prophets, the spiritual founders of the assembly, also passed away. They were the foundation stones of the building, and we may still be edified by their writings. But are there not evangelists, teachers and pastors? Can anything be more distinctly seen on earth now than servants of the Lord Jesus, having spiritual ability for evangelizing, teaching the children of God, and shepherding the flock? (See Eph.

4:11-13.)

It must not, however, be supposed that fellowship is limited to the privileges and blessings we enjoy when assembled together, for it extends itself into the various details of the state and circumstances of every member of the body. Thus, “if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Cor. 12:26.) We are all exhorted to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, as also “to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep,” to “bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ;” and that those “taught in the word should communicate to the teacher in all good things.” (see 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:2, 6.)

Moreover, we are instructed that “To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:8). Hence it becomes more helpful to seek under certain circumstances the counsel and fellowship of such. Some members of the body being specially gifted with wisdom and knowledge, we not only honor the Lord in seeking their counsel when necessary, but in this small degree we carry out, in a practical sense, the precious truths of “one body,” and “one Spirit,” because such gifts are given for the profit of the whole body. Perhaps no one point is more apparent among saints than that their failures are often traceable to their independent action, when they might, in the fellowship of the Spirit, have happily availed themselves of the counsel of discreet and honored members of the body. We know how habitually Paul seems to have cultivated the fellowship of his brethren, and invited the help of saints by their prayers. It may be that many in our day, who see clearly the practical ground of assembly action, have never thought seriously of their obligations to Christ in these details. Some may need awakening on this point, and to have their consciences exercised as to whether we do not often fall into the selfishness of independency, instead of practically owning the use which the Lord would have us make of the different members of the body?

It is impossible that any member of the body can walk healthfully alone. When any choose to do so, it is because there is something wrong in the state of their souls; for we are members one of another, and can no more do without each other's service, than one member of the human body can dispense with the assistance of the others. Those who have cultivated this fellowship have proved its blessedness. Nothing, surely, can more completely deny the ground of the church of God, than the habit of going on in the various details of life, outside the public gathering together of the saints, independently of the other members of the body. Such a state of things is to be deplored, not only as dishonoring to the Lord, but as damaging to souls. It is, however, to be feared, that many, who have sat at the Lord's table for a course of years, have known but little, or nothing, of this practical fellowship in the Spirit. Such things ought not to be. When saints of old were in primitive freshness and fervor, when “great grace was upon them all,” we know how lovingly the fellowship extended itself, oven to the things of this life. We read, “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any of them that the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.... neither was there any among them that lacked.... and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:31-37.)

In making this quotation, and applying its instruction to ourselves, we have no thought of reconstructing the church on earth, or of imagining that Pentecostal days will ever be acted over

again, but rather that we might learn from the divine record what we are to understand by fellowship, and what characterized it as practiced in the apostle's days, before the assembly lost its manifested oneness; when faith and love were in freshness and activity, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven was not grieved and quenched as He is now. Our place certainly is to confess the ruin of the church as a corporate witness on earth by our sin, to cleave to the Lord, to call upon His name, thankfully owning all that we can discern to be of Himself, and refusing all human imitations. We rejoice that we still have the Lord in the midst of two or three gathered together to His name. Besides, through abundant mercy, we have the presence of the Holy Ghost, the unalterable word of the Lord, and have to do with the only wise God, who is faithful and cannot deny Himself. As a people we have only “a little strength,” and taking the place of confessed weakness, we are bound as much as ever, in faithfulness to our loving Lord, to “depart from iniquity,” to be obedient to His word, and with all lowliness “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (2 Tim. 2:19-22.) And have not many proved it to be the place of God's presence and blessing?

When souls have really to do with the Lord, everything goes on well; without it, nothing is right. The question at this time is not so much one of usefulness as of faithfulness, not as to the extent of activity, but of reality; not quantity of service, but quality. May we seek only to please God! Where there is the knowledge of divine truth, a single eye, and a subject will, there will be acting for His glory. H. H. S.

Chapter 66

Fragment: 2 Corinthians 5:14

To apply 2 Cor. 5:14 to death to sin, instead of death by it, is more wrong than I thought, because π■ρτων is absolute. “He died for all,” and ο■ ρ■ντες applies necessarily to the same all.

Chapter 67

Fragment: Cast Out by Man

Outward progress in prosperity, joined to actual progress in evil inwardly, is a very solemn thing. It is at once a snare to the flesh and a trial to faith. David, on the contrary, is apparently—and in fact, as to circumstances—driven out from the people. He has neither home nor refuge. But the testimony of God, in the person of the prophet Gad, and communion with God by the priest's ephod, are his portion in his exile. Cast out by men, he is where the resources of God are realized according to the need of His people.

Chapter 68

Fragment: Didaktikos

The word διδακτικ■ς is not the gift of teaching, properly so called; it means suitable to communicate the truth he might have. It is a practical qualification as all the others, not a specific gift. What confirms in this is 2 Tim. 2:24, where it is among the qualities characterizing the manners to the Lord's servant, as avoiding foolish questions, and dealing with souls for their instruction. (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1)

Chapter 69

Fragment: God's Promises

God’s promises are precepts to Himself, binding on Him, and, as His to us, showing us what He is in Himself.

Chapter 70

Fragment: Rejecting the Word

It is really a question between faith and infidelity. If I believe the Bible to be the word of God, the judgment is formed; I have only to bow. If I reject it, I am an infidel; my judgment of it is formed. I may be ignorant of it; then there is no judgment to be formed: though I am sure, if a new nature be in us, it will be received by us as light is by the eye, and known. The rejection of the word, it being what it is, is the judgment of what rejects it.

Chapter 71

Fragment: the Spirit's Guiding in What We Say

What appears frankness is not always full openness. What is the Christian part? To say nothing unnecessary on principle; and then one is simple in both. Let the Spirit guide us in all we actually say.

Chapter 72

Fragment: “We Have the Mind of Christ”

The difference between Isa. 63 and gospel knowledge as made by Paul in 1 Cor. 2 is striking, often quoted for just the contrary. These things, he says, have not entered into man's heart; but God has revealed them unto us (Christians) by His Spirit: so at the end of the chapter,” but we have the mind of Christ.”

Chapter 73

Letter As to the Principles of Gathering

Dear Brethren,

I write for both, because I hardly know who is in ——, indeed for all, as to my heart's desire; and you will not be astonished at my being interested in the assembly at ——. I have heard from Mr. D., and also through T., only one side of course of the circumstances; consequently I say little of them. N., indeed, alluded to the question raised, but not to circumstances. I shall refer chiefly to principles, for you will feel that we are all, as of one body, interested in the position taken by ——, and still more in the glory of Christ and our brethren's welfare.

The question is as to reception of saints to partake of the table of our Lord with us—whether any can be admitted who are not formally and regularly amongst us. It is not whether we exclude persons unsound in faith, or ungodly in practice, nor whether we, deliberately walking with those who are unsound and ungodly, are not in the same guilt—not clear in the matter. The first is unquestioned; the last brethren have insisted on—and I among them—at very painful cost to ourselves. There may be subtle pleas to get evil allowed; but we have always been firm, and God, I believe, has fully owned it.

The question is not there; but suppose a person, known to be godly and sound in faith, who has not left some ecclesiastical system—nay, thinks scripture favors an ordained ministry, but is glad when the occasion occurs; suppose we alone are in the place, or he is not in connection with any other body in the place—staying with a brother, or the like; is he to be excluded because he is of some system as to which his conscience is not enlightened, nay, which he may think more right? He is a godly member of the body, known such; is he to be shut out? If so, the degree of light is title to communion, and the unity of the body is denied by the assembly which refuses him. The principle of meeting (as members of Christ walking in godliness) is given up, agreement with us is made the rule, and, the assembly becomes a sect with its members like any other. They meet on their principles, Baptist or other, you on yours; and if they do not belong to you formally as such, you do not let them in. The principle of Brethren's meeting is gone, and another sect is made—say with more light, and that is all. It may give more trouble, requiring more care to treat every case on its merits, on the principle of the unity of all Christ's members, than to say “You do not belong to us, you cannot come;” but the whole principle of meeting is gone. The path is not of God.

I have heard (and I partly believe it, for I have heard some rash and violent people say it elsewhere) that the various sectarian celebrations of the supper are called tables of devils. But this proves only the unbrokenness and ignorance of him who says it. The heathen altars are called tables of devils because, and expressly because, what they offered, they offered, according to Deut. 32:17, to devils, and not to God. But to call Christian assemblies by profession (ignorant of ecclesiastical truth, and hence meeting wrongly) tables of devils, is simply monstrous nonsense, and shows the bad state of him who so talks. No sober man, no honest man, can deny that scripture means something totally different. I have heard—I do not know whether it be true—that it has been said that the brethren in England act on this ground. If this has been said, it is simply and

totally false. There have been new gatherings formed during my absence in America which I have never visited; but the old ones, long walking as brethren, have always received known Christians; and everywhere, I have no doubt, the newer ones too, and in every country. I have known individuals to take up the thought—one, at any rate, at Toronto; but the assembly always received true Christians. Three broke bread in this way the last Lord's day that I was in London.

There cannot be too much care as to holiness and truth: the Spirit is the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of truth; but ignorance of ecclesiastical truth is not a ground of excommunication when the conscience and walk are undefiled. If a person came and made a condition to be allowed to go to both, he would not come in simplicity in the unity of the body. I know it to be evil, and cannot allow it; and he has no right to impose any condition on the church of God. It must exercise its discipline, as cases arise, according to the word. Nor, indeed, do I think a person regularly going from one to another systematically can be honest in going to either; he is setting up to be superior to both and condescending to each. This is not, in that act, a pure heart.

May the Lord guide you. Remember you are acting as representing the whole church of God; and if you depart from a right path as to the principle of meeting, you are separating yourselves from it to be a local sect on your own principles.

In all that concerns faithfulness, God is my witness, I seek no looseness; but Satan is busy, seeking to lead us one side or the other—to destroy the largeness of the unity of the body, or to make it mean looseness in practice and doctrine. We must not fall into one in avoiding the other. Reception of all true saints is what gives its force to the exclusion of those walking loosely. If I exclude all who walk godlily as well, who do not follow with us, it loses its power, for those who are godly are shut out too.

There is no membership of brethren. Membership of an assembly is unknown in scripture. It is members of Christ's body. If people must be all of you, it is practically membership of your body. The Lord keep you from it: that is simply dissenting ground.

Ever, beloved brethren,

Affectionately yours,

J. N. D.

I should, if I came to ——, require clear evidence what ground you are meeting upon.

Notes on Genesis 1-3

"In the beginning God created," &c. This stupendous fact, thus recorded at the very commencement of God's word, is elsewhere referred to—1, as proof of His proprietorship of all things (Psa. 89:11, 12); 2, as proof of His power (Isa. 40:26); 3, of power and Godhead (Rom. 1:20). 4, as, the ground on which praise is demanded (Psa. 148:5); 5, His glory stated as the object (Isa. 43:7); 6, His pleasure (Rev. 4:11); 7, proof of absolute sovereignty (Isa. 45:9-12); 8, to be inhabited, and thus not in vain, the end being accomplished in millennial times; 9, God's glory in the church by Christ Jesus, stated at the end of creation (Eph. 3:9, 10); 10, one God is the Creator; still, all the persons in the Godhead recognized; God the Father in all the above passages; 11, by Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. i. 2; John 1:5, 10); 12, by the Spirit (ver. 2): 13, the whole calling on us to remember our Creator (Eccl. 12:1); to worship and serve Him supremely (Rom. 1:25; Rev. 4:11); and to receive His gifts with thanksgiving. (1 Tim. 4:3.)

Supposing the Bible to be a revelation from God, how exactly it begins as we might expect! Not that men ever begin thus their disquisitions on the origin of all things; far from it. But this is precisely what illustrates the point. Supposing God to be the Author and the inspired penman the instrument of communication, how natural to begin with the simple absolute statement of verse 1! To suppose God writing a preface would be absurd.

What the first verse declares is the fact of God's creating the heavens and the earth when they began to exist. There is no intimation that this was part of the first day's work, nor of the space of time elapsing between the creation, as in verse 1, and the earth being found, as in verse 2, in the condition there described. Innumerable ages may have intervened, for anything the narrative says to the contrary. But at a given epoch the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. How impossible that the darkness could ever have enlightened itself, or that chaos could reduce itself to order! Equally impossible that light and order can be educed from the deeper darkness and more dismal confusion of man's fallen state by any power inherent in himself. But the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. In like manner does He, as the source of all that is to be produced in those born of Him, act upon their souls. But it is to impart what is not there, not to develop what already exists. "Let there be light, and there was light." So "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." It was by His word "God said, Let there be light," &c. So it is by His word that He shines into the sinner's heart.

Amid the uncertainty as to the import of the word Elohim, as traceable from its real or supposed root (which is not found in scripture), it is well that this chapter, and the opening verses of the next, in which it alone is used as the divine name, afford us so satisfactory a sense, revealing Elohim as the Originator of all things, His eternal power and Godhead being made known by the creation of which He is the source. As to the plural form of the word, and its connection with singular verbs, would not it be near the truth to say that, while it cannot be regarded as a revelation of the Trinity, it is still such a mode of expression as evinces that He, the blessed Spirit, the third person therein,

had it in mind, and used words, the full force of which could only be understood by us when that doctrine had been revealed?

What a pure and blessed atmosphere do we breathe in the perusal of this chapter! All is divine. God said, God saw, God called. His thoughts, words, and acts were presented throughout. And hence all is very good. Alas it is when the creature begins to act that all is marred. How observable, too, that God gives everything its name He calls as well as makes all things. Night and day, heaven, earth, and seas all receive their names as well as their existence from Him. What was for man's use, and to be subjected to man's control, is left for him to name. What an evident progress, moreover, from generals to particulars in the order of the creation! Light; the atmosphere; the divisions of the seas from the dry land; the varied orders of vegetable life: the min, moon, and stars, or the placing of the earth in such relation to them as to receive their light, and have time divided by their revolutions; then first the lower orders of animals, such as birds and fishes, and afterward the higher beasts of the forest and beasts of the field—all whose organization is more complicated and elaborate—and, last of all, man, to be the ruler and lord of all.

When man, however, was to be created, it was not, as in each previous case, by a simple fiat of God's lips: the creation of man was the subject of divine counsels. “Let us make man,” &c. Observe here that man was to be, and was, made in the image and likeness of God. This is his first great distinction from what had been previously created. For the second, he was to have dominion over all. How strikingly was he, in all this, “the figure of him who was to come!” (Compare Psa. 8; Phil. 2:6-11, with Heb. 2:5-10; Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15:45-47.)

How touching the testimony of God's complacency in the, as yet, unsullied creation! He rested on the seventh day: surely not in any such sense as that in which we use the word rest, as contrasted with fatigue, but simply as contrasted with the six days' work. “The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them;” “and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” as that on which He could with delight survey the completed work. How beautiful a type of that eternal rest He is yet to have in the redeemed creation! (Rev. 21:5. 6.)

Chapter 2: 4. We here begin to have a new name” Jehovah Elohim” —expressing, as it would seem, not only the origination of all things by Elohim, but the relations sustained by Him to a part of that which He had so originated. The double name is as uniformly used in this chapter from this point as the single one previously.

Verse 7. The creation of man is here more particularly described, and his distinction from the rest of the animated creation is still further developed. His body, it seems, was first formed of the dust, and without life. Then, into the nostrils of the frame thus constituted, the Lord God breathed the breath of life: and man became a living soul. He consists, therefore, of two parts—a body formed out of the dust, and now, in consequence of sin, to return to the dust whence it was taken, and a soul—a living soul—received from God Himself, and which, when separated from the body, returns to God who gave it. This soul, capable of receiving the knowledge of God, endowed with understanding, memory, affections, and will, is what renders man a responsible being. He is not inanimate, like a stone—insensitive, like a plant—irrational, and blindly governed by instinct, like an animal, but, unlike all these, capable of observation, recollection, judgment, decision; he is the subject of hope, fear, love, hatred, joy, sorrow, confidence, distrust, and, above all, he is

susceptible of knowing the One who has so formed and constituted him, and of finding in Him the object of the suited exercise of all these wondrous faculties.

With what perfect goodness had God provided a residence for man, before man himself was created to enjoy it! How everything must have witnessed to man the beneficence of his Creator! Everything pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life to sustain him in immortality, in case of his obedience, and but one object, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by which his obedience was put to the test.

Verse 15, &c. It was from God that the man had received his being, and it was by Him that he was placed in the garden prepared for him—placed there, not to be inactive, but “to dress it and to keep it.” How absolute were God's rights over the creature that He had formed All Adam's rights, as regarded the garden, the earth, and the various tribes of inferior creatures, flowed from the sovereign appointment of Him, whose, equally with Adam himself, they all were. How fitting that there be some test of whether Adam recognized these rights of His Creator: and if there were to be a test, how could there have been one easier or more favorable to man? In verses 16, 17, observe, 1, God's authority—He “commanded the man;” 2, His bounty— “Of every tree,” &c.; 3, His prohibition— “Thou shalt not;” — “His threatening” — “In the day,” &c. Man is thus fully set in responsibility before that woman is created. She was to share the responsibility with him.

Verse 18. Man was alone, and it was not good that he should be so. The earth and all that it contained was good, and man placed in unquestioned authority over it all. But amid its various tribes of animals and plants, man had no companion with whom to share his affections and his thoughts. Whence was such an one to come? Had another been created out of the dust independently of Adam, where had been his supremacy? and where had been, moreover, the tender intimacy of relationship needed in such a companion? Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast and fowl, and brought them to Adam, to see what he would call them. Adam exercised thus his delegated authority, and gave names to all the animal tribes—but for Adam there was not found an help meet. How blessedly was the lack filled up! Out of Adam, while he slept, did the Lord God make woman, and bring her to the man. His exclamation sufficiently evinces the joy with which he received her, as well as his perception of the Infinite wisdom which had thus provided a partner, a companion, distinct indeed, and thus the object of his affections and delight, and yet so mysteriously linked with his existence as to have been once part of himself. “The woman is of the man.” Precious mystery, regarded as expressing the relation of the second Adam to His Eve, the church. No one in all the creation of which He is Heir, and Lord, and Head, suited to be the sharer of His dominion, and the companion of His heart, but the church, by virtue of His deep sleep of death, made partaker of His life in resurrection, and yet in the day to come to be presented by Him to Himself, a glorious church, without spot, &c. (Eph. 5)

Chapter 3. It was by subtlety, not by force, that man was overcome. No force could have overcome him, had not he himself departed, as he was induced by deception to do, from God. How important to examine God's whole word, seeing that it is so near the close of scripture as Rev. 12 that we have an explicit declaration as to who” the serpent” is of whom we here read so near the beginning of the inspired record! How evident, from the mode of the enemy's attack, that faith is the root and spring of all obedience in the creature, even in innocence, as well as that which receives the Savior and His great salvation when man has fallen! No wonder that such

stress is laid on it as the fundamental principle of the Christian's life, walk, endurance, and victory. Perfect confidence in God's goodness would have assured our first parents, though they knew nothing of the reason for the prohibition, that it must be, and was, for their good and happiness. They would then have repelled the base insinuation against God's goodness, implied rather than expressed in the artful question, “Yea, hath God said?” &c. How much more was contained in such an inquiry than appears on the surface!

His own pretended anxiety for their enjoyment; the insinuation that such a thing was too bad for God to have said; but if He had, what a foe to their happiness He must be, to grudge them so small a gratification? What could have met so poisoned a dart from Satan's quiver, but the perfect confidence which would have replied in the very words of the LORD God: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” — “such is our Creator's goodness; and, having made the one only exception to this, we can trust His goodness in this also—that it is for our good.” Faith would have noticed the “every” and the “freely” in chapter 2:16; and such observation of the very words of the “LORD God” would again have strengthened faith, and led to the instant repelling of such thoughts as the enemy sought to suggest.

But Eve's first reply has two sad features: first, that God's very words did not constitute it; and, secondly, that the two she omitted were such as show that the tempter's insinuation had already begun to take effect. Her answer betrays that already her thoughts of God's bounty are less vast and magnificent than the words had expressed. The thin edge of the wedge was already inserted. All the rest, alas! was easy. The threatening was all that now stood between her and the enjoyment she had alas! begun to covet. And even ail to the threatening, the solemn words, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” have got diluted in Eve's lips to, “lest ye die.” The heart set on a prohibited indulgence, the threatened punishment the only barrier, and even this viewed through a diminishing medium, how easily can Satan silence all remaining fears by the bold contradiction of God's word: “Ye shall not surely die!” To this, moreover, he now adds, what he had but insinuated before, that God has motives of His own for the prohibition. According to the enemy, it was to perpetuate their inferiority to Himself that God had forbidden them the fruit.

Verse 6. What a contradiction here to the One who judged not “after the sight of his eyes,” or “the hearing of his ears,” and what an answer to the infidelity which prefers “sight,” or what men call “demonstration,” to faith in God's word. She saw through the medium Satan had interposed, and what she saw was neither more nor less than three enormous lies. God had said, by prohibiting the tree, that it was not good for food: she saw that it was. Had God retained His place in her heart, she could not have found pleasure to her eyes in that which He had forbidden, but she saw “that it was pleasant to the eyes.” Believing Satan rather than God, she saw, moreover, that “it was a tree to be desired to make one wise.” “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” having thus entered, the act of disobedience was all that remained, and soon, alas I she took, ate, gave to her husband, and he also ate.

We have divine authority for believing that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman.” (1 Tim. 2:14.) Hence learn, 1, the wisdom of God in making the man the head of the woman. 2, Satan's craft in addressing himself to the weaker vessel. 3, the evil and misery which flow from practical disregard of God's arrangement. It was evidently Eve's place to have referred the serpent to Adam, or to have herself referred to him the representations falsely made to her by the serpent;

and how evident, as Adam was not deceived, that the tempter would in this way have been foiled. 4, God's claim ought to have been, with Adam, superior to that of conjugal affection, whether the latter led him to choose, with his eyes open, to sin, and perish with his wife, or whether it was in some other way that it operated. 5, How solemnly does the whole illustrate and enforce the subjection due from the church to Christ (Eph. 5), as well as the chosen symbol of this in the actual and willing subjection of the wife to her husband.

It has often been said, and still oftener thought, that the act of our first parents in thus eating of the forbidden fruit was it trivial act, when compared with the consequences it involved. Nothing can be more absurd than such a thought. The occasion afforded them of obeying or disobeying was certainly in itself, viewed apart from God's command, a trivial one. But not only did it cease to be a trifle, when it had become the subject of a divine command, and a test of man's obedience, but the more trivial in itself the prohibited act, the more fearful and manifest the guilt of disobedience. The man who would be a traitor for a toy would be justly held more culpable than one whose inducement to revolt was the anticipated possession of a kingdom. If it were a small matter to eat the fruit of any particular tree, it was surely a small matter to abstain therefrom. But, for the sake of so confessedly small a matter, to disobey God's command, was not a trifle, but an act of gravest significance and deepest guilt. Consider the elements which are combined in such an act—which were combined in this. Distrust of their Creator's goodness; the denial of His veracity; ingratitude for all the bounties He had bestowed upon them, and all the favors He had shown them; contempt of all the blessedness involved in His continued favors, along with the hardihood which dared Him to fulfill the threatening He had denounced. These, as well as the trampling under foot authority, the aspiring to equality with Him, and the preferring Satan as their friend and counselor to the God who had given them existence, with all that made that existence a blessing, were some of the chief moral elements involved in the act which has been deemed so trivial by their fallen and corrupted offspring.

What a solemn spectacle is here presented to us! None so deeply interested in it as ourselves; but for that very reason alas! none so incapable of rightly estimating its character. Yet, even to us, blinded as we are by self interest, as well as by the actual effect upon our perceptions and judgments of the event before us, how momentous does that event appear! The inanimate creation answers the end of its existence: the display of its Creator's wisdom, power, and glory. The planets revolve around their centers; the seasons succeed each other in due course; the rain and dew fertilize the soil; the earth yields its rich variety of fruits; all these, even the inferior tribes of animated nature obeying the instincts they possess, subserve the wellbeing of man, and display the glory of his and their Creator; but man himself, the only being amongst them all gifted with the capacity of intelligent obedience, is a rebel! It was for the glory, by the power, and according to the will, of God, that all began to be. But while all else continue to exist on these conditions, man has chosen another end than his Maker's glory. He acts to gratify and exalt himself. He seeks to be independent of his Maker. His own will becomes the rule by which he acts, not only instead of God's will, but in contradiction thereto. “How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed.”

Verse 7. How little did the guilty pair anticipate, how little could they beforehand picture to themselves, the immediate consequences of their deed! The eyes of both were opened, not, as they had vainly imagined, to discern new objects, and receive new sensations of delight, but to

perceive, what they had been happily unconscious of till now, that they were naked! Their innocence had needed no veil. Shame, and the conscious need of a covering from each other and themselves, form the first-fruits of sin. Guilt and remorse, twin sisters, till now unknown, impel them to the vain attempt to hide their nakedness by garments constructed by themselves. How affecting and how true a picture of what still takes place Sin is no sooner committed, and the guilty fruition past, than remorse succeeds, and the attempt, by one excuse or another, to hide one's shame from oneself.

Verse 8. From oneself—for, the moment God manifests His presence, the fig-leaf aprons are of no avail. They may servo the purpose of self-deception till the light which makes manifest draws near; but they seem not to be remembered even when the voice of the LORD God is heard. Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God. They remember their need of covering; but those they have fabricated for themselves are forgotten, and they seek to hide themselves amongst the trees of the garden. Here several points suggest themselves. 1, they show the alienation of their hearts from God before any sentence of exclusion is pronounced upon them by Him. He has become the object of their distrust and dread. 2, how completely must sin have already blinded their understanding, that they should deem it possible to hide themselves from God! 3, with the heart alienated, and the understanding darkened, conscience, awakened by hearing the voice of the LORD God, does not lead them towards God, but away from Him.

Verse 9. What a question for Adam to have to answer! How it intimated that he was not where he had been wont to be! Why the difference? Why not meet, as he had been accustomed to meet, the One who deigned thus to visit the creatures of His power and love? No change had taken place with Him. What had befallen Adam, that he should hide himself at His approach? How wondrous the ways of God! Our first parents had rebelled—had sought by their own devices to hide their shame—and now were attempting to hide themselves from God. And yet He approaches—He speaks—not to accuse or to upbraid, but to inquire. There is nothing unusual in His approach; the change was in those who flee and hide themselves, instead of adoringly welcoming His condescension, as in moments past; and it is for them to account for the change. “Adam, where art thou?”

And what was the response to this demand? Was it a frank acknowledgment of sin, and submission to the will of the One who had such cause of just offense? Alas! no; Adam owns the effect of sin, the sense of nakedness, and the fear resulting therefrom; but not one word of his having sinned. Not a word expressive of contrition for his offense. And when the question comes closer to his conscience, assuming a form in which it could not be evaded, he casts the blame of that which he could neither deny nor longer conceal on “the woman,” and covertly on God Himself. “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me,” &c. As though he had said, The fault is not mine; it results from arrangements over which I had no control. If Thou hadst not given me the woman, she could not have been my tempter, and I should not have eaten of the tree.

Here notice, ere passing on, how solemnly precise and personal the questions are. Not, “My creatures, where are you?” but, “Adam, where art thou?” He had but one companion in sin; but this question completely isolates him, places him singly before God, and compels him to answer for himself. “I heard;” “I was afraid;” “I hid myself.” Equally direct is the next inquiry. “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest

not eat?" I and thou, God and the sinner—the sinner and his sin confronting each other And is not this still the effect of God's word, when it is felt to be His living voice? A man may be but one of a crowd, undistinguishable from his fellows in any eye but the eye of God; but when the word comes home, how does it isolate him, and make him feel as though none were present but God and he, and as though there were nothing for him to gaze upon under the eye of God but the sin on which that eye rests, and the conviction of which is being forced home on the conscience! "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." "Come, see a man who told me all that ever I did."

Observe, too, in Adam's second reply, that not only does he covertly blame God, regardless of the love in which God had given him the woman for a help-meet for him, but also how heartlessly he tries to screen himself by casting the blame on his associate in transgression. Little do men imagine, when hand joins hand in wickedness, how ready each will be to accuse the others.

Leaving, however, for the moment the man, who has been compelled to own the act, though making no confession of its evil, God next addresses the woman. "What is this that thou hast done?" She, as ready to excuse herself as her husband had been to cast on her the blame, replies, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Both put the pretended cause of their misdoing in the front, and only afterward, at the last, acknowledge the act they had committed. No notice is taken of the excuse alleged by either of the culprits: but, convicted out of their own mouth of the deed, they stand by, and await their sentence, while God speaks to the seducer by whose wiles they had been undone. To him no question is put. There is nothing to call his conscience into exercise in a way tending towards moral restoration or renewal. A curse is absolutely pronounced upon him—a sentence even as to the animal employed, of shame, and degradation, and perpetual enmity between it and the woman, and the woman's Seed. As to the latter in the highest sense of the expression, victory over the serpent—a victory complete and glorious—is foretold; "It shall bruise thy head." "Her seed" —what grace! "The woman, being deceived, was in the transgression;" and yet it is the woman's Seed by whom the head of the serpent is to be bruised. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." His heel, moreover, was to be bruised. It was not to be a conquest by mere force. The Victor was to be Himself a sufferer. Precious intimation, however obscure, of the mystery of redemption! Compare Heb. 2:14," That through death," &c. All this was in the hearing of the first human pair, but was not addressed to them. The promise was to the Seed of the woman. But though uttered in the curse on the enemy, it was within hearing of our first parents, and this before sentence is at all pronounced on them.

But judgment has to be pronounced. The woman, having been first in the transgression, is the first to hear her sentence. Her sin, moreover, had elements peculiar to itself; and these would seem to entail their distinctive punishment. She had usurped her husband's place, and forgotten her own, in undertaking to answer the seducer; and now subjection to her husband is a part of the sentence she receives. Sorrow in the conception and bringing forth of her offspring is that by which the female of the human race is distinguished, and that in all lands, from the female of all the inferior tribes of animals. And even afterward, how large a proportion of the sorrow and trial connected with children devolves upon the mother! In the sentence on the woman no notice is taken of her excuse; but Adam, having indirectly blamed God Himself, in the words, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me," his excuse is made the very ground of his condemnation. "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife," &c: The sentence on Adam, as lord of this lower

creation, is that the ground is cursed for his sake. Instead of yielding spontaneously all that could minister to his comfort and pleasure, hard labor is the only condition on which henceforth it should produce the ruder necessaries of life. “In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” Surely this is a part of that “vanity,” that “bondage of corruption,” to which, “not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same,” the whole creation has been consigned. (MS. of the late) W. T.

Chapter 75

Gilgal

After the victory Israel returned to the camp of Gilgal. But the return thither of the conquerors of the Canaanitish kings contains the instructive lesson that, whatever our victories and our conquests may be, we must always return to the place that becomes us before God in the annihilation of self; to the application of the knowledge we have of God (the resurrection of Christ having set us in the heavenly places), to the judging and the mortifying of the flesh, to spiritual circumcision, which is the death of the flesh by the power of resurrection. There is a time to act and a time to be still, waiting upon God that we may be fit for action. Activity, the power that attends us, success, everything, tends to draw us away from God, or at least to divide the attention of our fickle hearts.

Chapter 76

God Sufficient in Himself

God alone is sufficient for Himself—is α■ταρκ■ς, and hence not self-seeking, for that comes from not being satisfied, not sufficient for self. Out of Him the α■ταρκε■α is pride, satisfaction with misery and itself a sin-dependence is the right, holy, loving, excellent place. To be independent, if we are not God, is folly, stupidity, and a lie, living in a lie. If we are God, we must be the only one, or we are it not at all. Yet in Christianity we are made partakers of the divine nature, in order to our having the fullest capacity of enjoyment; but we for that very reason have, He being perfectly revealed, such a knowledge of Him as makes us undividedly delight in His infinite excellence, and makes our dependence to be our deriving in love from infinite excellence, and in our normal state unmingled delight in it. The connection of the derivative and perfect objective character of divine life and love is what is so brought out in John, particularly in his epistle; it makes its essential depth and beauty, and when not seized, because not possessed, its difficulty and apparently mystic character. It is this which makes the Trinity have so pure and perfect a place to the soul; I do not use this as a proof, save as the real present enjoyment of anything proves to the heart it is true. In the Father I have absolute Godhead in its own intrinsic permanent perfection. In the Son I find what is divine (if not in the same perfection, I have not God revealed) brought out in man, fully wrought into all that is sinlessly human; so that it is not only suited to man, but to be apprehended (if morally capable of it) by man. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily, at the same time in the personal relationship of Son. And the Holy Ghost, besides my having a life from God, and so being partaker of the divine nature, is the power in me (morally as well as in power of apprehension), by which I apprehend and enter into communion with God, with the Father and the Son; while this presence of the Holy Ghost secures in my feebleness the truth and purity of this communion, because any inconsistency grieves Him, and He works in the conscience by the revelation of God, though not then in communion.

Chapter 77

God's Answer to the Exercised Heart

It is instructive to observe here the difference between the exercises of heart which are the result of faith, and the answer of God to the wants and difficulties which are caused by those exercises. We have the expression of these exercises in a soul under the weight of the same oppression as his brethren, but who feels it thus because his faith in the Lord was real. Then we have the answer which produces peace, and, with peace, worship. It is the same, when, after having suffered death, the risen Jests reveals Himself to His disciples with the same words that God uses here, and lays down the foundation of the church gathered together in worship. In Luke 7 we find the same experiences in the woman who was a sinner. She believed in the person of Jesus. His grace had made Him her all; but she did not know yet that one like her was pardoned and saved, and might go in peace. This assurance was the answer given to her faith. Now this answer is what the gospel proclaims to every believer. The Holy Ghost proclaims Jesus. This produces conviction of sin. The knowledge of God in Christ, and of ourselves, casts down (for sin is there, and we are in bondage, sold under sin); but it produces conflict, perhaps anguish. Often the soul struggles against sin, and cannot gain the mastery; it cannot get beyond a certain point (the greater number of the sermons from which it expects light, go no farther); but the gospel proclaims God's own resources for bringing it out of this state. “Peace be unto thee,” “thy sins are forgiven.” “Thy faith” (for she has faith), says Christ to the poor sinful woman, “hath saved thee.” This is what she knew not yet. Compare Acts 2:37, 38.)

Chapter 78

Correspondence on God's Grace and Man's Ruin

My Dear Brother,

I have lately felt somewhat perplexed how to answer the following statements, and should be glad if you will kindly tell me how scripture meets this serious question. It has been said, “God is love. He does not leave the poor heathen without divine aid in their darkness. Though the Holy Ghost may not be in them as an indwelling Spirit, yet, as external, He deals with the conscience of every human being; in the case of a heathen aiding him towards right convictions and good practice, and helping him so to live that he may be saved, and this, though he may never have heard the name of Christ, and knows not the true God in Christ. Such texts as Acts 17:27; 10:35; Rom. 2:7; Gen. 6:3, corroborate this view.”

Ever, my dear Brother,

Affectionately yours in Christ,

J. B. P.

My Dear Brother,

The doctrine you refer to is widely spread enough. Zwingle held it, all the Wesleyans hold it, and most of the national professors of Christianity. But it is founded on a want of depth and truth in the foundations, denying that we are all lost. The best answer is the very plain statements in the Epistle to the Romans, though these are confirmed by many others. But there is always a want of conviction of sin in these cases; man is not lost, not dead in trespasses and sins, and that is, I am not; for if I have deserved condemnation, it is no difficulty to think we all have. Hence grace, sin, the Lord's death, all lose their import and value; and the real way of meeting it morally is to deal with the conscience of the individual. “So to live that be might be saved” at once shows ignorance of the ways of God in grace—in fact of the gospel—as regards Christ's work.

“Right convictions and good practice” is not gospel. Is he born again? Acts 17:27 does not say a word of the Spirit's acting, and chapter 10:35 says simply that he who is such and such is accepted. It was merely that blessing was not confined to the Jews, as is evident if the passage be read. Rom. 2:7, &c., which is the strongest passage, supposes the truth of glory and resurrection known. If I found a Gentile so walking, he is as much saved as a Jew. But it is declared that every mouth is stopped, and all the world guilty before God, that there is none righteous, no, not one. The condemnation of the heathen is (Rom. 1:18- iii. 19) put upon a ground which negatives the idea of such a universal operation of the Spirit. They are, says the apostle, without excuse, on the double ground of having given up glorifying God when they knew Him, and testimony of creation, adding conscience: a reasoning perfectly futile, and without sense, if there was the other ground of condemnation, namely, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. They that have sinned without law perish without law. The carnal mind is enmity against God, in me, as well as in any other one of the nations. People confound the ground of responsibility with sovereign grace in saving. Gen. 6:3

refers merely to the patience of God in Noah's time.

Men are not saved by grace, if they are as thus stated; because, as the Spirit works alike on all (or the argument is nothing worth), the whole of salvation depends on man's acceptance of and acting on it. As I said at the beginning, our whole state, as scripture puts it, is denied. (See 2 Cor. 5:14, where the apostle draws the conclusion from grace. Compare Eph. 2:5.) I do not believe the Gentiles more lost than I was myself. But there is no name given under heaven whereby we can he saved but the name of Jesus Christ. Rom. 10:13, 15 is positive as to the means. Judgment and condemnation is according to the means we have. What brings, by sovereign goodness, salvation to the lost is another thing. But, as I said, does he think himself lost? That is the real question. The source of thousands of opinions is the want of this, of conscience being before God; where it is not, the mind can have a thousand thoughts, all alike to no purpose. But I must close.

Your affectionate Brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

Chapter 79

God's Purposes

I do not doubt that God's purposes are in their nature eternal, and He purposed the mystery in Christ Jesus. But the church is not spoken of as a purpose before the world. It is a πρ■θεσις τ■ν α■■νων, and is ε■ς π■σας τ■ς γενε■ς το■ α■■νος τ■ν α■■νων, but not τρ■ τ■ν α■■νων. This is according to His nature and relationship as Father to the Son (but owned in Christ). But it is spoken of, though hidden in the ages, yet only when Christ is raised as men, and so we with Him as man, and so formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Then Christ loved the church; this also is in view of His special relationship with it as a man, second Adam. The Christ gave up all He had to have it and form it for Himself, and present it, glorious, to Himself. Still it is God's assembly; only the Father does not give it to Christ as He does the saints individually. It is an actual thing on earth after Christ's ascension, unrevealed in the ages, in a certain sense not till then (we have Matt. 16), but being revealed in connection with Christ manifested in flesh, not according to the nature of God and the Father. This is full of interest as regards the church. Head over all things is connected with creation and not with God's nature and His being the Father as in Ephesians; that is, it is God's calling, God's inheritance; and then Christ comes in to introduce the church, as raised from the dead, and given to be Head over all things. It is with Him the church is in relationship. Chapter i. 4, 5 is another thing; but all how wonderful! Hence we have operative power from verse 19.

But is not πρ. τ. α■. a purpose, as to the ages, about them, the word πρ■θεσις being of God giving the absoluteness of the intention? (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:7.) But it was purposed as to the ages, whatever eternity unfolded as to it.

Chapter 80

The Gospel of God

In the opening verses of the epistle to the saints at Rome, the gospel is spoken of as God's gospel—God's power unto salvation. It is that in which the righteousness of God is revealed. All is of God; and we are told what the gospel is about, what it reveals, what its power, and on whom its marvelous blessings are conferred. God is the source of all our blessings, and all is made ours on the principle of faith. We observe that Paul was an apostle by calling, and separated unto the work of the gospel by the sovereign acting of the Holy Ghost. He tells us he had received grace. Those too, in Rome, to whom he wrote, were saints by calling, beloved of God, called of Jesus Christ. All these ways were entirely of grace, and completely opposed to the principle of law.

The real value and point of the glad tidings of God, however, can only be rightly estimated by the consideration of the alarming fact, stated in connection with these verses, that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness” (ver. 18), which shows that God's terrible judgment against all that is contrary to Himself is coming upon men from heaven. It is not a local or partial intervention of God's anger, but “against all ungodliness.” Divine wrath then is coming, and happy are those who like the Thessalonians can say they are “delivered from the wrath to come.” But let us not fail to notice, that wrath is revealed from heaven, not only against all that is hostile to God, but against all those who, while holding fast the letter of the truth, are practicing unrighteous ways. In the days of our Lord the Jews were the holders of the truth. All the truth of God known in the world was with them. The oracles of God had been committed unto them; but alas what grievous unrighteousness was among them, culminating in preferring a robber to Christ, and spitting upon and crucifying the Savior whom God had sent. In our day Christendom holds the truth—professes to be for Christ in contradistinction to Mahometanism, Judaism, and idolatry; but the prophetic delineation of the last days is being rapidly fulfilled, that men would be “covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers.... lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5.) What is this but holding the truth in unrighteousness? And on such may we not expect that the heaviest blow of the wrath of God will speedily fall? Are we not told that God will judicially send “men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: because they received not the love of the truth, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?” (2 Thess. 2:11, 12.) However the solemn and arousing fact remains unmistakably clear that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.” It is in connection with this alarming warning that the glad tidings of God are sent forth.

Firstly, it is well to observe that the gospel is “the gospel of God” —God's message to man; a ministry that makes no demands on man, but communicates glad tidings, which can make him happy (sinner though he may be), and at rest in God's infinitely holy presence. In the gospel God speaks, and it becomes man to hearken. If a prophet in olden times said, “Hear and your soul shall live,” the blessed Master was wont to say, “He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, path everlasting life,” and an apostle could write that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

It was then “the gospel of God” that Paul preached; and these glad tidings he was ready to minister in Rome by the will of God. It appears that up to that time no apostle had visited Rome. The gospel had effectually reached souls in that city by other instrumentality. Many there had evidently received it as the word of God, inasmuch as their “faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.” But there seems to have been something wanting in them, as to their grounding in “the righteousness of God” —the prominent subject of the epistle—so that Paul expressed himself as ready to preach to them at Rome as well as to others. He opens the epistle, therefore, with the foundation principles of the gospel; first of all asserting that it is “the gospel of God;” not like the law which demanded righteous. ness and love from the creature, but God manifesting Himself in the activity of His own grace for man's eternal salvation and blessing.

Secondly, let us not fail to notice what the glad tidings of God are about. We are told they are “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Whatever may be its effects, its source is from God, and the subject of it the Son of God—David's Son and David's Lord—who was raised from the dead. The gospel of God then sets before us the person and work of His Son, who was essentially and eternally divine, and yet perfect man. And only such a Savior could meet our need, or answer the just claims of the Majesty on high.

To redeem us He must be a sinless, spotless, perfect Man, for, had there been the least flaw attachable to Him, He would have had to be judged for it, and therefore unfit to be a substitute for us. But, blessed be God, He was the “holy thing” as born of Mary; and after thirty years of trial and temptation in a path of sorrow and grief, the heavens opened over Him, and a voice from the excellent glory declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Beside this, because of His perfect spotlessness, the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him. This could not have been, had there been in Him the least taint of imperfection. When the Holy Ghost indwells in a believer now, it is in virtue of his having received remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus, for the Holy Ghost could not take up His abode in any one not cleansed from sin. The Holy Ghost then coming down and abiding on the Son of God, was another infallible proof of the perfect spotlessness of His person.

But while we needed a Savior who was perfect Man, that He might, as our Substitute, bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and be made sin for us, it was also necessary that He should be a person having such capacities and attributes, that He could bear God's eternal judgment of sin, and be able to satisfy all the demands of infinite holiness and righteousness. All this He could do because He was Son of God, and also Son of David—God and man—in His own Sacred person. By His one offering on the cross then He discharged all the claims of divine righteousness as to our sin and guilt, and in it glorified God. The “gospel of God,” therefore, must be concerning His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and raised up from among the dead. Thus He was made somewhat inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, in which He once for all so fully atoned for sin, that He was raised from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness, and was in this way declared to be the Son of God with power. The gospel is therefore concerning the person and the work of the Son of God.

Thirdly, in the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God on the principle of faith. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (or, on the principle of faith unto faith), as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” (Ver. 17.) No doubt it was the gospel of the grace of God of

which Paul testified; but we are told that in it is the righteousness of God revealed. We know that God in His acting cannot sacrifice righteousness to love, nor love to righteousness, but works all His counsels according to the unchanging character of His own nature. Thus He magnifies the law, vindicates all the claims of justice, and yet in richest grace justifies the ungodly who believe. Hence we read that “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Chap. 5:21.) In the gospel then it is not righteousness demanded from man, not legal righteousness enforced, but God's righteousness revealed; not God requiring righteousness from man in the way of works, but God bringing righteousness to man suited to Himself on the principle of faith. It is then not human righteousness, not the righteousness of the law, but “the righteousness of God” which the gospel reveals. It is righteousness wholly apart from law. It is a righteousness suited to the nature of God, and we participate in it by faith. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” (Chap. 3:21, 22.) This scripture then speaks clearly of another righteousness than the one connected with law, and also that the law and the prophets gave testimony to it. Hence we find in the ceremonial law, as it is called, the burnt offering showed that the worshipper was accepted in its sweet savor— “It shall be accepted for him;” and the prophet Habakkuk, as we have quoted, declared that “the just shall live by faith,” showing that life and acceptance in another were contemplated by the law and the prophets, not on the principle of law-keeping, but on the principle of faith. David also, who lived under the law, wrote of the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” (Rom. 4:6-8.) Again, we find some hundreds of years before the law was given, that Abram was accounted righteous on the principle of faith. We read that “he believed in Jehovah, and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Gen. 15:6.) Abel also, by his “more excellent sacrifice obtained witness that he was righteous;” and we find also, that “Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” It is unquestionable then that a righteousness which was of God, and wholly apart from law, was reckoned to believers long before the law was given, that it was gloried in by the faithful who lived under the law, and that it is now revealed in the gospel toward all and upon all them that “believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead, who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:23-25.)

Another point which scripture brings before us is God's righteousness in forgiving the sins of those who believed before the, sacrifice of Christ. God, having now set forth Christ as a propitiation (mercy-seat) through faith in His blood, declares His righteousness in passing by the sins of Old Testament saints. His forbearance had been shown at the time, but now His righteousness in having done so is declared; for the atoning work of Christ, though then not accomplished, must have been always present to the eye of God. (See chap. 3:25, 26.)

And further, when Jesus was bearing our sins on the tree, we know that God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. There was unsparingly poured out upon Him all that, justice could inflict in the condemnation of sin. Though He was the righteous One, yet He endured all the righteous vengeance due to sin in His own self on the cross, and completely drained the cup of wrath, so that He could say, “It is finished.” Thus in His death the wages of sin was fully dealt out, for He died for our sins according to the scriptures. He died unto sin once. All the demands of

righteousness were fully met, and peace was made. There righteousness and peace kissed each other. How then was it possible that He should be holden of death? The debt having been justly canceled, how could the prisoner be longer detained? The Savior having made a just atonement for our sins, and having satisfied divine justice and glorified God, was it not a righteous thing that He should be raised from among the dead? And having been raised according to the Spirit of holiness, was He not marked out Son of God in power? Having brought eternal glory to God in the stupendous work of the cross, was it not a righteous thing that He should be exalted and glorified? Hence we hear Him saying, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” (John 13:31, 32.) And again, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:4, 5.) This demand we know was granted, and we are sure that He was righteously entitled to be glorified as Man. Hence we read elsewhere, “He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore [that is, on account of His so glorifying God in His death on the cross] God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:8-11.) Thus not only is the Man Christ Jesus righteously raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of God, and has received a name that is above every name (there being made Lord and Christ), but He is righteously entitled to Lordship over heavenly, earthly, and infernal beings—universal dominion, not only by reason of His personal glory as the Son, but because of the infinite worth of the work of the cross. Hence, when He takes unto Himself His great power and reigns, He will do so as righteously entitled to it in virtue of His obedience to death, even the death of the cross. He will then judge both the living and the dead, and put all enemies under His feet; for to this end Christ hath died and risen again that He might rule over both dead and living.

But mere than this. It is because, in marvelous grace, Christ died for our sins under the righteous judgment of God that we have remission—that God can and does in righteousness forgive us. “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;” for we have forgiveness through the blood. How could God in righteousness condemn our sins in the person of His own Son, and afterward condemn them on us? Impossible. The idea would accuse God of injustice. But, blessed be His name in virtue of the atoning work He justifies us— “Being now justified by his blood.” Is it not due to Christ, just to Him, when blood was shed for many for the remission of sins, that God should forgive us and manifest the full outflow of His love in justifying the believer from all things? This we know He does. O, how forcible and assuring are the words, “It is God that justifieth!” Instead of God condemning us, He now justifies us, and declares that He is “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Precious words of comfort!

And yet further, “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him “ Christ Himself our righteousness. When the father fell upon the neck of the repentant prodigal, and imprinted on his cheek the kiss of love, he said to his servants, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” It was the best robe. There could be nothing superior to it. It was the highest possible character of fitness for the father's presence. But the illustration fails to convoy the full blessedness of the righteousness, which every believer now is in Christ, for

He is not only graced for the Father's presence, but his acceptance is in Another—the Beloved—so that we are become “the righteousness of God in him.” It is due to Christ, that in virtue of His God-glorifying work of obedience we should be accounted righteous in Him—the Lord our righteousness—according to the eternal purpose. God in His grace has therefore made Him to be unto us “righteousness,” and this on the principle of faith. We are not then ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish our own righteousness, but have gladly submitted ourselves unto the righteousness of God. Having found all our righteousness as filthy rags, and all hope of righteousness by law-keeping having come to an end, we are rejoiced to find that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Chap. 10:4.)

Thus “the righteousness of God” revealed in the gospel is presenting in widest contrast with “the righteousness of the law,” and is entirely apart from it. It flows to us from the sovereign love of God through the accomplished work of His Son, and is upon all them that believe. How sweet it is to know that Christ glorified is our righteousness, that through matchless grace we are the righteousness of God in Him. Christ then is our subsisting righteousness in God's presence. What rest of heart this gives! What boldness too in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world! Who can condemn whom God justifies? How these truths melt our hearts, and draw us out in worship and thanksgiving! What comfort too they give in darkest circumstances! It is no marvel that so many have found the true expression of their souls in such lines as these—

“Without one thought that's good to plead,

O, what could shield me from despair?

But this: “Though I am vile indeed.

The Lord my righteousness is there.”

Fourthly, the gospel is God's power unto salvation. (Ver. 16.) We say, with reverence, that in no other way could God's power be put forth to save sinners, for apart from the accomplished work of the person of the Son, He can only judge sinners, and must be against sinners; but in the death and blood-shedding of Jesus God shows that He hates sin but loves sinners, and is able to save the worst of sinners. The apostle Paul therefore gloried in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. It brings salvation to Jew and Gentile on the principle of faith, though in point of order it was preached to the Jew first.

Observe then that the gospel is preached for salvation, not to improve man in the flesh but to save him; not to help the efforts of nature religiously, but to bring him to God; for the obedience of faith not of all nations, but among all nations; it is not therefore preached to better the world, nor to convert the world, but it is the power of God unto salvation to individuals, to every one that believes. Now the power of God unto salvation is very specific in its meaning, a large expression; for while the freeness of the grace of God is shown in its blessing to every one that believes, fullness is set forth in not stopping short in its blessing of planting the saved one bodily in the presence of God in heavenly glory. We know that we are “called unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus,” and that “he suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 5:10; 3:18.) Not but that it is quite correct now to speak of believers as “saved,” for we have the salvation of our souls now by faith, as scripture says, “Receiving the end of your faith, the

salvation of your souls.” But we wait for salvation in its full sense, “The redemption of our body,” “the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,” when in spiritual bodies, suited to heavenly and eternal glory, and conformed to the image of the Son, we shall be in full possession and enjoyment of this great salvation.

The gospel then is the power of God unto salvation, because in the cross of Christ the foundation was laid in righteousness for its accomplishment, according to the eternal purpose and grace of God, to give life and righteousness in Christ Jesus to every one that believeth. We have therefore, by the power of God in the gospel, deliverance from the wrath to come, remission of sins, present possession of eternal life, justification by the blood of Christ, peace with God, sonship, the gift of the Holy Ghost, hope of glory and much more As the Father has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, we must wait for God's Son from heaven, for then we shall know the full power of God to us in this great salvation. Our hope then is glory. We do not hope for righteousness, for, as we have seen, the gospel reveals that Christ is our righteousness; but we hope for that to which righteousness established in the accomplished work of Jesus entitles us, even glory. “We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” (Gal. 5:5.) “We look for the Savior who shall change this body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil. 3:20, 21.) Then “salvation” will be fully consummated; and in this sense we can say, “Now is our salvation nearer [not surer] than when we believed;” because, as time rolls on, it hastens the blissful period of our Lord's return. Well has an apostle called it, “this great salvation.” It will not then be only salvation from the guilt and dominion of sin, the salvation of the soul, and deliverance from the wrath to come; but salvation from this old creation and its belongings, from a body of frailty and infirmity, changed in a moment, and bodily translated into the presence of God and the Lamb forever. Then, in untreated light, we shall see His face; then we shall realize fully what we now apprehend so feebly, and sound forth so faintly, that “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” H. H. S.

Chapter 81

The Ground of the Church of God

I am writing for those who have learned at least that the church of God is one, and that the sects and denominations of Christendom are, as such, necessarily wrong and to be refused. This is a great truth, however simple a one. If the church be God's—if Christ be its Head, and it His body—if by one Spirit we are baptized into that body—if the word of God be Christ's complete authoritative instruction. for His own, then of necessity the formation of divers bodies, the union of Christiana by what distinguishes them from one another, the adoption of human creeds and confessions (as if the word of God were not full enough or plain enough for the guidance of His people), all this must be judged as so much real confusion. There remains for us only the one church of God, to which every one baptized by the Spirit belongs, a body which it is not ours to make, admit into, or legislate for, but simply to recognize as that to which we have relationship, and a sphere of duty founded upon this, which scripture can alone authoritatively define for us. My conscience, delivered from the usurpation of traditional authority, is set free only to learn humbly in God's presence what is my path with Him, and to follow it in subjection to His word and Spirit.

I do not dwell further upon this then, however important. Two questions that are pressing upon many in the present day, and the various answers to which are dividing those who are so far united, I seek briefly to consider—

How far and in what way is scriptural unity attainable in a day like this? and

What is the discipline of the church of God enjoined with regard to evil doctrine and evil practice, so lamentably prevalent?

The latter question it may be simpler in some respects to take up first, and as to both I merely seek to point out and emphasize a few passages from God's word.

1. Separation from evil is everywhere enjoined upon believers, and that in order to the enjoyment of their privileges as such. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,... come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be any sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” And if the evil be in professing Christians, and there be each a state of things that all we can say is, “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” still the word is (perhaps even more emphatically) “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.... If a man therefore purge himself from these” [vessels to dishonor], “he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.”

In these two passages, both the yoke—commercial, patrimonial, and ecclesiastical—is forbidden with unbelievers, and a man is to purge himself not merely from iniquity, but from association with evildoers; and in both cases in order to be (in the full blessedness of it) a child of the Father, or a sanctified vessel for the Master's use.

In the latter case it is not simply moral evil that is in question, but the apostle has directly in view the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of fame.” These are an example of the people to be withdrawn from. And the apostle John, writing to an “elect lady” of “whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,” enjoins, “If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house nor bid him God speed ['salute him,' literally]; for he that saluteth him is partaker of his evil deeds.” Here again, dissociation from the person is the only way to be morally free from the evil with which he is identified.

These, it may be said, are rules for the individual. They are so, and therefore absolutely binding upon the individual, but upon each and all. If any gathering of Christians then would link me up with moral or doctrinal evil, my separation from them ecclesiastically is as much enjoined upon me as my separation from the evildoers in question, for they would bind me to disobedience to my Lord. Nay, their case is in this respect worse than his who brings the false doctrine, that he is blinded by it, while they, with their eyes open to its evil, practically sanction it by their association with it. Justly therefore does scripture decide, that whosoever salutes him who brings not the doctrine of Christ is partaker of his evil deeds.

This principle is fully recognized in the epistle which treats of the order of the church on earth—the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where they, having continued in association with the evildoer, are exhorted by the apostle to “purge out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump as they were unleavened.” It has been indeed contended with singular boldness, that these words intimate that the Corinthians were still “unleavened” as to their practical state. But “as ye are unleavened” applies plainly to what they were in Christ, not in practice. For they had to purge out the old leaven which was among them, in order to be a new lump corresponding to their character in Christ. How plain then that the leaven had leavened them by the very fact of its permitted presence in their midst They must therefore act, they must clear themselves, by putting away the wicked person from among them. His being taken away would not suffice. They must judge those within, not expecting God to come in and remove one, whom He had made them responsible to deal with and to put away.

He who should come into an assembly thus infected with evil would clearly become part of the leavened lump; and supposing the man in question had left the place, the assembly would not by the mere absence of the evildoer be purged at all. It would be in the same state as ever, because it was not the mere condition of the man which had defiled it, but theirs who could it down quietly with sin and their Lord's dishonor.

The scripture principle then is, that whether as regards false doctrine (fundamental error) or immoral conduct, those who associate themselves with such are partakers of it, and leavened by it, whether assemblies or individuals, and to be treated as such.

Let us now look at the other question, What is the scriptural unity of the church of God, and how far is it attainable in a time of confusion such as is the present?

For manifestly the church (or as I would rather call it, for it is its proper title, the assembly) of God—that which, as Christ's body, consists of all that are His members, and of none else—is not in practical visible unity, as it once was. It was once together; it is now broken up into multitudinous

divisions, and mingled with a mass of mere untrue profession. Corporate discipline has thus been rendered impossible; corporate testimony to Christ is gone; the church is not together to act as one. Is power for discipline lost then to any two or three, who desire to walk according to the word now? and how are they to do so, who are “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?”

As to the first we have already seen that separation from evil is a matter in which we are individually responsible to the Lord, whether others act or no; so that it would not be possible for one with a good conscience towards Him to remain in connection with any people by whom these rules were violated. The other is answered by that gracious assurance of Him who from the beginning foreknew and provided for the end; “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

People have pointed out to us that these words are connected with the promise of blessing to a simple prayer-meeting. But that, if true, would not take from their own evident and proper meaning. It would rather suppose the prayer meeting itself to be conditioned by the principles which the words can be shown manifestly to contain. But it is not true that the Lord's statement is appended merely to this. It is evidently at least as much so to what immediately precedes it: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven;” and “Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree,” &c., only adds another blessedness flowing from the Lord's presence with His people. He is present to confirm their acts. He is present to give answer to their prayers. But He promises that presence, as the words emphatically show, only where two or three are gathered together unto His name. There is need then to inquire what this means. We may not assume that every gathering of Christians fulfills these conditions. We must test this by the words themselves.

The name of Jesus and His person are distinguished in the Lord's words. Where people are gathered to His name He will be personally present. We must not assume we have Himself to gather to. For sight He is not here. And faith must have His word to justify it. The condition of His personal presence in our assemblies is that we are gathered to His name.

His name is the expression of what He Himself is. He was called Jesus, because He should save His people from their sins. Philip preached “concerning the name of Jesus Christ,” that is, “preached Christ,” or the truth of what He is; and the Samaritans, believing, were “baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus,” identifying themselves with that truth he had declared.

It is “gathered unto My name,” and not in it. The difference is obvious. To be gathered in His name means necessarily no more than by His authority. To be gathered to His name means that His name constitutes the center of union. What unites us is the truth of what He is; and where He finds a people for whom this bond suffices, there He promises the blessing of His own personal presence in the midst.

This presence must be distinguished from the presence of the Holy Ghost in the saints or in the church as the house of God at large. The Holy Ghost is always in the saints and in the church at large, unconditionally as to any principle of gathering whatever; and His presence therefore does not sanction the gathering as such. This should be as plain as it is important; for it shows how God can work in His grace amid all the confusion of Christendom, without sanctioning the discordant

and sectarian principles which prevail, in the least. Christ's presence in the midst, on the other hand, is sanction; “whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,” is connected with it.

If it is asked, how can He who is corporeally in heaven be (other than by His Spirit) now on earth? this is answered by another question, how could He who was corporeally upon earth speak of Himself then as “the Son of man which is in heaven"? A spiritual, not corporeal, presence in the midst it surely is, not the less real on that account; and Himself really, not representatively, by another.

If, then, we are gathered to His name, nothing less is implied than the absence of all sectarian terms of fellowship; what unites is the true confession of a true Christ, and this involves the exercise of effective discipline, for that would be no true confession of His name which allowed His dishonor. With this proviso, such a principle necessitates a door being open for all that are really Christ's; and if only two or three be on it, it is yet the common ground for all, the ground of the church of God, though the immense proportion of the church be elsewhere. And the two or three there, however few, have the assurance of the Lord's presence with them, and of His sanction of the place they are taking. For binding or loosing, the exercise of discipline, or as one near in living power for all they call upon Him for, they have Christ with them, and such is the force of this precious scripture as to the simple prayer-meeting of two or three.

Thus encouraged, we may turn to some other scriptures relating to the church of God, and note what we find as to its practical order.

Let us mark, then, first, that it is the assembly of God which is Christ's body—of course no local thing, and but one body. This body is the organism, the only one—of right the only visible community into which we are baptized, and in which we are members.

Thus, although there are necessarily assemblies, local gatherings, because the members of Christ are scattered over the earth, yet they are never members of any local assembly; the body with which alone they are connected is the body of Christ. The local assembly is not the divine organization at all. It is (if you take scripture) the mere result of our circumstances. At the Lord's supper we show that we are “one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The one body is not an association of many bodies, but a fellowship of many members.

On the ground of the church of God, then, we cannot be local bodies, whether confederated or independent, nor refuse to own in the fullest and most practical way the two or three on the same ground anywhere, nor to accept their binding and loosing as what has Christ's sanction. Infallibility, whether on our part or theirs, is not pretended to; nay, as of old, so surely still, saints anywhere may decline from God so far, and be so unfaithful to Christ, as to lose claim to be owned as His. But until there be proof of this, we mast remember the Lord's words which we have just been considering. The true and living Head of the church is yet faithful, let the weakness and folly of His people be what they may; what He sanctions we may not disavow.

I shall only add a few practical considerations, which, with the rest, I would affectionately commend to the consideration of beloved brethren. Truth is of God, and he who resists, resists God in it. Any question as to what is truth is, therefore, serious; how serious, then, when the question affects Christ's headship over His church, and the practical order of that church, which

He loved, and for which He gave Himself!

1. The principles announced are the very opposite of any requisition of intelligence as to church principles in order to fellowship. The church of God is necessarily composed of those of every stature and of every grade of knowledge, teachers and taught alike. All these, to the veriest babe in Christ, are already within its pale, and it is too late to talk of terms of admission. There are only two things which scripture (and not we) insists on in order to their enjoyment of their privileges as within—that they should be able to show their genealogy, and that they should be free from that which would involve the Lord's dishonor in association with them. Both these questions the word of God must settle.

2. These principles imply no “confederation of assemblies” at all, for any purpose whatever, but the practical unity of the one church everywhere, divided only by the mere accident of locality; the exact opposite of any confederation.

3. Evil doctrine (or practice) coming in at Corinth, would be as much a question (if not rightly settled there) for saints at Philippi or Thessalonica as at Corinth, or else Christ's dishonor there is of less consequence to me as the miles increase that separate me from it. And this nothing but indifference to Christ can argue.

4. If Corinth be leavened by the admission of evil, those coming from there would necessarily be treated as partakers with it by the mere fact of their association with it. Nor could they rightly be received until they had renounced such associations. This is the only practical proof that would avail to show their freedom from the evil itself.

5. One put away at Corinth would be equally put away at Philippi, or elsewhere, for he could not be outside the practical unity of the one body, and in it at the same time.

Some deny any right to put away from the Lord's table at all, but I suppose it is clear that the apostle did enjoin upon the Corinthians in the ease of any one called a brother, yet an evildoer, “with such an one, no, not to eat.” Does that apply to the Lord's table? or was their communion table perchance not the Lord's table? or has He another to receive such at, or what?

Again, it has been said we have not power to judge, for all is confusion; which would seem to mean that the Lord is more tolerant of evil than He once was. But the command to be separate is individual and imperative, as we have seen.

Others believe we may judge individuals, not assemblies, while almost in the same breath they will accuse us of maintaining the infallibility of assemblies. As to both, I have in fact replied. I would only ask here if evil loses its character when sanctioned by an assembly? and if an assembly would link one with the evil we are commanded to separate from, is it not a duty to separate from it? And then, further, whom are the twos and threes elsewhere to own, the one separated from evil or the assembly leavened with it 2 or are they to identify themselves with both and so persistently link the separated one with what he is separated from, in spite of all? Or once again, if his separation be right and called for, is it not as much the duty of every child of God to be separated with him?

And finally, however many may be the links that connect me with evil, if God calls me to be separate, must I not refuse the second or third remove, even as the first?

These questions I leave for the consideration of my readers. I have entered into no discussion of the facts to which these principles apply, nor do I design to do so. The honest-hearted will soon find how they apply. But these are the principles of what they call “exclusivism.” If any child of God should come to see that they are scriptural, and should be led to apply them honestly to his ecclesiastical associations, the Lord will not fail him in the endeavor, and he will surely find in the simple consciousness of doing his Master's will, a sufficient compensation for the reproach of being an “exclusive.” F. W. G.

Chapter 82

The Heavenly and His Heavenly Ones: 1 Cor. 15:46

Two efforts of the enemy are characteristic of the present day, and go along together with the humanizing Christ, and the giving a worldly character to Christianity, leading in result to multifarious forms of human religiousness and of earthly organization, having little or nothing in common but this, that they exhibit practical departure from heavenly principles and grievous independence of the divine persons.

It is therefore of no little moment that we should recognize that Christianity in its very essence is as heavenly as He who inspired it. Many are they who accept its divine authorship, who have never adequately apprehended it to be an absolutely heavenly thing, though in an earthly locale. But practically we find that the less it is apprehended as heavenly, the less also will its divine aspect be before the soul. And this we may safely predicate, that it is impossible to understand its character and its scope, unless in its origin, in its essence, in its operation and in its end, it is seen to be altogether a heavenly product for a heavenly purpose. Outside a very small circle, how rarely do we meet a Christian who understands his parentage, and occupies according to God, his present portion! How contracted and how erroneous are the commonly-prevailing thoughts of what Christianity is. How little is it accepted as the reflection of a heavenly Christ in a heavenly people redeemed from the earth, who are here only for Himself and looking for translation at His coming!

“The first man of the earth, earthy,” had been running his carnal and material course for forty centuries here below, before “the second man” paid a visit of three and thirty years to the same scene, having been sent into it in grace to “the first.” As man, He was, He is, “the heavenly,” and by this title is contrasted with “the earthy.” In God's reckoning He was “second man,” for all before God counts as one; and He was “last Adam,” for there could be no more after. But more than this He was “from (or out of) heaven” as the first was, “out of the earth, made of dust.” Refused and cut off from the earth, having nothing, He is now the risen Man in the glory of God, and alike in incarnation and in resurrection is He “the heavenly” —there, now and eternally!

Further, as is He, “the heavenly, such also the heavenly (ones).” There is, it is admitted, another aspect of Christianity in which birth and profession give status, and wherein are certain privileges and answering responsibilities; but what is now before us is a matter of race, and as to this we are born of God, are partakers of the divine nature, and just as truly as the angels, are we one of the heavenly families. The One “who lived, who died, who lives again,” has redeemed unto Himself a chosen race of which, as the risen Man He is the glorified federal head, and this word— “As the Heavenly, such also the heavenly (ones)” —so constitutes Christianity in its very essence, that every bit of it which is a genuine thing before God, expresses in word or in deed, the cardinal truth that man is in the glory of God, and God is glorified thereby. One who was once visible upon earth, “in likeness of flesh of sin” (Rom. 8:8), sits now in a glorified, but no less real, positive human body in the Father's throne. From the glory of God; from the throne of the Father; and in the risen, exalted Man who fills all heaven with His peerless presence. Christianity has its origin; and in the power of the Holy Ghost alone, witness from thence of His exalted majesty and glory, it has its

activities in so far as they are according to God. “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high” —marks its starting-point, both as to time and place. It is thus “the heavenly” gone back to heaven—man in the glory of God—in whom it takes its rise; and it is this fact—the parent truth of Christianity—which imparts to it its distinctive character. It is a divine thing as He is divine; it is heavenly as He is heavenly: He is its sure foundation, its tried corner-stone, its immovable key-stone, its crowning top-stone! It is all and altogether for His glory, and therefore its operation is progressive assimilation day by day of His heavenly ones to Him, “the heavenly,” by the action of the Spirit of God, and this alone constitutes practical Christianity of the highest, the true type. And as He and they look along the vista of earthly trial and testimony to the consummation of blessedness beyond, they contemplate the issue and end in the many sons brought to glory, when that unsullied scene of untold joy, which has ever been the true home and habitat of Christianity, shall be reached for aye.

When He was here in the days of His flesh, “knowing he came from God and went to God,” He took a towel and girded Himself, and washed the feet of His heavenly ones elect, and in principle that word applies (in a lower sense, of course) to us, for we too may say we have come from God and are going to God, and when He who is coming returns in the air, we shall be eternally with God, and in the likeness of the bosom—Son of the Father. Meanwhile we blessedly experience His tender solicitude in removing with a practiced hand every defilement that we contract in passing along an earthly scene, nor will He cease this heavenly service of His faithful love and unwearied grace, until we assume “the image of the heavenly” at His return.

If we look at the origin of Christianity, we see that it sprang from the heart of the Father) as it takes its title from Him who adorns His throne, and it is most interesting to trace how in every step of its delineation in the word, the Spirit of God indicates its wonderful and varied relations to the Father. It was the Father sent His Son to be Savior of the world. (1 John 4:14.) In Him the glory of the only-begotten of the Father was beheld. (John 1:14.) His ever-enjoyed place in the bosom of the Father made Him competent to declare Him. (Ver. 18.) Here was He about His Father's business. (Luke 2:49. What He saw the Father do He did. (Ver. 19.) The will of the Father alone was what He sought to fulfill. (Ver. 30.) The Father's works were given Him to finish. (Ver. 36.) The Father's name it was in which He was Come. (Ver. 43.) The Father gave to us the true bread from heaven (chap. 6:32), and gave us to Him. (Ver. 37, 39, and also chap. 18: 6, 11, 12, 24.) It is learning of the Father brings us to the Son. (Chap. 6: 46, 65.) The life everlasting is the Father's commandment. (Chap. 12: 50.) The words, also, the Son affirms to be the Father's (chap. 14:10-24), and when He goes away it is to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. (Chap. 14: 2.) The Father holds the sheep in His hand (chap.10: 29) is the husbandman who purges the fruit-bearing branches of the vine (chap. 15: 1, 2), that He (the Father) may be glorified in our “much fruit.” (Ver. 8.) The Father is to be asked in the Son's name, and that which we ask, the Father will give, for He Himself loves us. (Chap. 16: 23, 27.) The glorified Son shows us plainly of the Father (ver. 25), and is now glorifying Him. (Chap. 18: 1.) The eternal life is the knowledge of the Father and the Son (ver. 3), and those who have it are kept in the Holy Father's own name (ver. 11), are sanctified through the Father's word which is truth (ver. 17-19); have the Father's name declared unto them and are loved of the Father's heart, even as He is loved. (Ver. 26.) By the glory of the Father has he been raised up (Rom. 6:4); to the Father's throne has He been taken (Rev. 3:21); and from thence has He sent down “the promise of the Father” —the Holy Ghost.

(Acts 1:4; iii. 33.)

These are a few only of the scripture marks of the Father's relations to that of which we speak, all of which are of incalculable value as forming an essentially divine bulwark to Satan's present efforts terrestrialize Christianity, and to humanize its Author, clearly the Father is neither earthly nor human. Christianity then is the revelation of the Father, by the person and work of the Lord Jesus, His Eternal Son, in the presence and power of the Holy Ghost as “the promise of the Father.” Coming forth from His blessed heart according to eternal purpose and counsels, it is based upon the atoning work and acquired glories of the eternal Son, and has its unfolding by the living energy of the Spirit of God dwelling in us. By Him is its heavenly character wrought out, through and in “the heavenly ones” whom grace has reached for this precious character of blessing, as the associates; in eternal glory, and in heaven of Him who is emphatically, “the Heavenly.”

Two questions naturally arise here. (1) Have we truly accepted the fact that generically we are as heavenly as He who adorns the Father's throne? (Compare John 17:16 with Heb. 2:11.) (2) How far does the character and order of our lives make patent that our former earthly standing has been eternally abrogated to make room for the new and indissoluble relations we hold to the Man whom God has gratified His own heart in exalting to highest glory? Could believers answer these inquiries satisfactorily it would be utterly impossible that they should go on in practical fellowship with the course and current of this world; governed by its principles, giving utterance to its maxims, aiding its objects, adopting its practices, and accepting its patronage, the fruit of which is as the apples of Sodom, and whose reaping shall ever be leanness and poverty and wretchedness of soul.

May He, “THE HEAVENLY,” so blessedly connect with Himself the hearts of those who have accepted His heavenly call, and who know that what they have been brought into is as intrinsically of heaven as it is radically of God, that our Christianity may not comport with that of “this poor, faithless world,” but may, through grace upon grace, be ever acquiring in an increasing degree a character suited to its divine origin, expressive of its celestial destiny and redolent with the graces and the virtues of a glorified Christ!

R.

Chapter 83

Conscience

Conscience is a great difficulty with infidels. It is practically the weak point in their armor. Protect themselves with reasonings as they may, yet they cannot shield their conscience.

It would be, doubtless, a convenient thing for modern infidelity, if it could show that conscience—instead of being a witness to evil present, and good lost—is a part of the system of human development, but “the history of the conscience, from an evolutionist point of view, remains yet to be written,” and we may safely assert, that the evolutionist will find such “history” difficult writing.

The beasts which perish possess consciousness of various kinds in common with man, but the beasts which perish possess not that which makes mortals quake. Man alone, of the creatures upon this earth, has a conscience. However, as some beasts possess a power through which they acquire the knowledge that some of their actions will receive the reward of their master's favor, and others punishment, from his hand, and because some beasts can be instructed in obedience by their masters, there are not wanting some men to assert that, consequently, a moral link exists between such consciousness in the beast and the conscience of a man!

By the aid of a stick a cow can be educated into refusing to pluck the green leaves over the fence which her tongue longs after. The memory of the beating she has more than once received for interfering with her master's wishes, teaches her to forego her inclinations. But memory is not conscience. A parrot soon learns to fear the word “stick,” learns to associate the sound of the ward with a beating, and so will leave off screaming when “stick” is said. The parrot is unquestionably wiser than the cow, but the intelligence of the creature is not conscience. Yet we are invited to accept this kind of consciousness as a link in the chain of evolution, the end of which in ourselves is conscience!

It is remarkable how infidelity degrades man as a creature, while puffing up his pride. Yet, while asserting that the human race is but the outcome of former shapes, things, and being—that man is but a link in the long chain of unknowable beginning—that man is but a brute developed, a creature evolved out of atoms and apes, the infidel pauses, and inquires, “How did man become possessed of a conscience?”

Conscience is; it cannot be shelved. I am, and my conscience exists in me. And to him who is conscious of his sinful being, it is a terrible reality. Besides doing battle daily within the breasts of men, against their very wills, conscience spoils the pleasures of sin, renders the prosperous wicked man miserable, scares the skeptic, ruins the fine theories of no future, and forces men, against their judgment and their feelings, to confess their crimes, and to yield themselves to justice and to death.

We do not deny that man may harden himself, till, despite his conscience, he becomes like the beasts, and shuns evil only because of its consequences, or, worse, till his conscience, seared as with a hot iron, is so dulled to every righteous influence, that his fellow-men drive him from their

midst as too brutish for their society. In such case we may, perhaps, allow the claims of modern infidelity, by accepting the affinity between the savage element in dog and man, and own that there is a doctrine of evolution—that out of evil evil is evolved.

How came man by this inward force, this mighty power within his breast, called conscience or, first, what is conscience?

Clearly it is not the will, for conscience frequently pushes its way in opposition to the will. Neither is it reason, for while a man's reason will demonstrate to him that a given course of action will work him injury, yet his conscience will impel him forwards to do the right thing, even to the wronging of himself. It is not a conclusion arrived at in the mind upon weighing over the right and wrong of a question. Conscience is the moral sense of right and wrong which is innate to man. It is as much a part of his present being as his reason or his will. We may describe conscience as the eye of man's moral being, or liken it to a voice within his breast commanding him concerning right and wrong.

Conscience is not a faculty in man, enabling him to know abstractedly what is right and wrong, but, given the law of right and wrong, conscience appeals to man according to the precepts of the law he knows. Conscience needs instructing, it does not instruct; and according as the conscience is faithfully instructed, so will its utterances be more or less just. In proportion as this eye is tutored will be the truthfulness of its perceptions.

Men say, we will act according to the dictates of our consciences. But conscience is no standard of right. The conscience of a heathen does not address him as that of a man knowing the letter of God's word. The conscience of a Christian, instructed in the spirit of his Father's will, speaks very differently from that of him who knows merely the letter of the scriptures. And amongst true Christians there is a vast difference in fineness and sensibility of conscience. Conscience is very like a window, which lets in much or little light, if clean or dirty. Some labor to keep the window clean, others are slovenly, and their whole body is not full of light. Some Christians exercise themselves to keep the window clean, others are exercised because it is dirty.

Now, according to man's knowledge of right or wrong, is his responsibility. Having heard what is right, we are bound to obey, and conscience will speak upon the question. The heathen have the book of nature before their eyes. “The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity.” (Rom. 1:20, 21.) And more, for “when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written upon their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.” (Rom. 2:14-16.)

The nominal Christian has heard of the character of God, he has heard of God's holiness and righteousness, his conscience bears witness, and condemns him. God has revealed a standard in His word, and man's conscience tells him how utterly evil he is. Where the word of God has been heard, we cannot dissociate God from conscience. Our moral instinct, our sense of right and wrong, bear witness to the unseen God; within us there is that which knows together with God.

How came man by this voice within him? Where all was right, the voice warning of wrong was silent. It could not testify to right if no wrong existed. If man were not a sinner, he would not fear

the holy God. God made man upright, and set him in a scene of good, where evil was not, and in those days man had not learned it. Had, then, man before the fall a conscience?

We do not say that he had not a conscience in the sense that he was not perfect. Conscience in itself is a good thing, but it was got in a bad way. Before the fall, man's conscience was like the wings of the insect within the chrysalis, for man had not then broken out into that condition when he should be as gods. Innocence is not perfection, any more than ignorance is maturity. The lack of knowledge of evil is a lovely thing, and thus to us is childhood's simplicity so sweet; but vastly different is the state of innocence from that “new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. 4:14.)

In the creation, as at first, man lacked the knowledge of evil, and his state was beautiful, and he was happy. At present man has lost that simplicity, He is mature. He knows evil; he is acquainted with the contrast between right and wrong; but he is a fallen creature, he loves the evil, and cannot do the good. When we say fallen, we mean fallen from God, and that condition in which God set him. Man gained knowledge by his fall. “The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” (Gen. 3:22.) The knowledge is unquestionable, but, together with the knowledge, there is a nature contrary to God which loves iniquity. What kind of development shall this be called?

To the Christian it is said, “Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Not innocence regained, nor a return to the first state, but righteousness and true holiness. For man has acquired the knowledge of good and evil, never to lose that knowledge, but in Christ he is no longer under the power of evil. And in the future the believer will possess the knowledge of good and evil, yet without a desire after the evil, and rejoicing in the good. That will be perfection. Even in this scene of sin, and having the flesh in him, the man in Christ is shown the path of perfect bliss below.

How came man by his conscience? By disobedience. He stole his knowledge, and thus his eyes were opened. Disobedience was the key wherewith the door into the world was unlocked. Paradise was not the world, but the garden of earth, but when man's eyes were opened to the fatal knowledge of evil, he feared and fled from God; and so the world began, and so it develops. Man's knowledge condemned him, and condemns him still. The one step over the boundary-line set him where the darkness reigns.

Adam, made upright by God, and never having an idea of evil till he disobeyed, not acquainted as are we with sin from childhood, must have had a conscience of exceeding sensitiveness. Man now is used to evil, is well versed in sin, he learns it alas! from his childhood. It comes naturally to him without education, for he is born in sin, and shapen in iniquity. It is as he is instructed in right, and taught of God, that he becomes sensitive to wrong. There is a vast moral difference between those first hours in the world, when conscience awoke in man, and these last days, when it is a subject for infidel analysis.

But there is one thing respecting the sensitive and refined conscience which is self-evident—conscience is not strength. If it be a light within, showing to man the right path, it is a light to feet which are paralyzed” How to perform I find not.” Conscience makes men “cowards,”

and miserable. To be sure, a man may pride himself upon a clear conscience, and we do not deny that many men not “in Christ” possess consciences so high-class and refined, that they put many Christians to shame. They would not do willfully an evil thing for any consideration. But this must not be mistaken for new life in Christ. Surely, if Adam, as he was just after his fall, could see the world as it now is, he would be astonished at its low order of conscience; and it is astonishing that even infidels can really believe the doctrine of the evolution of conscience, and credit the theory that man's conscience is to-day nearer perfection than it was six thousand years ago.

Now when the Spirit of God works within a man, he begins with the conscience. True, some are apparently moved through their emotions, others through their minds; but man is gained for God through the conscience. In little children the affections do usually seem to be first reached, but in them the knowledge of good and evil is comparatively slight, and it is invariably the case with the child, that with the growth in grace there is increased sensitiveness as to the evil of sin. If a man's emotions or mind only be reached, there is no solid foundation within hire. The deeper the conscience-work, the firmer will the building stand. Man's departure from God was by disobedience, his first hidings from God were because of the fears of his conscience; God begins with man where man left Him. Man's way of return to God is by obeying the gospel, and his first laying bare of himself is the cry wrought in him by the pangs of his conscience— “I have sinned.”

It is a horrible deceit of infidelity, which bids us believe that the cry, “I have sinned,” is my development as a creature! It is the responsible creature now coming to his senses, awaking to the sense of what he has done in the sight of God. Quite true, I ought to be good, and to love God and to hate sin, but alas! I have sinned.

Now that kind of gospel preaching which lets the conscience alone, or only deals softly with it, will produce either unreal or weakly converts. There is no going on for an hour with God unless the conscience be right with Him. And this is very true of the Christian, as of the unconverted. The latter may become a nominal Christian, and be apparently all that is required, but until the Spirit of God apply the living and powerful word to the conscience, and lay all bare, a man is no nearer to God than Adam was when he was hiding from God. And with the Christian; unless his conscience be right before God, he cannot have communion with God. He has life in Christ, but so long as his conscience is not right with God, he is like a man asleep, or a ship, ashore,

One word about Christian consciousness. Conscience is the sense of right and wrong, and for those who have heard of God, this sense in relation to God. Christian consciousness is the sensibility to right and wrong. As the sense of the thing itself increases within us, so does our sensibility to it grow. Some heathens do not possess any consciousness that it is wrong to steal—they try not to be found out, but a monkey will learn to hide what he purloins. Now hiding the treasure lest it should be taken away, or lest punishment should ensue, is totally different from the moral consciousness that to steal is an evil thing. The Lord Jesus tells us that to look and long is like doing the very sin itself, and it is written of the effect produced by the law upon the quickened soul. “I had not known sin unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

As the believer grows in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord, he becomes more acute in his consciousness. He mourns over the sins of the soul. It is not punishment that he fears, but he grieves that he has done wrong against his God. It was this acute consciousness which made the apostle exercise himself day and night in keeping a clear conscience before God and man. With

too many there is such sloth of spirit—resulting from so little communion—that there is remarkably little exercise in keeping the conscience clear. The blood of Christ has purged our consciences. We know good and evil, but do not fear God, for we know that the blood of His Son has satisfied the righteousness of God. We do not ever fear a man who has nothing against us, and we do not fear God since He is entirely for us. He gave His Son for us, who shed His blood for us. Our consciences, instructed by the Spirit of God concerning the death of Christ, know together with God, that God has not one thing whatever against us.

Such clearness of conscience in the presence of our holy and gracious God surely leads to increased consciousness of every kind of evil thing. The window of the Christian's soul is unshuttered: he wishes the light to shine in, and his earnest desire is to keep every speck and spot from off the glass of that window; therein doth he exercise himself. H. F. W.

Chapter 84

The Hebrew Servant: Exodus 21:1-6

We have here in a lovely picture set forth the ways of grace as seen in Christ rising above righteous title to stop short of them. The Lord indeed came into this world for the purpose of displaying both in perfection. He did show us a Man born of a woman, born under the law; and this too undoubtedly in its perfection. It was never seen before, sin having made it impossible, even if the first man had otherwise been capable of it. But in Him was no sin; and our Lord Jesus Christ, living on account of the Father, displayed the astonishing spectacle of a man who never in one single act or way sought His own will, but God's—a man, therefore, who was the perfect pattern of a servant, who had but one purpose that filled His life, doing the will of God. He was the true Hebrew servant; He was the only One that could have challenged even God Himself to find a single particular in which He had not brought Him glory.

But in the type before us there was another thing. First maybe viewed in it the righteous claim of God on man: and when once the Son of God had been pleased to become a man, He owed that entire allegiance in all things small or great. The Lord Jesus showed His subjection to His mother and to him who was only by legal repute His father. He was subject to them both; much more intimately and absolutely was He to God Himself. I say much more, not as if there was any difference in the perfectness of Christ: but only that God had a still fuller and more indisputable claim; and this He Himself expressed, as a youth of twelve years of age, long before His entrance on the public service of God. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” said the Lord Jesus, when His mother and father had sought Him sorrowing. This was always to Him what governed. But then it was not merely to Him a governing motive. There was this in it, and in the very highest respect it was in it. Even in death itself, in laying down His life, though it was His own delight to glorify His Father and His God, yet even there He could say, “This commandment have I received of my Father.” He was the servant; He obeyed unto death—yea, death of the cross.

Nevertheless there is another character of service that the Lord Jesus fulfilled, which belongs to Him alone. As the Hebrew servant serving six years with the title to go out at the end of the time, He only shows us the perfection of a man in human circumstances and acting according to that place of righteous subjection into which He had put Himself with God. But scripture is never satisfied with showing us this alone, because it would derogate from the glory of Christ. Hence we have another part of the Lord's service of a wholly different nature, and here we pass out of all that is merely human. He is a man, but we pats into the region of divine motives, and where nothing but divine love could stoop to fulfill human duty, and rise into what is no question of duty at all—nothing but grace; and this was true of Christ even when He was here below, in all His service. Our Lord never was merely a man, or simply meeting a claim. In everything He did He was displaying God to man as truly as He was showing what is the perfection of man before God. Further, this came out in a transcendent manner in His death.

And this is what we come to next. The Hebrew servant could go out free for nothing, after six years. So Christ had completely fulfilled all possible claim on Him. But it is added, “If the servant

shall plainly say, I love my master." Henceforth it is no question of law in any way, this He really had been under, but now opens out another thing. "If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges, he shall also bring him to the door or unto the door-post." The door-post was the sign of personal limits; by it the family entered, and none else had the right. It was not therefore a thing that might pertain to a stranger, but pre-eminently that which belonged to the household. This too was the reason why it was on the door-post that the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled; it was staying the hand of God, as far as that house was concerned, on the first-born there, but on no one else. So here "he shall bring him unto the door-post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him forever."

Thus it is that the Lord Jesus Christ coming down into death and rising again still takes the place of the servant of God forever. He will never cease to be man any more than He will ever cease to serve. Is it not the very opposite of what had been shown by every other man? Who naturally chooses to be a servant? The first man who was at best God's servant, sought to be as God when he was only a man. He that was truly God, and who of course never ceased to be God, became so perfectly a man that, even carrying it through death into resurrection and into glory, He is a man forever and the servant forever. And this He beautifully shows Himself. I do not dwell on what our Lord is doing now. We all know that He is serving me in heaven, interceding and cleansing us on earth from every defilement. This He set forth in washing the disciples' feet. They did not in the least understand its import then any more than the great mass of believers do now; as He said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." He is now by the word, applied in the Holy Ghost, cleansing His own in the world, that they may have part with Him on high, not life but communion with Him; for this is the object of the Lord's advocacy with the Father.

But besides there is another word in the Gospel of Luke (chap. 12.), which shows us that in the day of glory He will still serve us. It is not only when He is in the glory; for there are these three steps.

First here below in grace He would not give up the place of Nerving. It is no question of law, but though under law, still in Him there was this full power of grace. Indeed in our ease it is only grace that fully accomplishes the right of law. But grace does not terminate there.

Next He goes up to glory, and carries this on up in glory. We are still in the place of need, and, as long as there is need in the saint of God, there is service on the part of the Savior. It is impossible that Jesus should not serve as long as there is a want to be met. But what of the day when there will be no need to be met? If there is no need on our part, there is love on His part, and love will always serve even when there is no question of need. And this is what He brings before us. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching! Verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." No longer will there be need, no question of the feet being washed, when we are in the presence of God; but yet the Lord Jesus has such love that He will serve, as He says, "I love my Master, my wife, and my children." And so it will be. As the witness of the perfect love of God, He will serve in glory; as the witness of love to the bride He will still serve; as the witness of love to these who are not in that position, His heart goes out to others. "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free." He serves forever. It is the activity, and delight of divine love in

man, though this Man be the true God and eternal life.

Chapter 85

Letter on Hebrews 10:2

Dear——

I believe Heb. 10 is absolute and forever. It is a question of imputation and a purged conscience, not of sensibility to failure, and confession of it, which is a state of soul connected with communion, or fellowship, to which 1 John 2 applies. But here the apostle says, if this were not perfecting forever; (ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς) Christ must often have suffered from the foundation of the world, but He was once offered to bear the sins of many. And when I go to God, even to confess failure, He is there, and all the value of His blood, so that imputation is impossible. Hence, in 1 John we have Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation. This is the basis of advocacy. And the very ground in that part of Hebrews, that the falling into sin is fatal and final's drawing back to perdition," is, that there is no more sacrifice for sin. But this for such, and for the believer, is founded on there being but one, but thus that one for the believer must finally and forever settle the question, or it never could be. And this is to the furthering of holiness, because what would be otherwise a question of acceptance and righteousness is now a question of holiness and walking with God, and present divine favor and communion. But as to conscience of sins, I cannot go to God and not find Christ there, not without blood, who bore them all, so that it is impossible they can come in question as to imputation, or my conscience be burdened with them, as yet unsettled between me and God; but it makes them doubly hateful as to holiness, that one in the light as God is should do them, and find even momentary pleasure in what made Christ's agony; but if it did, it cannot be imputed. Num. 19 is applicable here; the great day of atonement was valid, or he could not have had that, and he was an Israelite. I believe it to be of great moment to true holiness to know that the worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins. When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down. It is absolute for the divine glory, eternal in, its value, and unchangeable, and wholly finished, and ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς.

Chapter 86

Thoughts on Hebrews 11

In 2 Tim. 4:7 I think we get a key to the understanding of the order of this chapter, not dispensationally, but considered as an illustration of the Christian life.

The apostle there speaks of his past career in three distinct aspects: as a Christian soldier he has “fought the good fight;” as a racer he has “finished his course;” and as a witness for God in this world he has “kept the faith.”

This threefold division marks often the apostle's writings. Thus, in 1 Tim. 6 he divides his exhortations into “following after,” fighting, and holding fast. In Philippians also, the epistle of his practical life, we find him enduring hardness as a good soldier, “set for the defense of the gospel.” In chapter i., and (omitting chapter 2, which speaks of Christ rather than Paul), in chapter iii., we find the ardent racer, his eye steadily set upon the glorious goal, running with patience the race set before him; while in chapter 4 the word is, “Stand fast in the Lord.”

The life of the Master, too, no less than that of His servant, clearly sets forth these three great aspects. “I have overcome the world” tells us of victory; “It is finished,” of the close of His perfect course; and “I have kept my Father's commandments,” of the fidelity of the “faithful Witness.”

Such, then, being the three great aspects of the life of faith, we are not surprised to find the chapter that illustrates it arranged in the same order, and exhibiting the wondrous design in every detail that marks the hand of God. Very beautiful to the spiritual eye is this divine picture-gallery of the life of faith, and very encouraging to the heart of the believer to find each step already trodden by one and another; but when, in the language of the apostle John, we would see in all its fullness “the eternal life which was with the Father” manifested unto us, we look off, even from these “just men” of old, to “Jesus, the author and finisher of faith” —the solitary One, who trod the path from the beginning to the end; and it is the luster of His life that illumines the footmarks that precede, and gives them a glory not their own.

From the whole range of Old Testament history, the apostle here selects twenty-four examples. If we set aside for a moment the first three, and begin at verse 8, we find the word by faith fourteen times repeated, followed, in verse 32, by seven more examples, of which the apostle has not time to speak in detail.

The first seven instances of faith (vers. 8-22) are from the lives of the patriarchs, and are all in the strange country [a term that applies to Canaan (before the exodus), as well as to Egypt—see Acts 7:6; Gen. 15:13]. They are not descriptive of fighting, or of walking or running, but represent God's witness, embracing, holding fast, and confessing the word of the living God.

From verses 28-31 is the sevenfold illustration of the “course” of faith. Here the scene changes; we are no longer in the strange country with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but journeying through the wilderness to Canaan, brought out by Moses, and brought in by Joshua. Verse 32 completes the series by giving us the fight of faith in the land of Canaan.

Thus we see the witness, the walk, and the warfare of the child of God. The witness in this world a stranger in a strange country, the racer delivered from bondage, and steadily pursuing his course through the wilderness; and, lastly, the warrior fighting the Lord's battles in heavenly places. (Eph. 6) The sevenfold pictures in each case speak especially to the Hebrews, whom the apostle addressed, of divine perfection.

Returning to the three instances (at the beginning of the chapter) of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, we find in the first the grand foundation of the Christian's faith, in the sacrifice of Christ, “God testifying of his gifts.” In Enoch and Noah we respectively get the inward and outward side of the Christian life—the one “with God,” the other before a condemned world.

Observe, in our lives, the Enoch character is ever the basis of the Noah character; the man who “pleased God” precedes the “preacher of righteousness.”

The details of each series are full of the deepest interest. In the first verses 8-22—(clearly shown in the leading thought of each verse) we get seven characteristics of the witness of God: first, the obedience of faith; next, not only “taking the step,” but the patient continuance in the place of strangership (“he sojourned"); then (ver. 11) we get the strength of faith, and afterward (ver. 17) its trial.

The blessing of faith to others (ver. 20), and the worship of faith in the attitude of true dependence (ver. 21) follow, and the hope of faith (ver. 22) closes the series; the bright outlook of Joseph's dying bones being the one point selected from all his eventful history to encourage those who, two thousand years after, were “enduring a great fight of affliction.”

A general remark or, two may suffice on what remains, as enough has been said to induce the student of God's word to search out the details for himself; verses 23-31 being the path of faith, all wilderness experiences of unbelief are entirely omitted, and, what is still more remarkable, the passage of the Jordan. The Red Sea is given, as it was a part of God's purpose, but the Jordan was entirely a result of the people's unbelief. It may be also noticed that we do not get “they” till verse 29, as God toes not here speak of His people collectively until they have individually passed under the blood.

In conclusion, let us beware of the danger of merely intellectually admiring the beauties of a chapter like this. We must not be satisfied with admiration of that which is given us to feed upon, and, while intelligence is much to be desired in reading God's word, it met ever be accompanied with hearing and obeying its loving voice, if we would grow up into the likeness of Christ. “As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” A. T. S.

Chapter 87

How Judaising Was Met in Jerusalem

But the Jews—those at least who made a profession of Christianity with Satan as their instrument—sought to place the Gentiles under the yoke of Judaism, and destroy the work of God within, if they could not hinder it without the church. They went down from Judea to Antioch, teaching the brethren that they must be circumcised, and observe the law of Moses, in order to be saved. The moment was a critical one. It was necessary, according to them, that the Gentiles should submit to the law of Moses, and become Jews, or that two separate assemblies should be formed. Paul and Barnabas, however, oppose themselves to these exactions. But God did not permit the question to be settled at Antioch.

It will readily be understood that, had the cause of the Gentiles been vindicated by a decision given at Antioch, and, in spite of the Jews, they had preserved their liberty, the danger would have been imminent of two assemblies being formed, and of unity being lost. All the spiritual and apostolical power of Paul therefore was insufficient to overcome the opposing spirit at Antioch, and decide the question. It was God's will that it should be decided at Jerusalem, and that the Christian Jews themselves, the apostles, the elders, and the whole assembly, should pronounce the freedom of the Gentiles; and that thus holy liberty and unity should be secured. It is decided, therefore, that Barnabas and Paul shall go to Jerusalem concerning this matter. We learn from Gal. 2:2, that Paul went thither in obedience to direct revelation.

God permitted that these Jews, without mission, zealous without God for the law, the authority of which over the conscience had been terminated by the cross, should raise this question, so that it might be definitely settled. The apostles and elders, therefore, meet together. It seems that all the believers may have been present, since verse 12 speaks of the multitude; however it is the apostles and elders who meet together. Paul and Barnabas relate what has happened in their journey—the conversion of the Gentiles—and the brethren rejoice with great joy, Here the most simple hearts enjoy with simplicity the grace of God.

But at Jerusalem they met with greater difficulty. Nothing could be more opposed to grace than the doctrine of the Pharisees, which asserted that righteousness must be obtained by works, and by the administration of ordinances.

Arrived at Jerusalem, they declare there also all things that God has done with them. But here God in His grace manifests the question as having been produced by the hardness of the heart; that is, that some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed demanded that the Gentiles should be circumcised. I do not believe, however, that it is Paul or Barnabas who relates this fact, which had happened at Jerusalem. The apostles and elders then meet together. After much disputing (for the principals, led doubtless by the Holy Ghost, were wise enough to allow all who thought themselves capable to give their opinion; and in order that after the thoughts of men the voice of God might be heard) Peter reminds the assembly how God had chosen him first to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, and that the Spirit had been given to Cornelius without his being circumcised; that God Himself had borne witness to them by the Holy Ghost just in the same way as to the believing

Jews; that He had made no difference between them, purifying their hearts by faith. He acknowledges the yoke of the ordinances, and warns them not to tempt God by putting it on the neck of the Gentiles. For did not they themselves believe that they had been saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, and not by ordinances?

Then all the multitude kept silence, and Paul and Barnabas declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. (Here, at Jerusalem, Barnabas is always mentioned first, it is probable that he spoke more than Paul, relating what had been done. Paul had labored more than any other; but at Jerusalem it was natural that Barnabas should be more forward than Paul.)

Then James, who held the first place at Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal. 2:12), gives a summary of the judgment of the assembly, which no one opposes, and, by the aid of the Holy Ghost, a definite form to the thought of God, expressing His will respecting the Gentiles. The work of the Holy Ghost is here in the first place—remarkable; and also His full liberty, so that all the thoughts of men are brought to light, and given utterance to. In the next place, what God proposed to reveal by Peter in the case of Cornelius; and then the wonders that had been wrought by the hands of Barnabas and Paul among the Gentiles. Such is what seemed good to the Holy Ghost, what was given to Cornelius, and wrought also among the Gentiles with signs and wonders by the hands of those who were sent out from Him.

Then James (who, as we have seen, represented the Judaic spirit, and in whose mind the feelings of the assembly at Jerusalem concurred, but who was fully under the influence of the Holy Ghost) expresses the thought of that assembly, and of the eleven apostles of Jerusalem, whom we may call Judaic, the judgment of God on the vital question under consideration; namely, that the Gentiles should not be subject to the law of Moses. The word of the prophets supported this sentence, for they had declared that there should be Gentiles on whom the name of the Lord should be called. It is with this intention that he cites the past.

Thus the Gentiles were free. The things they had to observe were duties before the publication of the law. The worship of one God, and the purity of man, were always obligatory. Noah had been prohibited from eating blood, in testimony that the life belonged to God. These great principles are established by this decision—abstaining from idols—that life belongs to God alone, purity of life in man. They were principles necessary for the Gentiles, and corrected their evil habits; principles recognized by the law, but which had not been distinctly laid down by it.

The assembly did not vote. All consented, under the influence of the Holy Ghost to what had been expressed. All agreed, apostles, elders, and the whole assembly, to send men chosen from among them to confirm by word of mouth the account of Barnabas and Paul, and the written decision which they took with them from Jerusalem. The apostles and elders assembled together to examine the question, but all the brethren joined with them in the letter sent to the Gentiles. Thus it was not the Gentiles who maintained their rights in spite of the assembly at Jerusalem, but by the wisdom and grace of God the assembly at Jerusalem which acknowledges the liberty of the Gentiles as to the law; and unity is thus preserved.

We may add that it was not a general or other assembly, for it was the assembly at Jerusalem, and the apostles and elders of that city, who mot together, with a few from Antioch on the part of the

Gentiles, to consider the question. The councils, for many centuries called “general,” were convoked by the emperors to settle the disputes of the bishops: first in the east, on which occasions there were never more than six bishops present from the west; and afterward when the Greek church separated from the Latin church, when there was no emperor from the west, councils being assembled by the popes without a single bishop from the east being present. These popes, without one bishop from the east and profiting by the need of the emperor of the east who was menaced by the Turks, sought to unite the east to the west in the fifteenth century at Florence; but the attempt failed.

What we have here is that the apostle and the Judaic assembly, by which God had begun the work, set the Gentiles free from the law: and unity is preserved. We learn too how the Holy Ghost gives unity of thought concerning the questions which had arisen, since the gathering was waiting on the Lord. Thus is the liberty of the Holy Ghost preserved to the Gentiles, and, by the goodness of God the unity of the whole assembly maintained. It is declared that no commission had been given to those who had disturbed the Gentiles, subverting their souls. Subsequently, after much long-suffering on the part of God the Jews are called, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to give up Judaism. The law and Christianity cannot be united.

Paul and Barnabas, then, taking leave of Jerusalem, come to Antioch, assemble the multitude, and give them the letter. The brethren, having read it, rejoice for the consolation. Thus was the state of the whole assembly settled, and also the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles. The necessary rule for them is established. They are to walk well, avoiding certain things. Judas and Silas remain for a time with the disciples at Antioch, exhorting them, and rejoicing in this new fellowship of the love of the assembly at Jerusalem for the brethren among the Gentiles. Then Judas leaves them, but Silas, drawn towards these new brethren, remains at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas also remain there, teaching the brethren; and many others likewise interest themselves on their behalf; for the power of the Holy Ghost was working in their midst. Life was fresh in those days.

Chapter 88

“I” and “We” in 1 and 2 Corinthians

Remark the singular beauty and fitness, as to feelings, of the way in which the apostle passes from “I” to “we” in 2 Cor. 2:14, and more variously in chapter where he passes from one to another: so in chapter 8, and the chapters which follow, as chapter 9, save verse 11. See how he turns in chapter 10: 2, and the mixture in verse 8. The apostle is one. Paul is “I;” and his heart made him so with the Corinthians. See much of the “I” (as it were foolishly). Chapter 11: 21 brings in “we,” but is generally “I;” chapter 12, “I,” save verse 19. The same interchange in chapter 13 as in chapter 8. Chapter 3 is all “we,” chapters 1 and 2 being naturally varied. Save Paul and his children, chapters 6: 3; 3, 4, 5, 6, is all the ministerial “we.” But the natural appropriateness is striking. See the change in 1 Cor. 2:6 as characteristic. So chapter 1:23: so chapter 2: 12, 18. See the change in chapter 4:1, 2, 3. See verse 9, changing in verse 14. In chapters 5, 6, 7 we turn to “I.” In chapter 9 we return to the apostolic “we;” in verse 15 to Paul again, and to the end, save chapter 15: 15: only he has mentioned the apostles.

Chapter 89

“I,” Sins, Sin

There seems to me great confusion in many between our ever unchanging personality, and consequent responsibility, and the sin that dwells in us, as well as the sins we commit. Man is spirit, soul, and body (Gen. 2:7), a responsible being. Sin was introduced into him at the fall, as a distinct thing, an evil principle. (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12.) Sins were the evil fruits as the result. Coming under the power of sin, the fleshly tendency became predominant, and so the term flesh was stamped on his moral condition. (Gen. 6:3), and as to God he became dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2:1.) Now the Epistle to the Romans brings, out the threefold thought distinctly. There is the responsible man, the sins he commits, the sin that entered into him at the fall.

In Rom. 1:18-22; 2:1-16 we have the responsibility of the heathen set before us, consequent on the light of creation shining upon them, and their conscience giving the knowledge of good and evil (chap. 2:14, 15): the judgment of God is against the heathen for not walking according to that knowledge. But God is wroth with the responsible man for his sins (sin is not responsible), and He will judge the responsible man for his sins and rejecting His forbearance and goodness. (Chap. 2:2-6.)

Chapters 2:17-29; 3:1-20 take up the responsibilities of the Jew, as also his privileges, bringing out the law as the measure of those responsibilities, and he, the responsible Jew would be judged by the law, which, besides proving guilty of sins, given the knowledge of sin. (Chap. 3:19, 20.) Man's universal moral character is described from head to foot (chap. 5:10-18), then the law applied, proving guilty of sine, and giving the knowledge of sin. Thus the three things are clearly brought out in the history of man's responsibility. There is himself—the responsible “I” —guilty of sins, and, if he will learn, the law will give him the knowledge of sin. (Chap. 5: 19, 20.)

Chapters 3:21; 8 to end give the doctrine of man's salvation from this lost condition. He is saved from his sins, and from the power of sin. God is revealed in three characters, answering to the three conditions man is seen under. He is Justifier for guilty man. (Chaps. 3, 4.) He is Reconciler for man, his enemy. (Chap. 5:1-12.) He is Deliverer for man born in sin. (Chap. 5:12; 8 to end.)

Sins are the subject up to chapter 5:12; sin from chapters 5:12; 8 to end. The blood of Christ is presented to God, since all have sinned; and God on that basis displays His justice, in justifying everyone that believes in Jesus. The sins, figured by debts in scripture, are remitted or forgiven, the man is justified, or cleared from guilt. (Chap. 3:23-26.) The sinner believing is forgiven, his sins are covered, sin is not reckoned. (Chap. 4:7, 8.) All his sins have been borne by Jesus on the cross, and therefore can never be reckoned to him. He is cleared from all charge, and accounted righteous. (Chap. 4:23-28; 5: 11.)

From chapters 5:12; 8 to end, man is looked at as connected with Adam, born in sin, and God as his Deliverer—first, from the present power of sin, as to his soul; secondly, as to his body when the Lord comes. But here we shall see clearly the distinction between the responsible “I” (man, composed of spirit, soul, and body), and the sin that dwells in him, whether in his unconverted or

saved state. “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.” (Chap. 5:12.) Clearly this brings out, first, men; secondly, sin entering; thirdly, all have sinned.

The figure always used is that of sin, a master or king ruling over man, and man is looked at as its slave. In chapter 5:12 sin entered the world; chapter 5:21, sin reigned unto death; chapter 6:23, it pays wages to its servants, men—namely, death.

Now, this is all in reference to the unquickened, to man born in sin. Man, therefore, is sin's slave till delivered. Rom. 5:18, 19 gives the ground of deliverance; Rom. 6 gives the deliverance applied; in Christ's death he has died to sin, and is alive to God in a new condition. Sin therefore now has no more dominion over him, he is no longer under the law, but under grace. He was the servant of sin, but having obeyed the form of doctrine that was committed to him, he has been set free. Sin is actually in him still, but he is not to let it reign. Having now become a servant to God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, as to his body. (Rom. 6:14-23.)

Rom. 7 shows how the law, applied to the condition of man born in sin, could no more deliver him than it could justify him. Useful as a schoolmaster, it could give the knowledge of sin as a distinct evil principle in the man, if its lessons were learned, but, instead of delivering, could only condemn. It is figured by a husband, from which, as well as from sin, the master, the believing sinner is delivered by the death of Christ.

The law is not sin, it is holy, just, and good; and that for two reasons—it gives the knowledge of sin, and condemns the man to death who gives way to its first motions, and commits sins. Man in the flesh is the evil tree, bringing forth fruit unto death, and sin is the poisonous sap in the tree. But, except in verse 5, the figure used is always that of a master and slave, and I do not know anywhere in scripture where sin is figured by a tree. Man is, but not sin. So (ver. 8), sin works in the man all manner of lust; verse 11, sin deceived, slew me; verse 13, sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful.

But in all these verses sin is seen distinct from the man who is responsible.

From verses 14-25 we have a quickened soul, coming to the knowledge of deliverance. First, in comparing himself with the spiritual claims of the law, be finds himself carnal, sold under sin, a slave. But then, finding he wills to do right, he finds a distinction between himself quickened and sin dwelling in him, but it is a matter of knowledge and experience. Then (ver. 18) he finds he has no power over the evil, though quickened; in the flesh dwells no good thing. The struggle goes on till he finds himself a wretched man altogether, even though quickened; and who shall deliver him? He looks away to God, and finds God a deliverer, giving him Christ as his life, who has opened the way clean through death for him, and finds he is in Christ, and no longer in Adam. For the Spirit of life of the risen and glorified Christ communicated to him sets him free as a present thing from the law of sin and death. Sin in the flesh is condemned on the cross, but there is no condemnation to the man that is in Christ Jesus. Now in all these scriptures we find man in his distinct personality, whether unconverted, quickened, or fully delivered, but it is the man; and sin is a distinct principle inside him. It is a question between sin, when he comes to the knowledge of it, or God as a Deliverer through Christ, for the law, as we have seen, cannot deliver.

Man, then, ever remains in his distinct personality—first, seen in Rom. 1; 2; 3:20, as an object of judgment, and directly responsible to God; secondly, Rom. 3:12- ch. 8, finding justification from his sins, reconciliation from his enmity, deliverance from the power of sin in God through Christ, finally to he delivered, as to his body, from the presence of sin when the Lord comes. But it is the same person justified, reconciled, delivered, and redeemed, though entirely newly created, and made like the Lord Jesus at the end, when He comes. His sins, looked at as debts, are forgiven the moment he treats in the blood of Christ, not because he has died with Christ, but because Christ died for him. His sin he is delivered from through his having died with Christ, and Christ risen and glorified being God's gift of eternal life to him. The word of God, through the death of Christ, purifies his soul from sin, he has died to it; besides it produces a distinct new nature in him, so that “I” is now distinct from the flesh; he has two natures. Besides, by the communication of Christ glorified to him he is set free in spirit now; the full deliverance will be applied to his body (chap. 8:11, 23-25) when the Lord Jesus comes. He will then be delivered from the presence of sin. Then, thank God, there will be the full shout, O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear reader, I hope you are among this happy people, and I trust some dear children of God will be cleared up in their souls, and the sense of their responsibility too will be quickened by seeing from scripture the distinction between “I,” sin, and sins. A. P. C.

Chapter 90

In Christ and the Flesh in Us: Part 1

Such is the Christian. Through infinite grace he is no longer before God in his sins and in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He was “without Christ,” he is “in Christ,” he will be “like Christ.” A Christian, then, is not one who hopes to be, but one who is, in Christ. A man may be much reformed, and not in Christ. He may be earnestly taken up with religiousness, yet not in Christ. He may even be convicted, yet not converted. Those who stop short of Christ are still in their sins. To be in Christ is to be the workmanship of God—a new creation. Such have died with Christ, and are alive to God in Christ. It is an entirely new condition and standing. All is of God. The old things have passed away; all things have become new. Whatever, therefore, a man may think of himself, whatever changes may have been wrought in his outward deportment, or however esteemed he may be by others, he has no authority for calling himself a Christian, if he is not “in Christ.”

Nor is it correct to say that those who are in Christ were always in Christ, as some have asserted, because they confound purpose and redemption. We are told that “we were all by nature children of wrath, even as others.” The apostle seems gladly to acknowledge that he knew some who had been brought into this marvelous character of blessing prior to himself. He says, “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen... who also were in Christ before me.” (Rom. 16:7.) As to the purpose of God, we know that all those who compose the church of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is also clear that redemption, though accomplished more than eighteen hundred years ago, is only the present blessing of those who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and believed in the Son of God. Before that we were afar off; “but now, in Christ Jesus, we, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Of such, too, it is truly written, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sine, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. 1:7, 11, 13.) No one, then, can be spoken of in a scriptural sense as in Christ Jesus, before he has received Him who “was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification” as his Savior. Before he was made alive (quickened) he was dead in trespasses and in sins—in the flesh; but, through a divinely-wrought faith in the Son of God, he has received eternal life, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is associated with Christ in life, and by the Holy Ghost he is one with Him. This, too, he is entitled to know and to rejoice in, as Jesus said, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John 14:20.)

In the apostles' days persons were accredited as being “in Christ,” and they were spoken of, and written to, as such. For instance, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is addressed “to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus;” and the letter to the Philippians, “to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi,” thus showing that saints in those days were ordinarily recognized as “in Christ Jesus.”

The truth is that the epistles describe men as either “in the flesh,” or as “in Christ Jesus.” The natural man, however cultivated or refined, however outwardly religious and benevolent, is nevertheless “in the flesh,” as to his state before God. He is in the first Adam, and dead in sins. He

needs spiritual life. This is why the gospel presents no thought as to mending or improving men in the flesh; on the contrary, it speaks of redemption, that is, taking out of a state of guilt and condemnation, and bringing into a position of blessing and nearness to God. For, however polished and amiable people appear, we are assured that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” —the will is in opposition to God. Thus man naturally, however refined. and generous, is only “corrupt tree, which cannot bring forth good fruit.” Neither law nor terrors, commandments nor judgments, make him fit for God. His whole history shows the opposition of his will to God's will, and exhibits the truth of the divine sentence, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:8.) A verdict sweeping indeed but most just, and unmistakably plain and conclusive. Such is man! He “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14.)

Under those circumstances, as before observed, God has not proposed to mend the corrupt nature, but, in His infinite grace, has brought in redemption, in Christ, and through His blood. In this way we have deliverance from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin, and are before God on an entirely new standing in life and righteousness.

The sense of guilt has been cleared, in divine grace, by the death and blood-shedding of Jesus once for all; who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, suffered for sins, and died for our sins under the judgment of God. Thus all our need, as to sins and guilt, has been fully met in righteousness, and all who believe are justified by His blood, justified from all things. Instead, then, of guilt we have a purged conscience, for we know that all is now clear between us and God. Our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Instead of imputing sins, He accounts us righteous, so that we have “no more conscience of sins,” are no longer guilty, but justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is God who justifies. We are also delivered from condemnation, because, when law was unable to produce good in us, on account of the unclean and corrupt qualities of our nature, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned our old evil nature— “sin in the flesh.” Thus our old man, with its sinful passions and lusts, has been crucified with Christ; we have died with Him, who, in such wondrous grace, was made sin for us; who became our Substitute, and bore that condemnation which was due to us. The whole condemning power of God on account of sin having been poured upon Jesus, there is no condemnation left for us. Hence we are assured, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

But sin is the master of man naturally—it has dominion over him. Sin reigns unto death. He is the slave of sin, and cannot free himself. But God, in His grace, has set the believer free. He has died unto Christ, his Substitute. Neither sin nor law can have anything to say to a dead man. He that is dead is set free, or justified, from sin. You cannot charge a dead man with lust. Being then set free from sin, and become an object of divine favor, it is said of such, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” We are delivered, and brought to God. We are become servants to God. What an unutterable difference between being a slave of sin and a servant to God! We are alive to God in Christ, that “henceforth we should live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again.” His death has brought us deliverance as well as peace. By it we have been forever freed from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin. Blessed indeed it is to grasp these precious realities!

We must not, however, forget that God has not only wrought, in His exceeding grace, to save us from wrath, but has acted agreeably to His own goodness and nature. Nothing less could suit Him than that we should be before Him in love, in conscious nearness and relationship in eternal glory. He is therefore bringing many sons to glory. Jesus once suffered for sins that He might bring us to God. Redemption is God's way of bringing us to Himself; the wisdom, work, and results are all for His glory, as well as for our eternal blessing. It was necessary, therefore, that the whole question of sin should be settled in righteousness, for the glory of God, as well as to meet our need. Atonement was for God; it fully answered the just demands of His throne. In this way God has been glorified, and we have been cleansed, delivered, and brought to God as purged worshippers.

God has also given us life—a risen and eternal life. It is His own gracious gift. Blessed be God! We read, “God hath given tons eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” It is life in Him who is risen from among the dead, and given to us as a present possession, to be known in activity and power in our souls. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:11, 12.) Christ, then, is our life, and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death.” Christ lives in us, and we are in Him. We are, then, associated with Christ in life—a risen and eternal life. Hence we are addressed as “risen with Christ,” and consequently exhorted to “set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” The believer has passed out of death and into life. This transition scripture folly recognizes. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. We have also received the gift of the Holy Ghost. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

The believer, therefore, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—he is in Christ; he has died out of his old Adam standing in the death of Jesus, and has been quickened, raised up, and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has been brought out, and brought in. Hence scripture speaks of us as “accepted in the Beloved,” “complete in him,” “preserved in Christ Jesus,” and “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” We are a new creation in Him who is Head of all principality and power, are always before God in Christ, in all His acceptability and nearness, and loved by the Father as He loves the Son. This is where redemption has brought us, where divine perfect love has set us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. We have died unto sin, died with Christ, and are alive unto God in Him. Having received remission of sins, we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, joined to the Lord—one spirit. This is a man in Christ. “We were in the flesh,” but having died with Christ, and risen with Him, we have eternal life in Him, and are united to Him by the Spirit.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 91

In Christ, and the Flesh in Us: Part 2

On, the marvelous depths and heights of divine grace! Its depths in embracing us when in our sins and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God, and its heights in bringing us to God in Christ for everlasting blessing. And so truly does scripture teach the reality of this translation from being in Adam to our present standing in Christ, that we are now spoken of as “not in the flesh,” “not of the world,” “not under law,” but “in the Spirit,” and “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” The important question for us is, How far have we received these truths into our hearts? How far have we mixed faith with the truth of God concerning what He has wrought in Christ? The practical point is, Do we habitually take our place when consciously dealing with God as in Christ? Those who have not received this truth may be trying to work themselves into nearness to God and be always disappointed, instead of taking in simple faith the nearness and acceptance in Christ which His own grace has given us. Those who are working and redoubling their efforts to get near, only prove that they have not yet entered upon the place in Christ in which divine grace has set them. Those who by faith take possession of it do rejoice therein, and rest in God's presence. Such are never so happy as when inside the veil, where the Lord Jesus is. They worship God, and in measure enter into the wondrous truth of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

But though the believer is not in the flesh, he sorrowfully finds that the flesh is in him. He learns through humbling experiences to say, “In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” He does not say, “In me dwells no good,” because he has a new life, and the Holy Ghost in him; but he says, “In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing;” for, though delivered from the Adam standing, he still has the Adam nature—the flesh, with its passions and lusts—that evil principle which is ready to serve the law of sin. He has, in fact, two natures: the old nature, “that which is born of the flesh, which is flesh;” and the new life, or new nature, “that which is born of the Spirit, which is spirit.” The new nature which is born of the Spirit is strengthened by the Holy Ghost which indwells us; so that, while the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit is against the flesh in such antagonistic power, that we cannot do the things which we otherwise would. The delivered soul knows that he is the subject of the actings of these two opposing natures, and his conclusion is, “so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Rom. 7:25.)

The great trouble of every believer is not so much what he has done as what he is. It is the painful consciousness of having this evil nature—pride, self-will, and lust cropping up within, even if it does not come out. And the more his desire to live for the glory of God, the greater his sorrow at the garment being spotted by the flesh. This is his greatest enemy, his constant opponent, that upon which Satan and the world can act, and which neither time nor circumstances can improve, so desperately wicked is it, and deceitful above all things. The more we are occupied with it, the weaker we are toward it, because it becomes an object in the stead of Christ. The secret of power over it is to know that it has been crucified with Christ because of its incurable badness—to reckon it dead—to disallow its cravings, and to find all our springs of comfort and strength in Christ glorified—to “reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus

our Lord” (Rom. 6:6-11.) In the heavenly glory we shall not need so to “reckon,” for we shall be completely and forever delivered from it. But to so reckon now is because “the flesh” is still in us. Yet it is equally our privilege to say with the apostle, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [that is, not the old nature] but Christ [my new life] liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh [that is, in this mortal body], I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20.) This is Christian life.

To be occupied with what the flesh is in its various activities and deceitful workings, is not to be reckoning it dead; to be regarding it as an antagonistic force to be overcome, is to reckon it living; but to be holding it dead in the death of Christ, as judicially put to death in Christ our substitute, and to find all our resources in Christ risen and glorified, is to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we have power over ourselves, and can daily bring forth fruit unto God. The way of faith is always to look at things from God's standpoint, to take sides with Him who regards our old man as having been judicially set aside forever in the death of Christ, and who always sees us complete in Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

It is quite true that we are the Objects of the continual care and discipline of the Father of spirits. If we walk after the flesh, instead of after the Spirit, this may call for His loving rebuke and chastening; but that in no way interferes with the precious truth of our continual acceptance and standing in Christ, by whose one offering we have been perfected forever. The fact is that, through grace, we “are not in the flesh, but in Christ,” yet the flesh is in us; but our part is to reckon it as having been, before God and to faith, judicially put to death in Christ crucified, and thus to be so constantly occupied with the triumphant Son of God, as to find all our resources, all our strength, all our springs, in Him.

Nor does age, experience, or change of circumstances improve the flesh. It is wholly unimproveable, though its desires and habits, in youth and old age, in affluence or poverty, may show themselves differently. Its principles of lust and wilfulness remain the same. Paul had been in the third heaven, and heard unutterable things, which it is not possible for mortal man to speak. Was the flesh improved in him by such a wondrous change and experience? We are told that he needed “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him,” lest he should be exalted because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations. Now surely, when in the glory, we shall not need such a thorn, neither did he when in the third heaven, but afterward; when among men, there was such tendency to the pride and lust of the flesh being stirred up, that a messenger of Satan was needed to act upon him, as a preventive of fleshly conduct. So deeply distressing and humiliating was this “thorn,” that he three times besought the Lord to take it away; but this could not be done, that the servant might not be exalted above measure. Instead of removing it, the Lord said unto him, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” His path, therefore, for the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage was to go forward, having no confidence in the flesh, but boasting in his weakness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; for, said he, when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Cor. 12:10.)

How vastly different was the experience of this honored servant of the Lord when in the third heaven, and when buffeted by Satan on earth! But was he not equally secure in Christ, when filled with anguish or irritation through the “thorn in the flesh,” as when hearing the unutterable

communications of paradise? Surely his standing before God in Christ was in no way altered by this remarkable change of circumstances and experience. And it is very important to observe this. For have not most believers their bright times and their dark times? Did not Israel taste the bitterness of Marah, and then realize the delightful change of Elim's palm-trees and wells of water? And do not most of God's children know what it is, on some occasions, to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and at other times to be in heaviness and distress, having, the heart lacerated with the sorrows of the way? But are we not as secure and blessed in Christ, when in the trying path of humiliation and anguish, as when we are so happy in the Lord, so near, that it is only the thinnest film which appears to intercept our vision of Himself, and His own glory seems to shine down upon us? Surely it is always true that “ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power,” and that no change of circumstance or experience, whether dark or bright, can in any degree shake our security and standing's in Him;” though it is quite true we may lose the enjoyment of this, if we are taken up with experience, or anything else, in the place of Christ. How wise, then, it is for the believer to abide in the Lord Jesus, to be occupied with Him; for then we have always blessing. “We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18.)

So clearly does scripture recognize “the flesh,” with all its evil capabilities, even in those who are born of God, that they are enjoined to “lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, and as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Peter 1:23; 2:1, 2.) Here we find persons who are born again instructed how they can grow in grace, &c., and charged not to let these dreadful workings of the old man come out. Again, because we are “risen with Christ,” and hope to reign “with him in glory,” we are exhorted thus— “Mortify” (or put to death) “therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” —the vile workings of the flesh, the things which the ungodly practice, and which bring down the judgment of God upon them. “For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.” Observe, scripture nowhere says that we are to crucify the flesh, because our old man has been crucified with Christ, and thus we are said to “have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;” but as risen with Christ, and having a new life in Him (though still having the flesh in us), we are so to reckon ourselves dead as not to suffer these things to live in us, because we have died with Christ. Again, therefore, we are enjoined to “put off anger, wrath, malice, filthy communication out of your mouth, and lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new.” (Col. 3:1-12.)

Now it is clearly impossible that such injunctions should have been given to those who are born of God and risen with Christ, unless they still have “the flesh,” in which is nothing good. Let us turn to another scripture on this point. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Rom. 8:13.) This is spoken to those who are said to be “in Christ.” Observe, it is not the body which is to be flagellated, or put to death, but the deeds of the body—those things which the body is capable of doing, which are in opposition to God's mind. Again, notice that the power for this is the Spirit of God; not flesh against flesh, but a new and almighty power given to us, by which we may practically keep in the place of death the workings of “the flesh.” Nothing, then, can be more clearly taught in scripture than that the believer is “in Christ,” who is his life, and one with Christ by the Holy Ghost; and, at the same time, that “the flesh” is in every believer. He is therefore a

compound of two natures; with one, “the mind,” he serves God's law; and with the other, “the flesh,” sin's law. The indwelling Spirit strengthens the new nature, and keeps us occupied with Christ, our righteousness and strength, so that we may reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and thus practically hold as dead the buddings forth of “the flesh.” May the Lord graciously help us more and more in this!

It is important, however, to remember that the knowledge of having “the flesh” in us is of itself no hindrance to “our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;” but allowing it to come out practically does hinder it. We have not a bad conscience from its existence in us, because we know that the flesh, or the old man, has been judicially dealt with in the death of Christ. Neither need the believer sin. He is enjoined to sin not, and he has no excuse for sinning. “These things write I unto you that ye sin not.” It is, moreover, not correct for a believer to say sin is not in him, for “if we say we have no sin” —not sins, but sin, the corrupt nature, or old man— “we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” If, however, the believer does sin, or commit sins, the fruit of the Adam nature, he finds his conscience troubled, and his communion with the Father and the Son interrupted. It is a question of communion, not of salvation. Provision has graciously been made for it. Christ is our Advocate with the Father concerning it. Self-examination, self-judgment, repentance, and confession are wrought in our souls by the Spirit, and by the application of the word— “the washing of water by the word” —we become restored. The advocacy of Christ is based upon propitiation for our sins having been made, and He who takes up our cause is the perfectly righteous One. Hence it is written, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:1, 2.)

On confessing, we are cleansed perfectly, forgiven in righteousness, on the ground of the sacrifice once offered; so that we are told, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-10.) It is not the believer taking the place of a miserable sinner; but a believer taking the place before God of an offending naughty child, counting on the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive his sins because of the sacrifice of Christ, and to cleanse him, and thus to restore him to happy communion. This is the divine way of restoring an erring child of God. He may be the weakest and most faulty of God's children; still he is a child to whom the Lord does not impute sin, and never can be, strictly speaking, a miserable sinner, even when feeling the dreadful character of his sin, before God in confession.

Happy indeed are those who are occupied with the personal glory and excellencies, finished work, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to have always the comfort of their Father's love, and the joy of their security and completeness in Christ, and to be waiting for His coming! H. H. S.

Chapter 92

Thoughts on Isaiah 7-9

I take this passage because it contains a great outline, and is an instance of what is common in the prophets, the taking what was passing then and connecting it with the great counsel and plan of God which has its full result in Christ. In Isaiah you generally get the whole scheme or plan of God, who was thus revealing as Peter says, “no prophecy of the scripture,” &c.

You do find a present application to encourage faith while the prophet looks out to the full result. But this as to the earth. The events were to happen there. We belong to heaven.

There are two great principles of judgment. One is departure from original standing, the other is fitness to meet the Lord when He comes. See the vine for the one (Isa. 5.); the other we see in Isa. 6, the Lord high and lifted up, and “I am undone,” &c.

Another point is in Isa. 7 There had been a special dealing of God in giving the house of David. All was gone as to responsibility when the ark was taken. Then He sovereignly raises up a prophet, Samuel; after that David (figure of Christ). I just add here, God has put everything first on responsibility in man and man fails; then afterward God sets up in Christ all that has failed in man's hands, as the promises, the law, the house of David, and Nebuchadnezzar, or the Gentile empire. Then comes the church. Taken as to responsibility, that too is gone. Hereafter you get all these things definitely fulfilled in the Second man.

It was not merely that Israel failed under the law, but the house of David had wearied God. He goes to the house of David with Shear-jashub—the remnant shall return. The last resource of Israel having failed they must go to captivity. But God Himself shall give you a sign—Immanuel the Christ. Having got this footing, this rook, he can talk now of all the future history of Israel. He sees the whole power of hostile evil coming in, it will all flow up to the neck, referring to the last days. Then also, but he goes on from this time through the whole history of Israel, to what is yet to take place in days to come. What of these conspiracies and intrigues? It shall not stand, for God is with us. This is just the wisdom of the Christian, I may say, whatever plots, intrigues, &c., may be going on. Never mind it; God is with us. These great principles run through all dispensations. You cannot deal with a Christian except for his good. He unfolds the history. Do not you be plotting and planning to counterplot their enemies. Sanctify the Lord God, that is, give Him His own right place in your hearts. Taking the Lord God of hosts for a sanctuary brings in Christ. There is judgment on the nation, but the remnant is brought out. “Bind the law,” &c. The law and the testimony are sealed up among the disciples. The spirit of faith looked on to the Lord. We see a remnant separated by the revelation of Christ and judgment comes in. Israel have to wait for them. Christ and the remnant meanwhile take a separate place; and all is stopped as regards the nation. Christianity and the church come in between.

The time will come when all Israel shall be saved; but I cannot take this up now. But in the last days the law and the testimony have to be looked to. The dimness is greater than when Christ is here. In the last dreadful darkness for Israel they could not put out this fact that Immanuel has

come in and will take up Israel's cause.

First, Christ is revealed. Secondly, the remnant are His disciples separate to and with Him while Israel rejects them. Thirdly, we come to the last days. As Israel was to be rejected, the remnant could not be turned into Israel and therefore in Acts they are added together and make the church.

The Holy Ghost comes out while the great High Priest is still within. Our place is thus in heaven.

But there is another thing. We are still pilgrims on earth and to this the Sermon on the mount even still in some sort applies.

The question was raised who is going to get into the kingdom, and the answer is, “Except your righteousness,” &c. That is the character which suits the kingdom, not the Pharisees with their legal righteousness. We are in the kingdom— “translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” The kingdom will be set up in power, but now we are in it in this mysterious way. You must wear such or such a coat to be admitted to court—well, but it suits me when I am at court. We are born again and so see and enter the kingdom. The way we are brought in is not described in the Sermon on the mount, any more than redemption or anything of being dead and risen. Still the character of those who could enter suits us now that we are in it.

Chapter 93

The Israel of God and Abraham's Seed

The expression of the Israel of God, as being the whole body owned of God in heaven and earth, has been repeated so very frequently, that the hearer will have got the habit of using it in this sense in his mind, and so lose the sense that it is quite unfounded. The expression is used once in scripture, and with no. possible connection with the subject, or the millennial state at all. It is found in Gal. 6:16, where, false teachers having sought to introduce Judaism among Christians, the apostle (having closed his reasonings and exhortations on the subject, and shown what was really valuable, namely, the new creature) says, “As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” —evidently in contrast with fleshly Judaism, which the false teachers were seeking to introduce. But they were those then and there owned of God as His Israel; and there is not an idea of the millennium, nor any gathering of all into an Israel of God in heaven and in earth. Such a thought is never found in Scripture anywhere.

And then what is the proof? Why, that Jewish things are used as types, or symbols as the author calls them. And what then? Who denies it? Why does the use of circumstances of the fleshly Israel prove that the church is a constituent part of another Israel? We keep the paschal feast typically or figuratively. Well, and what then? I repeat. What does that prove? “Sons of Aaron.” We are priests—everyone owns that; and if it be merely that, in the whole creation, to all on earth, and I add even ostensibly to the unconverted during the millennium, we hold the place of priests; nobody will deny that. We are the children of the heavenly Jerusalem which is above. And what does that prove but just that we are a separate people, having a Jerusalem of our own? As to children of Abraham, and branches in the Abrahamic olive-tree, it has been already considered. It is of more importance than the others, which really are of none.

There is one general principle, owned of all who believe John 3, that for earthly blessings as well as for heavenly, a man must be born again, must have the new creature. But it does not follow thence that, if this be necessary for all association of man with God, even in the lowest place, there can be no special place of glory. It would as much set, aside degrees in glory as anything else, and I should pretend to be necessarily as exalted as the Apostle Paul, because I was born again. But this is not so. The principle is quite false. There is a difference, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor, though all be saved and born again.

But, branches in the olive-tree and Abraham's seed? Well, how are we Abraham's seed? By being in Christ: that is, that we take the place of the promises down here, as Israel especially will hereafter, and therefore succeed them, and they us, as heirs of promises down here. Yet still God had reserved some better thing for us. We do so in virtue of being in Christ, who is in the highest sense Abraham's seed. But we are in Him in a way that makes us His body, His bride, as His own flesh. And it is quite clear that the principle alluded to has nothing to do with our highest privileges, because it is, as has been already remarked elsewhere, the own olive-tree of the Jews, the seed according to the flesh, loved even in their unbelief for the fathers' sake.

Further, it is a principle which is false in another way. It is only their own olive-tree as descendants of Abraham specially called out as father of many nations down here before God. Now all the saints before Abraham will, I doubt not, be in glory. Yet they were not of this olive-tree, or else the Jewish question never could have been raised. The question of Rom. 9; 10; 11, is the Jewish question, and so in Galatians, and to which the Israel of God evidently alludes. That the saints will be in a certain relation to Israel yet dwelling in the earth, everyone who has received the doctrine of the Lord's pre-millennial advent believes. But then the reader is left here to draw some important conclusion from it as to his system: whereas it proves exactly nothing, and is believed as much by those who utterly reject the system, and believed more accurately and more scripturally: that is all. But it is true of all the world as of Israel. Yet here again this does not put Israel in the same place down here with all the world, because all saints will be born again. Nor does this latter truth set aside the special distinctive promises made to Israel, any more than the far more important distinctions which are true about the heavenly church.

When it is said, Israel will not be of the earth any more than the church of the first-born, it is partly true and partly false. Israel, as Israel, will be of the earth, and Isa. 65 proves that some will be wholly so, though such will be cut off when manifested. But the spared remnant, and all who really enjoy millennial blessedness, will be born again, and that life which they receive will not be of the earth. It will be the new creature, But it is true of everyone else then and now, and has nothing particularly to do with Israel. But the very passage (if passage were needed) which specially proves it calls this whole state of things earthly, in contrast with heavenly things which belong to the church; and therefore, though, they have a life which is not of the earth, their whole condition and state will be then earthly, in contrast with what is heavenly.

Nor is it at all true that the moment when the church receives its actual, Israel will receive its virtual, deliverance. There is no connection in scripture between the actual placing the church in its heavenly glory, and the quickening of individual Israelites, which is their virtual deliverance; nor is this latter the placing Israel as a nation or a body in the place of their earthly glory as purposed of God. The statements we have already considered as to the Jews—Ezek. 20 as to Israel, Isa. 66—all prove the contrary, as indeed do Ezek. 36; 37 It is never said that Israel are to be individually horn again at the coming of the Lord to receive the church; nor all individually born again at the same time; nor all restored at the same time, if public manifestation be referred to; but the contrary in the chapters I have cited. That they have their life from Christ, I do not doubt. That the resurrection of Christ secures to them the sure mercies of David, we are expressly taught in Acts 13. But it is never said they are, of the one body, nor the bride of Christ in glory. They are not His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

That all things will be headed up in Him in earth and heaven, all admit, and thus far they will have one center; but so will all creation; and earthly and heavenly are definitely distinguished in this very passage—we having part in the heavenly.

I do not believe that the passage applies to the post-millennial state, which cannot properly be called a dispensation, for it is eternity; and the heading up all things to be administered by Him in whom we have received an inheritance who have first trusted (or pre-trusted) in Christ (that is, before His manifestation in glory), evidently speaks of the special time of Christ's administration as the glorified Man, and our association with Him in that glory. The fullness of times itself is not an

expression for eternity. That would not be called “times” or “seasons” (καιρ■ν), and the heading up all things in the man, as administrator, is not God being all in all, and the Son subject, as in 1 Cor. 15, Rev. 21; and this view of the passage is completely confirmed by verses 22,23. That Christ will be the center of all in heaven and earth in the millennium is clear: but this does not hinder the church being in the proper, special, peculiar place of the bride, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all when He is in glory. Israel, moreover, has its place as Israel, distinct, and in many respects in contrast.

Nor is it ever said that Israel will govern the earth at all. That they are the favored glorious nation on the earth, where the government of Christ is placed which extends over the earth, is true; but they do not govern nor judge the earth. It is the heavenly saints who do this. They are governed by Christ, who will be “great to the ends of the earth,” and “all nations call him blessed.” That they will celebrate the ways of God in justice and judgment, I fully believe. But what then? There is nothing at all like the knowledge, the anticipative knowledge, of the mind of Christ, and of His glory, which we find in verses 9-11. When the things are accomplished, they will understand them and celebrate them.

But the peculiar character of the church's place is to know and celebrate them before by faith—not to know The justice and judgment merely which are the habitation of His throne, but His counsels and thoughts. The “mind of Christ” is more than the works or the ways in God in judgment. It is all His counsels in Christ. Who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” Thus it is we have the mind of Christ; as: Joseph yet unexalted was the interpreter of the revelations of God. And Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Power will be displayed hereafter; we have but samples of it now, the display of which confirmed faith. But Christ is made unto us wisdom: and if in infirmity we know only in part, still, as regards the object of knowledge and the source of knowing, the whole wisdom of God is in Christ, and we have an unction from the Holy One and know all things—we have the mind of Christ. But it is never said that Israel has the mind of Christ. They will see the displays of His power, recognize and celebrate them. But is this having the mind of Christ as we have it? The Egyptians knew what Joseph knew, when the things came: but had they the mind of Joseph?

The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh in the millennium. They will prophesy and see visions; but, though the lump is holy, it is not that separate consecrated first-fruits. The Holy Ghost will enable them to enjoy, but will not in identity with the sufferings of Christ make saints the vessel of the outgoings of His heart in the sorrow of a groaning world, nor in the joy of its deliverance by power, as the day when their love is answered. They will profit by the answer themselves, but they will not as in the love which has thought of others, though in itself “according to God” —this place they will never have, they can never have. It is reserved for us who have gone before the day of His power, and fore-trusted in Him. Blessed privilege! If sovereign grace has given it us, shall we disown or depreciate it?

Chapter 94

It Must Needs Be That Offences Come

Q. Whose are the “offenses” in this word? Offenses in the world, or in the church? R. H.

A. 1. To judge from the scope of the chapter, it would seem to have to do with “them that are within,” rather than with” them that are without.” Its counsels and warnings are addressed by the Lord to “the disciples,” not to “the multitude.” It is manifestly offenses on their own part that these are admonished to deal with in verses 6, 9; and if the denunciation against the offenders of the little ones in verse 6 be somewhat general in character, the warning of verse 10, with the parable employed to enforce it, are clearly for the admonition of the disciples.

Of the bearing of verses 15-20 on questions within the assembly, there can, I presume, be no doubt, and Peter's question in verse 21, “How oft shall my brother sin against me?” along with the Lord's own application in verse 35, “If ye from the heart forgive not everyone his brother,” determine with sufficient precision the application of the intervening parable.

2. “The word “woe,” though frequently denunciatory, as in the last clause, is not always so, but is also commiserative, as in Matt. 24:19, Mark 13:17, Luke 21:23, Rev. 8:13; 12:12.

3. If I apprehend the word ■π■ (from out of) aright, as indicating rather the source from whence, or occasion of, than the procuring cause or ground, this would confirm the thought that the world is not here the object of denunciation on account of its own misdeeds, but of commiseration, in view of evils to arise to it from, or out of, offenses elsewhere.

4. If σκ■νδαλον be that part of a trap or snare, by contact with which the game brings down the trapfall or causes the snare to close upon it, nothing could be more graphically descriptive of the effect upon the world (as well as on many within) of scandals in the professing church of God. Such “offenses” are not in themselves the snares in which Satan entraps souls, but they are truly to thousands the stumbling-blocks or touch-pins which give effect to the snares, and serve to precipitate into the pitfalls of unbelief and infidelity.

5. Finally, this view finds confirmation in the following clause of the verse: “It must needs be that offenses come.” If offenses in the world were in question, they were already around on every hand; but if offenses in that new thing about to be set up, the assembly, or church of God, be the matter in hand—that thing in which, according to its ideal or theory, no offense should be found, then how needful and appropriate the warning.

In view of these things, I lean to the conclusion that the “offenses” here are offenses in the professing church, and that the opening “woe!” of the verse is a long-drawn sigh from the Lord's loving heart over the foreseen confusion among His own, and the consequent break-down and obscuration of the testimony that ought to have shone as the light of the world in His absence, that through it the world might have believed that the Father had sent Him. (John 17:21.) Alas! alas how dreadfully prophetic has that compassionate “woe!” been—how much of blessing has been hindered by the scandals the world has seen among professing Christians! R. H.

Notes on James

James addresses his Epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel; but at the same time that he owns the people beloved because of the fathers, he places himself on the ground of faith: “James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

At the time when this epistle was written, the gospel, preached first in Judea, bad had among the Jews very great results. Numerous churches had been formed; many myriads of Jews had believed (Acts 21:20); a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7.) In those days of beginning, the believers from among the Jews still took part in the old order of things. They, were all zealous for the law; and there were even some of them who offered sacrifices. Jerusalem on its side occupied a very particular position; it was under a new responsibility by the fact of the introduction of Christianity and the deposit of faith granted to the holy city at the starting-point of the gospel. But this privilege, too little appreciated by her children, was going shortly to pass from their hands into those of the Gentiles. It is in the midst of these different elements that James, whilst having in view principally the believers, addresses nevertheless his epistle to the twelve tribes, to all Israel, giving them this last warning before God should detach the church from the Jewish system.

James does not at all advance toward Israel like Paul, who, soon in collision with the synagogue, separated from it the disciples and pursued far from it the work of the gospel in favor of the Gentiles. There is even a difference to remark between the two apostles of the circumcision, Peter and James, in the manner of regarding Israel in their epistles. Peter is occupied specially with the faithful remnant, and he finds it in those of the Jews who had received faith; he sees Israel only in the remnant; whilst James embraces the people in its totality. The faithful which is found there comprised is the living part of it doubtless, that in which evangelical truths, the great truths of faith and life, have their reality; but it is to the address of all the people that James writes. He sees this people under the favor of the promises of God then presented by the gospel.

As to doctrine the Epistle of James presents as much as another the great truths of the gospel of God; but it is limited to the first elements. One does not find there the truth developed as would be the case in an epistle of Paul. Notwithstanding it does not follow from this that the things said in the Epistle of James are of an authority less absolute. What for example more absolute than this declaration, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

In reading these first notions of the gospel, we are astonished not to find there all that which the Spirit of adoption has revealed to us; but we say that these developments are not the subject of the epistle, and that besides the state of those for whom it was written did not admit of them. But if it does not show all the riches of the revelation of the gospel, it is at least very useful as a girdle of righteousness, as a voice of warning which keeps the conscience awakened. It wishes that the faith and the life of the Christian should be proved by their effects in the eyes of men. When one understands the position of Christians in the midst of the Jews at the moment when the Christian's

form was not at all marked out, the Epistle of James is sufficiently simple.

The level that it keeps is that which might have been the moral state of the faithful of all ages: God being known of them according to His, eternal truth, whether without or above the particular characteristics that His different revelations have imprinted on them. The economies have differed one from another; they have successively put in evidence different characteristics of God; but God Himself does not change.

I. Verses 2-15. From the beginning James abases man. He puts him in a position of dependence toward God; he sees him submitted to the trial of faith. But trial produces its effects; it brings the fruit of patience; it leads to the prayer of faith; it makes a lowly condition loved; and, as a last result, it renders worthy of the crown of life promised of God to those that love Him.

Verse 4. “But let patience have her perfect work.” Patience sustains for one to wait according to God for the issue of the trial, without, taking the shortest way that the flesh teaches. Saul, for example, could not wait patiently.

Verse 5, “Let him ask of God.” When trial comes, the first resource of the Christian, as also the first movement of the new man, is prayer. And God always hears the prayers of His saints. Thus strengthened from on high, the Christian is capable of passing through trial in the spirit of obedience. Christ in Gethsemane prayed before finding Himself in difficulty; afterward, obedient, He took the cup from the hand of His Father. If we neglect prayer and difficulties catch us at unawares, we enter into temptation and we fall. At the moment when he should have prayed, Peter slept; when he should have submitted, he drew the sword; and when he ought to have confessed Jesus, he denied Him.

“And upbraideth not:” God gives without upbraiding our state.

Verse 6. “But let him ask in faith.” God loves that it should be in a spirit of confidence in His goodness, that we send up our prayers to Him.

Verses 9-11. A lowly condition is the only one in this world in which God will meet us.

Verses 12-15. Trial (temptation) may come to us from two sources. It comes from God when the heart or faith is put to the proof. “God did tempt Abraham.” It came from the adversary when it came by lust, when the flesh is enticed. How much sweeter it is to have to do with God than with Satan in trial!

Whoever knows himself will offer up this prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.” And may the grace of God work in us in order that we may have no need to be sifted by Satan to be stript of our pretensions! When Jesus prayed in favor of Peter, whom He knew to be confident in himself, He did not at all ask that His disciple should escape the sifting of the enemy; He only asked that his faith should not fail.

Verse 15. “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” Paul said inversely, in the Epistle to the Romans (chap. 7:8) that it is sin which produces all manner of lust. The difference between these two declarations is this: Paul keeps himself to the spiritual principles, whilst James would look at their effects. The one completes the other. The sin which is in the nature produces the lust (Rom. 7); and the lust produces the sin in the conduct of the man. (James 1)

Verses 16-18. Thus the Epistle of James, while it owns faith in Jesus (chap. ii. 1) owns also the new birth by the mighty grace of God: two fundamental truths of the gospel.

“Begat he us with the word of truth.” (See 1 Peter 1:23-25; John 3)

“That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” God will reconcile all things to Himself; His creation, and His elect. And we, begotten by the Father, are the firstfruits of this reconciled creation. In a sense Adam would have been, after his sin, the firstfruits of fallen creation.

Verses 19-27. Patience, and obedience are two practical graces, two of the perfect gifts that the Father gives and that He wishes to see developed in us. The new life is ever dependent: too much energy or too little is worth nothing. The moment that one's own will is manifested, that man wills, it is sin.

Verse 24. “The engrafted word.” Just as a graft becomes an integral part of the subject in which it is put, the word becomes in the Christian a portion of himself. It is not thus with a law which is always a commandment outside of us. That the word produces effects in us, does not at all destroy its authority over us—an authority which is that of God. The word edifies, commands or condemns, according to the case.

Verse 25. “The perfect law of liberty.” In the Epistle of James the divine nature in us is always seen in perfect conformity with the law of God. This nature loves what God commands. When it is found that he to whom the commandment is addressed has already the desire to do the thing commanded, he does at the same time what he loves and what is commanded him. Such is the law of liberty; as we see its example in Christ. If one had wished to restrain His liberty, He must have been hindered from obeying. Just so is it with the divine nature in the Christian. It is always free, that is to say always ready to do the will of God. The conflict of the Christian does not destroy this truth. The principle in the case is this: “I can do all through Christ that strengtheneth me.”

Three laws are mentioned in the Epistle of James: 1st, the law of Moses (chap. 2: 10, 11); 2nd, the royal law which consists in loving one's neighbor (chap. 2: 8); and 3rd, the perfect law of liberty (chap. 1: 25; 2: 12). These two latter approach each other.

Verse 26. “And bridleth not his tongue.” The tongue is that which makes known most promptly the state of the soul. When a man keeps himself in the presence of God, it does not happen that the word is evil or too abundant. “The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” (Hab. 2:20.)

Verse 27. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father” —always submission to God. In this position life is manifested, selfishness disappears, and one is kept pure from the defilements of this world.

II. Verses 1-13. It is perfectly useless to pretend to know the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, Loan of glory, when the conduct does not answer to this confession. Here as in the course of this epistle James thunders against the spirit of this world. Human greatness, the enticements of wealth, distinction of persons, the despising of the poor, all this agrees not with the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; “for God hath chosen the poor as to the world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” Nevertheless James does by no means level all ranks. What he demands is that one should have no preference for the rich. By the mere fact of his position the latter may find wants more

numerous; but it is needful to distinguish those wants when they are real; tendencies to show oneself rich, to do the grand, &c.

Verse 12. “Judged by the law of liberty,” that is, according to the nature which has been communicated to us. This nature is holy. We ought, conformably to this nature, to speak and act holily, and also to judge ourselves. Woo to him who, to excuse evil, should say,

“I do that which I would not,” for though the flesh is in us, we are not its debtors.

Verse 13. “Mercy rejoiceth [glorieth] against judgment” is the same expression as in Ex. 8:9, “glory over me.”

Verses 14-26. Faith is shown by its fruits. James demands the proofs of the faith that one professes, and the answer, if there is faith ought to be, “Look at the fruits.” This expression “Show me” is the key of the subject: You say, I am a Christian. It is well; but I cannot see faith in your heart: show it me by your works.

The works James demands as proof of faith are not those that they call good works. He demands works of faith, works such as those of Abraham and of Rahab. To put a son to death, to renounce one's country, is not what one would call good works; and nevertheless they were works of faith: Abraham, in obeying the order he had received to sacrifice his only son, believed that he would have equally the numerous posterity promised of God. Rahab believed that the Canaanites were cursed, that God had given the land to Israel, and she joined herself with the destinies of the people of God. These works which prove faith, are acts in which the flesh is for nothing.

Verses 1-12. A new form in which James touches the pride of man to combat it—seeking to appear by fine discourses, speaking without reserve, use things which do not agree with the respect which is due to our God and Father.

Verse 1. If in the habitual life there is evil in not keeping the tongue in check, there is also in the itching to speak before the assembly. “Be not many masters” [teachers].

Verse 2. “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;” for the tongue is in man the swiftest instrument for the service of good or ill; it reveals the state of the soul. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Verses 13-18. The wise and intelligent man will be shown, not by words, but by a good conversation with meekness and wisdom; he will show himself modest without hypocrisy, sowing in peace the fruit of righteousness.

There is a wisdom which is not of God, a wisdom which lies in the intelligence of man; a wisdom earthly, sensual, devilish, which lies to the gospel in that it pretends to belong to it. But the wisdom of God is first pure, then peaceable. It is the effect of the word when it is received; it renders us pure and peaceable.

“The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace.” Christ has done the will of God spontaneously, without experiencing inward resistance. It is not that He was insensible to the suffering which resulted from fidelity. This suffering He felt, but it did not at all hinder the movement of His soul from being obedience itself. We too, though we feel grief, whether in persecution or in the different

evils which touch us, ought to do the will of God without inward conflicts, and this would be if our heart were quite weaned from the elements of this world.

Verses 1-10, opposed to lust. The apostle had just been saying that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace; now lust is the enemy of peace. It brings disturbance among the saints and in the relations they have with God. They pray, but God does not hear. Nor is there (ver. 4) agreement between the love of the world and the love of God: the one kills the other.

It is God who gives (ver. 6); but He gives to whom He will—to the humble.

Would you avoid the danger and the evil of lust? Humble yourselves, submit yourselves to God, resist the devil, draw near to God, purify your conduct, feel your state. All these things which wound the pride of the flesh are suited to maintain, you in a true state, in the presence of the Lord who will exalt you, when this can be without danger.

Vers. 13-17. Dependence and submission toward God are anew recalled to us. It does not become us to choose our ways. To do so is to forget the authority of the Lord, to obey our lusts, and to act in a spirit of boasting.

V. Verses 1-6. Censure more for the rich. James recalls first the oppression by great people; but, what is remarkable, is to see him identify the persons who pursue riches with those who condemned and slew the righteous One.

Verses 7-9. The Lord is coming. Waiting for Him keeps the heart from the love of riches. We must wait patiently and live in peace.

Verses 10-20. Different consolations and exhortations follow. Those who have suffered by the will of God are now happy. We must then, if we suffer, follow them—suffer patiently.

God in His government afflicts sometimes by sickness: there must be self-judgment. But He hears the prayers of the saints, He pardons and heals. (Vers. 14 -16.) The prayer of the righteous man is of great efficacy: Elias gives us the proof. (Vers. 17, 18.) The love of souls is of great price: to recall a soul from his wandering is to save him from death. It is to cover a multitude of sins, and to what God is doing. (Vers. 19, 20.)

Notes on Job 28

The connection between this chapter and the preceding has perplexed readers and writers on the book; but, though it passes (as not infrequently do Job's discourses) into a sort of soliloquy, there seems to be an intelligible and weighty link with what went immediately before, where the miserable end of the ungodly fool is set out most vividly. This might appear an extreme case; but in truth it is the too general experience of the race, that men walk after a vain show, zealous after every other object under the sun, yea, in the bowels of the earth, and in the depths of the sea, overlooking that wisdom which consists in and is inseparable from the fear of the Lord, and that understanding which departs from evil. Such is God's saying, who knows the place of wisdom inscrutable to all others, for destruction and death can only say that they have heard its report with their ears. Not seeing the connection, the Vulgate, followed by Luther, &c., gives no expression to the particle éÌÄë as others soften down into a musing ejaculation, “Yes truly,” “Indeed.” The antithesis in any case is in verse 12, “But wisdom,” &c.

For there is a vein for the silver,

And a place for the gold they refine.

Iron is taken out of earth,

And stone molten into copper.

He [man] putteth an end to darkness,

And to the end searcheth he all,

The stone of darkness and death-shade.

He breaketh a shaft away from a dweller,

Forgotten of a foot they hang suspended,

Away from men they swing:

The earth, out of it cometh bread,

And under it is turned up as it were fire.

Its stones [are] the place of the sapphires,

And nuggets of gold it hath,

A path no bird of prey hath known,

Nor vulture's eye hath seen.

The sons of pride have not trodden it,

Nor the dark lion passed over it.

He [man] layeth his hand on flint,

He overturneth mountains by the root,

He cutteth rivers in the rocks,

And his eye seeth every precious thing.

Floods he bindeth from dripping.

And bringeth to light what was hidden.

But wisdom, where shall it be found?

And where this, the place of understanding?

No mortal knoweth its price,

Nor is it found in the land of the living.

The depth saith Not in me [is] it,

And the sea saith, It [is] not with me.

Pure gold is not given for it,

Nor is silver weighed, its price.

It cannot be weighed with gem of Ophir,

With the precious onyx or the sapphire.

Gold and glass cannot equal it,

Nor its exchange [be] a vessel of fine gold.

Coral or pearl is not to be mentioned.

And the acquisition of wisdom [is] above rubies,

The topaz of Cush doth not match it,

With the clear gem it is not weighed.

And wisdom, whence cometh it,

And where this, the place of understanding?

And further it is hidden from the eyes of all living,

And is concealed from the birds of the heavens,

Destruction and Death have said,

With our ears we have heard its report.

God understandeth its way, and He knoweth its place.

For He looketh to the ends of the earth,

He seeth under the whole heaven.

In making to wind its weight,

And meting out the waters by measure,

In making a law for the rain,

And a way for the lightning of the thunder,

Then He saw and declared it,

He established and also searched it out;

And unto man He said,

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that [is] wisdom,

And to depart from evil understanding.

It is impossible to overlook the comprehensive grasp of nature, and even art, here surveyed, especially as the passage stands correctly rendered in verses 4-11, where even the Authorized Version fails in duly presenting particular phrases as well as the connection. Both are given more accurately, I believe, in the version before the reader, and in general by those who have translated during the last century and more, when attention was drawn by A. Schultens to the allusion made to mining operations, misunderstood in earlier days.

Job then speaks of the realm of nature searched out with the keenest avidity by man, Who familiarizes himself with the vein or mine where silver lies, as he takes care to refine the gold he discovers not so disposed. So too with iron and copper ore molten for use. He knows how to pursue his way spite of darkness, overcome with artificial light, no matter what the danger, learned every holy and then at cost of life. We see described the shaft formed far away from human dwelling, and means used to convey men where none could walk, suspended by ropes, it would seem, and swinging to and fro. We see not only the earth cultivated on its surface, but means of fuel found beneath its stones, the place of the sapphire and nuggets of gold. Into such depths, ransacked for its hidden treasure, no bird has penetrated, nor vulture's eye seen a path; not the boldest of beasts has trodden there, not even the dark or fierce lion has passed over it Man's daring resources, with covetousness behind, conquer all difficulties. The hard flint yields to his hand, and mountains he overturns by the root if they stand in his way, as he cuts rivers in the rocks, to reach the precious things his eye discerns. Nor is it only letting the waters off in suited channels, but he binds floods from oozing and making their way through, so as the better to bring to light what lay Concealed.

But if such is man's successful pursuit of the least accessible objects in the bowels of the earth, where shall wisdom be found? and where the place of understanding? And it is the harder to find, as no mortal knows its price, and in fact it is not found in the land of the living. The depth disowns its presence, the sea yet more emphatically. Vain is the hope of adequate exchange; gold or silver

is weighed in vain; nor gem of Ophir, nor onyx, nor sapphire, nor golden glass, nor work of art in gold, nor coral or pearl, nor topaz, nor jewel of clearest luster. Again, then whence comes wisdom? and where the place of understanding? But if besides it be hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the heavens; if destruction and death can only say that they have heard its report, God understands its way and He knows its place. The universe in no degree distracts Him: He looks to the ends of the earth, He sees not only in but under the whole heaven. Nothing is too ethereal or too vast for His ken end sway. In appointing to the winds its weight (surely a remarkable thought and word for these days), and meting out the waters by measure, in controlling the rain and the lightning, He none the less laid down the foundation of all righteousness, and this for favored man on earth to hear. It is to give God His rights. Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding. It is to be subject morally to God as Master, fearing Him and departing from evil—the true wisdom and understanding of man.

Notes on Job 29

A fresh discourse of Job here begins, and it is his final one, which naturally parts into the three chapters which follow, each presenting a distinct portion, and the whole a very complete summary of the case, as it now presented itself to the sufferer's spirit. He takes a retrospective glance at his past life, when divine favor lavished on him every enjoyment that an upright soul could desire on earth, and this in the relief of the needy and distressed, quite as much as in the universal honor of those that knew him. Then in chapter 30 he contrasts his actual circumstances of degradation, an object of scorn and insult to the lowest, even of the young, and this without the smallest comfort within, yea, the bitterest dregs of his cup lying in the fact that he cried unheard to God who indeed with strong hand was putting him down, as surely as He had once blessed and exalted him; so that he could only surrender himself to hopeless sorrow as regards this life. Yet does he, in chapter 31, with the utmost detail and solemnity repudiate all consciousness of secret iniquity, whether wandering in lust, or in any stain on domestic propriety, either in public or in religious life, so as not only to imprecate judgments if there was hidden evil, but to speak with unbecoming boldness in the presence of God, who however well knew that His poor servant was far more distant from hypocrisy than his friends that suspected him. Thus runs the first of these sections.

And Job continued to utter his parable and said,

Who giveth me like the months of old,

Like the days when God guarded me,

When His lamp, it shone over my head—

By His light I walked [through] darkness;

As I was in the days of the harvest

When God's familiarity [was] over my tent;

While the Almighty [was] still with me,

My young ones around me;

When I washed my steps in cream,

And the rock alongside me [poured] rivers of oil;

When I went out to the gate by the city,

In the open place I established my seat;

Youths saw me and hid themselves

And the aged rose—stood up,

Princes refrained from words

And laid the hand on their mouth,

The voice of nobles was arrested,

And their tongue cleaved to their palate.

For the ear heard and praised me,

And an eye saw and testified to me.

For I delivered the poor that cried,

And the fatherless that had no helper.

The blessing of the perishing came on me

And the heart of the widow I made sing.

Righteousness I put on, and it put me on,

As a robe and a diadem mine equity.

I was eyes to the blind, and feet [was] I to the lame,

A father to the needy, and the cause I knew not I searched.

And I broke the jaw of the wicked,

And flung the prey out of his teeth.

And I said, With my nest I shall expire,

And as sand shall multiply my days.

My root is open toward the waters,

And dew lodgeth all night on my branches.

Mine honor remaineth fresh with me,

And my bow is renewed in my hand.

They hearken to me, they wait, and are silent for my counsel.

After my word they repeat not,

And my discourse droppeth on them,

And they wait for me as rain,

And their mouth they open wide [as] for the latter rain.

And this sense would fall in with the context excellently. But the Jewish Rabbinical commentators, following the Talmud, and followed by Ewald, RosenmUller, Dillmann, Delitzsch, &c., regard it as "the phoenix." Bochart (Hieroz. 819) reminds us that 80 some of the fathers took the φο■νιξ of

Psa. 92:13, as a testimony to resurrection. It is needless to argue against the reference to this fabulous bird, which suits the context as badly as it does in itself. For the common view see Psa. 139, Hab. 1:9 where the sea or shore is not added; and here it was the less necessary, as the sand of the desert is no less countless: so in Targ., Syr., Arm.; so Luther, Trent. and Jun.; so even Gesenius, Umbreit, and Rattan, not to speak of orthodox scholars in general.

I laugh on them when they have no confidence,

And the, light of my face they cannot cast down.

I choose their way for them, and sit head,

And dwelt as king in the troop, the comforter of mourners.

Some of the finest compositions of genius in ancient and in modern times embody a similar retrospect, out of the depths of present misery, on past prosperity and honor; but, touching as they may be, they fall as far short of that which has just come before us, as the character of an Oedipus or a Lear is inferior to this holy man of old. None need travel out of scripture—I do not say for truth, found nowhere else, but—for the most admirable and affecting picture of reverses, borne patiently, though not perfectly, till He came whose alone it was to sum up all, divine and human, unalloyed and unconfounded in His own person. Immeasurably far below Him was Job, yet as far above the favorite sufferers of dramatists and other poets as faith is beyond unbelief. Nor is it only on the human side that we see the gulf that separates the inspired book from the best writings of men, but yet more on the divine, where no vengeful being looms behind to take a spiteful pleasure in blighting at length man's earthly happiness. There is indeed such a being, yet a creature of vast but limited capacity of malicious power, whose defeat is here revealed for our comfort; and yet more fully the delight of God in the final joy and blessing of those who honor Him with subjection of heart and word and ways, and this even on earth before men, as it will be on the largest scale when the Lord appears in His kingdom.

Job then sets before us a beautiful account of his previous life, when God shone on the days and months as they glided by, His lamp above his head, His light enabling him to walk through darkness. Especially does he recall the days of his harvest, of maturity rather than youth, when he enjoyed the familiar presence and counsel of Eloah over his tent life, and beneath the shadow of Shaddai, his young surrounding him, and the proverbial blessings of earth beyond measure abundant and accessible. Nor did honor fail outside his own domains; for if he went from [or to] the gate up to the city, and took his seat in the broad-way or market, youths hid themselves in awe and the gray-headed rose standing up till he seated himself. Leading men or rulers abstained from speech and imposed on themselves respectful silence; those nobles or men of mark whose voices were wont to be heard, were hushed with tongue cleaving to the palate; so great the reverence that greeted Job's presence in their midst, with an influence all the more because it was unofficial.

Other testimony too did not fail: what distress had ever sought his help in vain? What tale of woe been slighted? What sight of wretchedness forgotten? And those relieved did not see or hear their benefactor unmoved, if his left hand knew not what his right had done. God does not let die the memory of unselfish goodness; and the poor can render as true a witness to lovingkindness, as the rich to a greatness beyond, their own. And was not Job the deliverer of the poor, the orphan, the perishing, and the widow? Indeed this field of his beneficent, aye and righteous, activity was

large. As he put on justice, so did it fit Job, and judgment became him like mantle and turban. Eyes was he to him that had none, and feet to the lame, and to the needy a father, refusing no pains to search out a cause unknown; nor was his just zeal less to be dreaded by evil-doers—so would he break the tusks of bad men, and pluck the prey from their teeth.

Assuredly, if ever mortal was entitled to look for a tranquil future from God and before men, it was the man of Uz. And he did say, “In [or with] my nest shall I expire and like the sand [or palm], multiply my days, my root open to the water, and the dew all night on my branch, my glory remaining with me, and my bow renewed in my hand.” For how could he ignore the weight attached to his words, the waiting and silence for it; the absence of rejoinder; the welcome reception of it, as thirsty land waits for rain, with open mouth as for the latter rain? His laugh was suited to dispel distrust, instead of their despondency darkening the light of his countenance. In short, Job was their cherished counselor in difficulty, sat as chief, dwelt like a king in the army or troop, and really was one that comforted the mourners. Such without a break had been his life of yore.

Notes on Job 30

Now Job sets forth the misery and degradation to which he had been suddenly reduced. And, first, he dwells on the disdain which was his portion, not from the high and haughty, but from the most wretched and despicable of men. None was so low that he could not regard Job with derision and scorn. It would be hard to find such a picture of utter baseness in the habits of men; yet was there no expression of malicious contempt which he had not to endure from these loathsome objects, who set on him, not only with their vulgar ribaldry, but with the coarsest of practical jokes and rude indecorums, which utterly unnerved him. But then a deeper and more constant sorrow oppressed him, for he could not shut out from himself the harrowing conviction that his ceaseless sufferings in the body were from the hand of God, from whom he might have looked for compassion. Whereas now he could not but abandon all hope of relief or deliverance from above, any more than of the commonest sympathy from men ordinarily quick enough to feel for the misery of their fellows.

And now at me they laugh, younger in days than I,

Whose fathers I had disdained to set with the dogs of my flock!

Even the strength of their hands, what [was] it to me?

In them the prime was lost through want and hunger,

Who yesterday were gnawing the desert, the waste, and the wild,

Plucking saltwort in the jungles, roots of broom their food.

At them, driven out of the midst, they hooted, as at a thief,

To dwell in the horror of glens, in dens of the earth, and in rocks.

Among the bushes they brayed, under the nettles huddled,

Sons of folly, sons of no-name, who were whipped out of the land.

And now I am become their song, and I am their bye-word;

Abhorring me, they get far from me,

And even refrain not from spitting in my face.

For He hath loosed my cord, and humbled me,

And they have cast away the bridle before my face.

On the right riseth up a brood; they push aside my feet,

And cast up against me their destructive ways;

They tear up my path, helping on my downfall;

They have no helper; they come as [through] a wide breach,

Under the ruin they roll onward.

Terrors turn on me; they pursue like a storm my dignity,

And my prosperity like a cloud is gone.

And now my soul poureth itself out upon me;

Days of suffering hold me fast;

The night pierceth my bones, and my gnawers rest not.

With great violence is my clothing changed;

It girdeth me as the collar of my vest.

He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become as dust and ashes.

I cry to Thee, but Thou dost not answer me;

I stand, and Thou dost look fixedly at me.

Thou art changed to a cruel one towards me,

With the strength of Thy hand Thou warrest against me.

Raising me on the wind, Thou makest me borne off,

And in my very substance dissolved me.

And I know that Thou art bringing me to death,

And to the house of assembly for all living.

Surely there is no prayer when He putteth forth the hand,

Though they cry out, in His destroying.

For have I not wept over one whose day is hard?

Was not my soul sad over the needy?

Yet when I looked for good, evil came,

And when I waited for light, darkness came.

My bowels are made to boil, and are not silent;

Days of affliction have overtaken me.

I am going as blackened without the sun;

I stand up in the assembly, I cry out.

Of jackals am I become brother, and companion of ostriches.

My skin of me is black, and my bones are burned with heat,

And my harp is turned to wailing, and my pipe to the voice of weepers.

The acute feelings of the eastern grandee come out vividly in this resumption of complaint. His sensitiveness was in no way impaired by his astonishing reverses, and his deep and varied sufferings, but, on the contrary, as one might expect, quickened thereby to the highest degree. Thus he does not merely speak of the cruel age of mockery he had to endure from a crew of youths, incapable of appreciating worth, or of feeling for others in trouble, but breaking forth into shameless mirth over his unparalleled misery. He looks at the antecedents and belongings of these his juniors, who spared no unseasonable and unfeeling jibe that could wound to the quick, and cannot but express the reflection that he would have disdained to rank even their fathers with the doge of his flock. Even for physical strength they were worthless, their prime being perished through want and hunger. What else could be expected from such as had been till now gnawing what they could find hi the desert? and this not where bright spots smiled, but where was unrelieved waste and wild, plucking saltwort, when they could find it, in the jungles, and finding food, wretched as it was, in roots of broom or, juniper. How sad to think of such degradation for members of the human race even in those early days! Such social outcasts, with whom we commonly connect the overthronged dens of infamy and crime in some great city, were not wanting then behind the scenes of desert life. At them, says Job, driven out of the midst, men hooted as at a thief, compelled to find a dwelling in horrible glens, in dens of the earth, and hollow rocks. Among the bushes, they could hardly be said to speak; but brayed, he adds, under the nettles they herded, after some beastly sort, sons of folly, and, obscure for a name, notorious for vice and its surrounding punishment.

And now Job was become their song and their bye-word. Even such as those, wretched troglodytes, if not worse, from their origin, dared to turn him into merriment and spiteful outrage. In their abhorrence they would retire far away, or, if they drew near, it was to pour on him the lowest mark of ignominious contempt. But Job could see that God's hand was behind all the humiliation to which he was subjected. The Keri gives “my,” that is, Job's, cord; the Kethib, “His,” that is, God's, which Ewald interprets as a bowstring, Conant as a rein. The sense seems to be the letting loose of trouble end persecutions. They took their stand as bearing witness against the sufferer as the right (see Psa. 109:8; 1), as has been noticed by others. Thus was he deprived of firm ground to stand on; so that he could only compare himself to some place exposed to all the ways. and means of a siege and assault, the tenor of his life being violently broken up, and they needing no help who helped to precipitate his ruin. For they poured in as through a wide breach, rolling onward under the crash of ruin; while a crowd of terrors turned on him, each chasing his dignity away like a hurricane, and his prosperity vanishing like vapor.

Hence he was utterly unnerved, and his soul dissolved, as it were, in sorrow, as days of suffering held him fast; and the night, which ordinarily affords a respite to the most wretched, aggravated his misery to the piercing of his bones, as if they were picked out from him, and the gnawers of his flesh not only began their work before the time, but this sleeplessly. Such was the condition of his body, that it was only by the utmost violence his clothing could be changed; it surrounded him as tightly as the collar of a close-fitting vest. What could he feel but that God had cast him into the mire of abasement, so as to become like dust and ashes? Job crying to Him, and He not

answering; Job standing, and He gazing fixedly at him! for there seems no warrant for transporting the negative into the later clause. Job did not doubt God's contemplating all, which made His non-intervention the keener pang; and he ventured to say that He who had erst blessed him was now changing Himself into a being creel toward him, and making war on him with all His might, raising him up in a storm-car, and causing him to be borne away only the more thoroughly to dissolve his very being. So that he knew it was God bringing him 'to' death, and to the house where living men assemble at last.

Lastly, Job contrasts his own misery, thus without a hearing or alleviation from above, with his tenderness towards incomparably less troubles among his fellows, whereas, when he cried, worse followed: Yet what could exceed his inward feeling, or what the effect outwardly on his person, and this, not by natural or external causes, but by unheard-of blows and consuming disease, and by sad exercises worse than all? He had even cried out among men, and not to God only, and this so dolefully as to set him with brutes and birds notorious for their yells and screeches.

Notes on Job 31

Here, as the conclusion of his last discourse, Job makes the most solemn and complete protestation of his innocence; not, of course, denying what he had already owned of man's condition—of his own among the rest, but absolutely repudiating the thought of grievous wickedness concealed under a fair exterior, with which God could be now waging war, as his friends had surmised. In personal purity—and this again as a married man, in his behavior toward his domestics, in his remembrance of the poor and exposed, in his abhorrence of idolatry and avarice, in his cultivation of generous and hospitable ways, in his hatred of hypocrisy, he prays that, if false, he may be put to utter shame, appeals to the Almighty for an answer, and avers his willingness to endure the closest scrutiny, where no evil can be cloaked or tolerated; nay, more, he imprecates a curse on himself from His hand, that, if it can tell of fraud or violence, baneful weeds and thorns may take the place of wheat or barley.

I have presented a covenant to mine eyes,

And how should I think on a maiden?

And what [would be] the portion of Eloah from above,

And inheritance of Shaddai from on high?

[Is there] not destruction to the wicked,

And a strange [dream] to the workers of iniquity?

Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps?

If I walked with falsehood, and my foot hosted to deceit,

(Let Him weigh me in a balance of justice,

And let Eloah know mine integrity,)

If my step turned aside from the way,

And my heart walked after mine eyes,

And a blot cleaved to my hands,

Let me sow, and another eat, and my produce be uprooted.

If my heart was enticed about a woman,

And I laid wait at my neighbor's door,

Let my wife grind for another, and others bow down on her.

For this [is] an infamy, and that a crime for a judge.

For a fire it [is], it consumeth to destruction,

And it would uproot all my increase.

If I despised the right of my bondman

Or of my bondmaid, in their contending with me,

What then shall I do when God ariseth?

And when He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?

In the belly did not He that made me make him?

And did not One fashion us in the womb?

If I kept back the poor from [their] desire,

And the eyes of the widow made to pine,

Or ate my morsel by myself,

And the orphan had not eaten of it

(For from my path I brought him up as a father,

And her I guided from my mother's womb).

If I saw [any] perishing without clothing,

And the needy without covering;

If his loins blessed me not,

And he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;

If I shook my hand over the orphan,

When I saw my help in the gate;

Let my shoulder fall from the blade,

And mine arm be broken from the bone.

For the destruction of God was a terror to me,

And before His majesty I was powerless.

If I made gold my confidence,

And to the pure gold said, My trust;

If I rejoiced because my weal [was] great,

And because my hand found much;

If I see the light when it shineth

And the moon walking splendidly,

And my heart was secretly enticed

And my hand kissed my mouth

(And this were a crime for judges,

For to God (El) above I had lied);

If I rejoiced over the ruin of my hater,

And got uplifted when evil found him;

Yea, I suffered not my palate to sin

By asking that his soul might be under a curse;

If the men of my tent said not,

Who giveth one not satisfied with his flesh?

The stranger passed not the night in the street;

I opened my doors to the traveler;

If I, like Adam, covered my transgressions,

Hiding in my bosom mine iniquity,

Because I feared the great multitude,

And the contempt of families terrified me,

So that I am silent, I go not out of the door.

O that One would hear me! Lo, my sign.

Let Shaddai answer me,

And mine adversary with the charge:

Would I not carry it on my shoulder?

I would bind it as crowns on me.

The number of thy Steps I would tell Him,

As a prince would I go near to Him.

If my land cry out against me, and its furrows weep together,

If its strength I consumed without wrong,

And caused the soul of its owners to expire,

Instead of wheat let thorns come up,

And weeds instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

Deeply interesting and instructive is this closing burst of indignant self-defense on Job's part. Valuable as the law might be—for surely God does nothing in vain—we can see how high was the moral standard for the soul and for the walk of godly men outside Israel, before the legislation from Sinai, as appears in the patriarchs of Genesis. Nor is it only in matters of right and wrong, of which the conscience could judge with more or less precision, according to the amount of light possessed; but we see the effect, in the soul and its affections and judgments, divine revelation. God had spoken words, and had wrought too in solemn ways with men individually and universally, in grace and in judgment, long before He had. inspired men to write His mind by divine power. And faith received His word, and pondered on His dealings, to rich profit, before scripture; though scripture, when it was vouchsafed, added much to the blessing, and increased the responsibility, of those who possessed it, and alas! of all who despise it.

For it is an immense favor to have God's words in a permanent as well as perfect form, as communicating His mind, whether about Himself and His ways, or about man and man's ways: how much more when He spoke ■ν Υ■■, not by servants, but in His Son, by whom He wrought eternal redemption! On this, however, we dwell not now, but weigh what God gives us of those early days, where we see, as here, how the Holy Spirit, spite of scanty revelation, enabled saints, like Job, to feel so becomingly as to God, no less than in their ordinary walk of every day. But let us remember that the same faith which turned the little then to such admirable account will not be satisfied now without a deep and growing entrance into all the written word, and a hearty fellowship with Christ in all of joy or sorrow that His name entails on us, whether we think of our being in Him above, or of His being in us here below. Grace never enfeebles the sense of what is due to God's nature or authority, but, on the contrary, strengthens him who knows it by faith, to walk, and worship, and testify. accordingly. Knowledge or privilege, however precious intrinsically, is to us worse than useless, if we love not the good and hate the evil, as He judges each. And now our responsibility is measured by the fullest light and the nearest relationship; for Christ is revealed, and the Holy Ghost given, and we are His children by that Spirit, crying Abba, Father.

Law, as the apostle teaches us, came in by the bye (παρεισ■λθεν), not as a rule of life, as men perversely imagine, but rather of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. 3) Christ is really that rule—Christ as revealed in the word of God as a whole, and applied by the Spirit. Law came in parenthetically that the offense might abound, the power of sin, not of holiness, as grace is, the exact counterpart of law. Hence we see right ways and holy thoughts before the law; as we are called so much the more, that sin should not have dominion over us, because we are not under law, but under grace. We have died with Christ to law as distinctly and assuredly as to sin: such is the teaching of the Holy Ghost in Rom. 6-8, where it is a question of life, not of blood, as the ground for holy walk, not for the remission of sins. Would that God's children cast their theological idols to the moles and to the bats, and sought to know and enjoy better the liberty wherewith Christ sets free! Let them be assured that as they would be all the gainers in solid peace, so His name would have glory in their exceeding and abounding in love toward one another, and toward all, to the confirming of their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

To return, then Job formally and minutely tests himself by the comprehensive bill of delinquency, and this toward God as well as man, by failure in good, as well as by self-gratification or other sins. We may be assured that not one of the friends who virtually arraigned could have afforded to try himself as Job proceeds to do here. He judges unclean lusts as well as actions; and this in the fear of Him who had power to cast soul and body into hell—Him who meanwhile took cognizance of all his steps. Vanity or falsehood, too, was just as far from Job's spirit and ways as impurity. Whatever men might think who drew conclusions from appearances, he could ask God to weigh him in a just balance, whether he had resorted to deceit, or turned aside from the way, and if so, that another should reap the results of his labor, and that retribution, even as to his own wife, should follow any such consuming evil on his part. Most touchingly does he show that, if in an exalted position, his heart never forgot that his servants were of the same race, of the same human family as himself, to the exclusion of unfeeling personal pride. Nor was it merely a strong sense of relationship within the household, for his compassion ever went out to suffering humanity—the widow and the fatherless, the needy and the naked—and this not casually, but with constant and unwearied care as a father, and with vigilance against taking the least advantage through influence with others: so powerfully, he could say, had the fear of God, and his indignant vindication of all such acted within him, as to render that hardness a total stranger to his heart. And trust in gold, the covetousness which the New Testament calls idolatry, was as abhorrent to his spirit as the giving to the highest orbs of creation the glory due to God alone; which iniquity would seem to have been in those patriarchal days as distinctly punishable before the judge, as the insidious corruptors of domestic sanctity. (Compare vers. 9-11 with vers. 26-28.)

Further, he most solemnly abjures all joy over an enemy's calamity, though he had not in the most indirect way asked it; and he could appeal to those most familiar with the habits of his life, whether a single soul had ever gone from him discontented with his fare, or even a stranger near him was left shelterless; and he could absolutely deny the tendency to conceal evil, which we have all derived from our first father, uninfluenced by the fear of man which is its habitual motive.

Finally, he again renews his desire for the Almighty Himself to answer, this being his affidavit, as we say, with his mark or signature, as he earnestly wishes the counter-statement in the case, which, far from dreading, he longs for, and declares he would wreathe it round his head like chaplets of honor, and, far from hiding, tell all out, as he drew near like a prince, instead of a conscience-stricken coward. No violence nor fraud lay within; not a field could cry against Job, nor its furrows weep together, as the ground did where Abel fell, as many a plot has since testified against kings and queens, down to the basest of men throughout this world's sad history. But he asks that, if any wrong had sullied his life, even in such transactions as these, thorns and darnel might curse his toils, instead of the wheat or barley he had sown.

The friends were wholly wrong, unjustifiable, and uncharitable; what Job says was true, but he knows not yet all the truth about himself, as none could of God, till He came who is the Truth, and proved it in grace to the uttermost in His cross. But Job was occupied and satisfied with himself. From this God would deliver him, and bless him then more than ever. No flesh shall glory in His presence; and this Job must learn to glory only in Him. We shall see in the sequel how he was taught it, humbly and graciously. But Job ended his words before it was even begun.

Notes on Job 32-33

A new, and hitherto unnoticed, person joins the great debate, now that even Job is silent. It is not that he only just enters the scene, for he soon gives the fullest proof that one present had listened more attentively to all that had been urged, and very especially to his arguments who had stopped the mouths of those that misjudged him. He is careful to apologize for his own intervention, and would evidently have preferred to listen, if any one older than himself had produced matter relevant to the question, and adequate to expose the not infrequent occasions in which the sufferer had been provoked into impropriety. There is no lack of moral courage or of force in dealing with Job's actual words and line of thought. Whilst he avoids insinuating evil of which none knew, he does not spare where there was too high a thought of self, or a lack of reverence toward God, in one under His correcting hand. He has juster thoughts as to the divine discipline of the soul than any one of the interlocutors, not excepting Job himself, who had not yet been brought down to the true place of nothingness before God. The introduction and first discourse of Elihu go down to the end of chapter 33.

Chapter 32.

And these three men ceased answering Job, because he [was] righteous in his own eyes. And the anger of Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Barn, burned: against Job his anger burned, because of his justifying himself rather than God; and against his three friends his anger burned, because they found no answer, yet condemned Job. And Elihu had waited for Job in words [that is, till Job had spoken], because they [were] older than he in days; and Elihu saw that [there was] no answer in the mouth of the three men, and his anger burned. And Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said,

I [am] young in days, and ye [are] aged:

Therefore I did shrink,

And feared to show you mine opinion.

I said, Let days speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom.

Surely the spirit [it is] in mortal man,

And the breath of Shaddai giveth them wit.

Not the great [in years] are wise,

Nor do the aged understand judgment.

Therefore I say, Hearken to me;

I will declare my knowledge, even I,

Lo! I have waited for your words,

I gave ear to your reasons,

Until ye might search out replies,

And to you I gave attention;

And, behold, there is none that refuteth Job,

That among you answereth his sayings,

Lest ye should say, We have found wisdom.

God shall drive him away, not man.

But at me he directed no word,

And with your words I answer him not.

They broke down, they answer not again,

Words are fled away from them;

And I waited, but they did not speak,

For they ceased, they answered no more.

I also will answer my part,

I also will declare mine opinion.

For I am full of words;

The spirit of my inwards constraineth me.

Behold, my inwards [are] like wine not opened,

Like fresh wine-skins it is working.

I will speak, that I may be refreshed,

I will open my lips, and answer.

Let me not, I pray you, accept any one's face.

Neither to man will I give flattering titles.

For I know not to give flattering titles;

[Else] my Maker would soon take me away.

Chapter 33.

Notwithstanding, Job I pray thee, hear my speech,

And hearken to my every word.

Behold, I pray thee, I opened my mouth,

My tongue speaketh in my palate.

My words [shall be] the uprightness of my heart,

And my knowledge shall my lips utter purely.

The Spirit of God hath made me,

And the breath of Shaddai gave me life.

If thou canst, answer me;

Draw up before me, take thy stand.

Lo! I am God's, as thou;

Out of clay was I also formed.

Behold, my terror will not affright thee,

And my hand shall not be heavy on then.

Surely thou hast said in mine ears,

And I heard the voice of the words:

I am pure, without transgression,

I [am] clean, and have no iniquity:

Lo! He findeth hostilities against me,

He counteth me as His enemy;

He putteth my feet into the stocks;

He watcheth all my ways.

Behold, in this thou art not right, I answer thee;

For God [Eloah] is greater than a mortal.

Why hast thou contended against Him?

For He answereth not of all His matters.

When God [El] speaketh once, and twice—

[Man] regardeth it not—

In a dream, in a vision of the night,

When deep sleep falleth on mortals,

In slumberings on the bed;

Then He openeth the ear of mortals,

And sealeth up their instruction,

To withdraw man [from] doing;

And pride from man he concealeth.

He keepeth back his soul from corruption,

And his life from passing away by the dart.

He is also chastised with pains on his bed,

And the strife of his bones [is] lasting.

And his life loatheth bread,

And his soul meat of desire.

His flesh wasteth out of sight,

And his bones that were not seen stand out,

And his soul draweth near to corruption,

And his life to the destroyers.

If there be by him a messenger,

An interpreter, one of a thousand,

To declare To man His uprightness;

And He is gracious to him, and saith,

Deliver him from going down to corruption:

I have found a ransom.

His flesh [is] fresher than childhood,

He returneth to the days of his youth.

He supplicateth [Eloah] God,

And He accepteth him.

And he shall see His face with rejoicing,

And He requiteth to mortal man His righteousness.

He singeth before mortals, and saith,

I sinned and perverted right, and it satisfied me not.

He ransomed my soul from passing to corruption,

And my life looketh on the light.

Lo! all these worketh God [El] twice, thrice, with man,

To bring back his soul from corruption,

That be may be enlightened with the light of life.

Attend, O Job, hearken to me;

Be silent, and I shall speak.

If thou hast words, answer me—

Speak, for I have a desire to justify thee.

If not, hearken thou unto me;

Keep silence, and I will teach thee wisdom.

Jerome, or the pseudo-Jerome (Opera, ed. Vail. iii., App. 895 et seqq.), seems to have led the way in attacking the new speaker, as others followed, including the venerable Bede, who confounded him with Balaam; a Jewish writer dared to count him Satan in disguise; whilst too many to name, Protestants and Catholics, down to our own time, held a view of him only less disparaging. But those who weigh far more in godliness and discernment see in him one who brings a juster and more comprehensive appraisal of Job and his friends, and the first real insight, displayed in the book, of the place and aim of discipline through suffering.

The opening verses of chapter 32 show the deep emotion and displeasure of Elihu at the unsatisfactory issue of the discussion, unprofitable to man, and not to the honor of God; whereas, comparatively young as he was, he could not but feel a burning desire for the reproof of what was rash and wrong on man's part, and for the vindication of God's character and glory. But if Elihu feels reluctantly forced to speak in presence of men from whom he would gladly have learned, if they could have taught, the mind of God, he is careful to stand only for what comes from God. He is taught, as never before, how spiritual wisdom is of God's spirit, not of man's age. It is the very reverse of self-confidence or vain-glory, though out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaks.

On what other ground, could a younger speak, and speak in terms corrective of all who had gone before? His silence, sustained till even Job had no more to say, broken when Job, no less than his friends, could not but feel that the riddle was as yet unexplained, is the strongest proof how little he deserves censure as bold, forward, officious, conceited, arrogant, boastful, and I know not what more; while the scope of his remarks exposes the folly of those philosophizing dreamers who brand as an aimless and unanswered talker left in the shade that he merited. One can only reply that all men have not faith, and that such as thus judge of scripture manifest a mind void of discernment, and scarce anywhere more than in a verdict like this on Elihu. He certainly sets in the most vivid light the total failure of those who had condemned Job without confuting him, and not without insinuations which condemned themselves. He feels that, as being unassailed by the sufferer, and in no way sharing their uncharitableness, he is in a position to lay bare not a little that was uncomely and presumptuous. He was amazed at the total rout of the friends, when he could not but own how much was in his heart claiming utterance irrepressibly, without respect of

persons, and in the fear of God.

But he addresses himself, above all, to Job, to whom he was about to speak with all possible candor. He did not set himself up unbecomingly, speaking of what he could not know, but as man to man, wholly dependent on God. He did not judge, but would fain appeal to him, and plead with him, as belonging to God, just like himself, and as he, a fellow-creature made of clay, so that awe had no place, but weight of truth only. (Compare chap. 13:21.) For this already had Job expressed the longing desire, even though he had too boldly declared his readiness to litigate with Him who is over all. In disputing God's dealings with him, in asserting his own purity, without aught amiss, in imputing ungracious, capricious, arbitrary ways to God, Job had evidently put himself in the wrong. It is enough to answer that God is greater than weak man, and is necessarily sovereign, giving none account of His matters. Yet He speaks to man, slow to hear His voice, in dreams and visions of the night, to open the ear, and seal instruction, so as to restrain man from activity and pride: also by chastenings of bodily sickness and pain, for the awakening of the soul, when all else becomes distasteful. But most fully does He use a messenger, as interpreting his mind, however rarely found, to let man see his uprightness, as well as how gracious He is, in delivering from what is incomparably worse, by virtue of what He had ever before Him (Rom. 3:25), when the guilty one, now won to God, returns to more than wonted health, enjoys lowly, happy intercourse with Him, and gives a testimony, humbling but bright, to his fellows of the undeserved mercy that delivers.

Such are the ways frequent with God, by dreams, chastenings, and messengers, to arouse man to a due sense of himself before God, and thereby rescue him from corruption, that he may be enlightened with the light of life. It is intelligible that men, no matter how erudite or superstitions, who knew not the gospel nor even the Spirit's application of the law to their own condition, should overlook the value of this wonderful appeal from Elihu, himself doing the part of the interpreter with Job, the appeal of a man's heart purified by faith to unfeigned love, and filled with the sense of God's goodness, rich in resources to arrest the self-willed madness of the race. The everlasting gospel had its witness in Elihu, as surely as Noah preached righteousness to the ungodly antediluvians, whose judgment of old was not idle, nor did their destruction slumber. Mark the personal earnestness of the man, equally ready to listen as to speak, if by any means the soul should be won to a better appreciation of God, and therefore importunate in repeated calls, which weary all who share not the like love of souls for the Lord's sake. He was only the truer, and more effective also, because he never dreams of sparing sin, even in word or thought, and was quick to feel for His honor who is the spring of all that is good. Not one of the disputants shows such a reckoning on grace in God as this young and valiant champion of the truth.

Notes on Job 34

The second discourse of Elihu has for its scope to prove that the divine equity in government is in no way to be doubted, and that Job, who did venture to impeach it, is himself deserving of grave censure, as giving countenance, in thought and word, to the evil and scornful. God, sovereign in Himself, cannot err in His ways, but is necessarily righteous. So Abraham reasoned in Gen. 18:25; so all men, unless their mind and conscience be defiled. Impossible to conceive of injustice in the Almighty. His servants may fail—never the Fountain of all good. And if it be in the highest degree unseemly to tax a king with worthlessness, how much more to impute wrong to Him who is infinitely above all kings, and knows not the rich before the poor, having made both alike! Therefore falls under the invisible hand of God the mighty ruler whose guilt was marked of Him, spite of the darkness that enveloped it, now in the night, now openly, so as to warn others, as well as to dell with himself, and to relieve the oppressed. Submission of heart is, then, the only due feeling for man, that he may be taught more, as becomes one conscious of his faults, and turning from them in the fear of God. And what can be less consistent than, like Job, to insinuate unrighteousness in God, and withal appeal to His decision and desire his intervention? Elihu (who is sure of the sympathy of intelligent men) could not wish Job relieved, but rather tried to the uttermost for thus adding rebellion to his sin, and multiplying his words, not only among them, but at God.

And Elihu answered and said,

Hear, ye wise men, my words,

And ye men of knowledge give ear to me.

For the ear trieth words, and the palate tasteth food.

Let us choose for ourselves judgment,

Lot us know among ourselves what [is] good.

For Job hath said, I am righteous,

And God [El] hath turned aside my right:

Against my right I shall lie.

My wound [is] mortal, without transgression.

Who [is] a man like Job?

He drinketh mockery like water,

And goeth in company with workers of iniquity,

So as to go with men of wickedness.

For he hath said, It profiteth not a man

That he should delight himself with God.

Therefore, hear me, ye men of heart;

Far be it from God to do wickedness,

And [from] Shaddai to do perverseness.

For the work of man he reporteth to him,

And causeth each to find according to his way.

Yea, verily, God doth not act wickedly,

And Shaddai doth not pervert the right.

Who committed to Him the earth?

And who established the whole world?

If He should set His heart on Himself—

Gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,

All flesh would expire together,

And man return to dust.

And if [thou hast] understanding, hear this,

Give ear to the voice of my words.

Yea, doth a hater of right govern?

And wilt thou condemn the mighty just One?

Shall one to a king say, Belial; to princes, Wicked?

Who accepteth not the person of princes,

Nor hath known the rich before the poor?

For the work of His hands [are] they all.

In a moment they die; oven at midnight

Is a people shaken, and passeth away,

And the mighty are removed without hand.

For His eyes [are] on the ways of a man,

And He seeth all his steps.

There is no darkness nor death-shade,

Where the workers of iniquity may hide.

For He doth not regard man more,

That he should go to God in judgment;

He breaketh the mighty without inquiry,

And He setteth up others in their stead.

Therefore He knoweth their works,

And overthroweth them in the night, and they are bruised.

As wicked did He strike them publicly,

Who purposely turned aside from after Him,

And attended not to any of His ways,

So that the cry of the poor should come to Him,

And the cry of the oppressed He heareth.

And He giveth rest, and who can disturb?

And hideth His face, and who beholdeth it?

Whether as to a nation or to a man, the same,

That a corrupt man reign not,

Nor snares [be] to the people.

For had man [but] said to God,

I have suffered, I will not offend:

Things beyond [what] I see teach me:

I have done iniquity—I will not do it again.

According to thy judgment shall He requite him?

Nay, but thou hast rejected,

Thou hast chosen, and not I.

And what thou knowest, speak.

Let men of heart tell me,

And let a wise man hear me:

Job hath not spoken with knowledge,

And his words [were] not with wisdom.

Would that Job were proved to the uttermost,

Because of replies like men of iniquity.

For he addeth to his sin rebellion,

In the midst of us he mocketh [lit. clappeth],

And multiplieth his words against God.

Thus does Elihu vindicate God and His ways with man, which the three elders had so painfully misconstrued, not only to their own loss and the increased anguish of the sufferer, but to the dishonor of Him whom they knew too little to represent aright. Elihu would have his words subjected to the keenest discrimination. Truth has nothing to fear from this, if men listen with conscience toward God, not with the misjudged will which refuses all that lowers man, as all truth cannot but do, for he is fallen. But the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom, as surely as fools despise wisdom and instruction. Therefore does he call men of wisdom and knowledge to hearken. There is an inner man no less than an outer, and he cannot escape responsibility. Judgment surely becomes, and to know what is good in an evil world.

At once Elihu seizes on Job's self-justification, as if God could set aside the right, or treat with unfairness. This he brands as worthy of a scorner, and expresses the individual pain with which he had heard Job's heroic strain, drinking not indeed iniquity like water, as Eliphaz had harshly said, but a taunting style, or mockery, which really tended to the encouragement of evil-doers. And was it comely to say that man is not profited from having pleasure with God? Elihu scouts the thought of iniquity with God, the Judge of all; and who or what was man to sit in judgment on the Almighty? Was it he, or who, that put Him in charge of the earth? And who founded the universe? Creation owes its being and conservation to His disinterested goodness, who had only to absorb His care on Himself, gathering up His all-quickening Spirit, and all flesh would breathe its last, and man, the chief of all here below, return to dust.

Besides government has its rights, and reverence is due to those in power and dignity. Therefore be appeals to his understanding whether a hater of right governed, and he condemned the mighty Just One If no man could address a king or prince with a disrespectful word, what was it to speak unworthily of Him who, infinitely higher than the highest has no respect of persons, nor knows the rich before the poor, all being the work of His bands? Death comes in a moment; and the night is half spent when a people is shaken and pass away, and the mighty are removed, and not by hand. For all things are naked and open to His eyes with whom we have to do, the ways of a man and all his steps. Nor is there darkness or death-shade dense enough to hide the workers of iniquity; neither needs He to look a second time on a man ere going to God in judgment, but is entitled, without further scrutiny, to break the mighty, and to set up others in their room. He takes cognizance of their deeds, and overturns in a night, and they are crushed, as wicked, struck openly before others, for deliberate slight of Him and His ways, and in vindication of the poor and oppressed who cried to Him. So truly sovereign is He, and withal just and merciful: nation or man makes no difference, He being above both, lest a corrupt man reign, and the people be ensnared.

Man—Job—should have rather humbled himself to God, bowing to His hand and owning his fault, with desire to be taught, and to sin no more. Was God to recompense according to Job's mind? It

was he that repudiated, and be that chose, not Elihu. It was for Job, then, to speak what he knew. Elihu turns to men of discretion, that they may say whether such language was wise, or according to knowledge. He wished him not afflicted, but proved thoroughly, because of answers meet for or countenancing the wicked. For this was to add presumption in divine things, or a breaking away from authority, and this not without a sense of exultation over the rest, in a multitude of words to God, wherein there lacked not sin.

Notes on Job 35

It is not only unkind insinuation which has danger for the heart. There is need of vigilance and self-judgment. And we do well, always and in everything, above all to vindicate God, who needs nothing from us, and can in no way be a debtor to us, yet deigns to occupy Himself with us in infinitely condescending mercy and compassion. Here Job had failed, not under the blows which fell on him so heavily and fast, but when stung by the evil surmisings of men who knew incomparably less, of God than he, and as they could not help the sufferer to the secret none of them understood, so they hindered and provoked him by the cruel misunderstanding they expressed. Elihu lets him know plainly that he thought too much of himself, and forgot the majesty of God. One should not use complaints which imply failure in His moral government, who is infallibly right, and beyond measure good. None should indulge in the dream of blamelessness before God. The heavens are high above man; but God is high above the heavens, and if man will talk of himself or his doings, what can all this be to God, who is above all man's measures? And if He seem to disregard the cry of the oppressed, He has good reason, and they fail to ask aright; else their lamentations would soon change to songs of thankful praise in the night. To groan is not enough, as the brute may; it is to God that the tried should cry. God remains God, and is the judge of all, however slow to punish, as He surely will in His day. Feebleness in giving God credit for what He is spite of appearances, Elihu feels, had betrayed Job into no little impropriety of speech.

And Elihu answered and said,

Hast thou counted this for judgment,

[That] thou hast said, I am more right than God?

For thou askest what is the gain to thee,

What profit shall I have more than by my sin?

I will answer thee words, and with thee thy friends.

Look at the heavens, and see,

And behold the clouds—they are higher than thee.

If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him?

Thy transgressions are multiplied, what doest thou to Him?

If thou art righteous, what givest thou to Him?

Or what receiveth He from thy hand?

Thy wickedness [is] to man like thyself,

And thy righteousness to a son of man.

Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out,

They cry because of the arm of the mighty.

But no man saith, Where [is] God my maker,

That giveth songs in the night,

That teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,

And maketh us wiser than the fowls of the heavens?

There they cry, but He answereth not,

Because of the haughtiness of the wicked.

Surely God doth not hear vanity,

And the Almighty beholdeth it not.

Though thou say thou seest Him not,

Judgment [is] before Him, and wait thou on Him.

And now, because His anger hath not punished aught,

Doth He not very much regard insolence?

Therefore Job openeth his mouth to vanity,

He multiplieth words without knowledge.

Elihu did not tax Job with anything so presumptuous as a direct assertion of his own superior righteousness to God's. But to impeach His ways because of conscious integrity under severe trial, to complain of His dealings as hard toward oneself, or as indifferent to others, what is this if not a virtual censure of His government, and implied preference of one's own thoughts? To judge from self, or anything here, to God, now especially that sin is come into the world, with all its bitter consequences and darkening influences, is always false ground; and Job needed to learn, as his friends yet more and with less excuse, that it is alone wise, becoming, and even safe to reason from Him and His revelation of Himself to ourselves or anything else. This Elihu could not do as those who have seen Jesus and the Father in Him, the Son, and that Son a man on earth. But he does what he could under God's teaching, and from the heavens above man he points to His majesty above all. Man's sin is serious for himself, and may be so for his fellows; but what difference does it make for God? Not all the transgressors that dare most can darken a ray of His glory, though He may turn all, as He will, to exalt as well as manifest what He is. And so with the righteousness of man: what does it confer on God? or what does He receive at man's hand? God is the unchanging One, always good, never unrighteous: it is man, the human race, which is affected by one's righteousness or iniquity.

Doubtless, in such a world as this, there never lacks an oppressor, and oppression abounds, and the oppressed cry out and wail because of the violence of the mighty. Is it that God does not hear or feel? Not so, but that even human anguish fails to lead to God. As the prophet, long after,

complained of the pride and silliness of stricken Israel: “They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.” (Hos. 7:14.) So of men generally Elihu declares that none said, Where is Eloah my maker, who can change all and deliver at the worst extremity, thus giving songs in the night, teaching us more than the beasts of the field, and making us wiser than the birds of the heavens? Now it is this very God-consciousness which distinguishes man from every other animal of earth or air; not the mind, or νο■ς, as the heathen and others thought, but the highest part of the inner man. It is the spirit which, capable as it is of enjoying God, constitutes the wretchedness of the lost man, as it is therein by will he is God's enemy. Hence their reluctance to tell their sorrows to the one effectual source of help, and His apparent indifference, while all is open before Him, and known forever. There are haughty as well as wicked; there are thoughtless of God who suffer from man. His eyes, His ears, are open to those who appeal, not to vain cries which have no more spiritual, or perhaps even moral, feeling than the brutes that perish. Shaddai regards not, though all power be His to protect and deliver. But He will interpose, though men believe not, and saints are downcast, if not destroyed. Judgment is before Him. It is for the believer to wait on and for Him. Insolence of speech is none the less hateful because He not yet punishes. Job, therefore, had spoken to no purpose, and his words were multiplied without knowledge. It was sorrowful so to speak, but the truth.

Chapter 103

Notes on Job 36-37

We have next the final discourse of Elihu, in which he proceeds to clench his justification of God's ways against Job, who had virtually impeached them. He no longer deals with the human side, but rises up to God's own character, and His moral government of men, wherein mercy rejoices against judgment. But there is, withal, that distinct reference to His glory in creation and providence which is characteristic of the Old Testament generally, whether law or prophets, yet with ample and definite application ethically; an admirable transition to the interposition of Jehovah Himself, which immediately follows:

And Elihu added, and said,

Wait for me a little, and I will show thee;

For [there are] yet words for God.

I will fetch my knowledge from afar,

And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

For truly my words [shall] not [be] falsehood:

One upright in knowledge [is] with thee.

Lo! God is great, and despiseth not,

Great in strength—in heart.

He letteth not the ungodly live,

And giveth the afflicted their right.

He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous,

And with kings on the throne, yea, He establisheth them forever,

And they are exalted.

And if, bound in fetters, they be held with cords of affliction,

Then He showeth them their work,

And their transgressions that they have been mighty—

And He openeth their ear to instruction,

And saith to them, that they turn back from vanity,

If they hear and serve, they end their days in good,

And their years in pleasantness.

But if they hear not, their soul dieth [or like] the dust,

And expireth in want of knowledge.

And the impious in heart lay up wrath,

They cry not when He bindeth them.

Their soul dieth like that of youths,

And their life among the polluted.

He delivereth the afflicted by His affliction,

And He uncovereth their ear by trouble.

And there, too, He lureth out of the jaws of distress,

A wide place, on the site of which [is] no straitness,

And the setting of thy table fullness of fatness.

But hast thou filled up the judgment of the wicked?

Judgment and justice will take hold.

For beware, lest wrath stir thee against the blow,

And a great ransom turn not the scale in thy favor.

Will He value thy wealth? Not gold, nor all the powers of might.

Desire not the might, the going up of nations on the spot.

Take heed—look not to sin,

So that thou wouldest choose this rather than affliction.

Lo! God exalteth by His power:

Who is a teacher like Him?

Who hath assigned to Him His way?

And who hath said, Thou doest wrong?

Remember that thou magnify His work,

Which mortals behold; all men looked on it;

Mortal man looketh attentively from afar.

Lo! God [is] great—we know not;

As for the number of His years, [there is] no searching.

When He draineth off the drops of water,

They condense into rain in place of its mist,

So that clouds drop, they distil copiously on man.

Yea, doth one understand the spreading of the cloud?

The noises of His tabernacle?

Lo! He hath spread over it His light,

And hath covered the depths [or roots] of the sea.

For by them He judgeth the nations;

He giveth, food in abundance.

On both hands He covereth lightning,

And giveth it a charge in striking.

The noise of it announceth concerning Him,

Store of wrath against perversity.

Chapter 37.

Yea, at this my heart trembleth,

And it standeth up from out of its place.

Hear, O hear, the roar of His voice,

And the rumbling that goeth forth out of His mouth.

Under the whole heaven He directeth it,

And His light into the borders of the earth.

After it roareth a voice,

He thundereth with the voice of His majesty,

And restraineth them not when His voice is heard.

God thundereth marvelously with His voice,

Doing great things which we know not.

For to the snow He saith, Fall to the earth,

And to the small rain, and to the rains of His strength.

The hand of every man He sealeth up,

That all mortals of His work may come to knowledge.

And the wild beast goeth into lair,

And continueth in his abodes.

Out of its chamber cometh the hurricane,

And cold out of scatterings.

From the breath of God frost is given,

And the breadth of the waters is compressed.

And He loadeth with moisture the cloud,

He scattereth the cloud of His light,

Round about it turneth itself by His counsels,

That they may do all for which He commandeth them

On the face of the world—earth.

Whether for a scourge, or for His earth or land,

Or for mercy, He causeth it to come.

Hear this, O Job; stand and consider the wonders of God.

Knowest thou how God charged them,

And He maketh the lightning of His cloud to flash?

Knowest thou the balancings of a cloud,

The marvels of Him that is perfect in knowledge,

Thou, whose garments are warm,

When the earth becomes still from the south?

Dost thou with Him spread out the sky,

Firm as a molten mirror?

Teach us what we shall say to Him?

We cannot set forth because of darkness.

Shall it be told Him that I would speak?

Did he say that he would be destroyed?

And now indeed one seeth not the light

Which shineth brightly in the skies;

But a wind passeth by, and cleareth them away.

From the north cometh forth gold [that is, golden brightness]:

With God [is] terrible splendor.

The Almighty! we do not find Him out; great in power and judgment,

And great in righteousness; He will not give answer.

Therefore men fear Him: He looketh not on all the wise of heart.

Elihu had yet somewhat to say on behalf of the impugned dealings of God, who is not one-sided, like man, always apt to fail in power if benevolent, if mighty in compassionate goodness. In God, not only is each reality perfect, but so is the whole, if we may so speak of the Infinite. If His greatness be beyond measure, so is His condescending mercy, and His heart, or understanding, is as vast as His power. The Lord, in the New Testament, asserts, to us incessantly, the minutest care of His Father's, while all things serve His will. Hence the assurance to the soul that knows Him, that, in the long-run, the godly shall not be permitted to wither, nor the afflicted be denied their right. But as Job had already sinned most truly against his friends, it is not yet the day for the exercise and display of his earthly righteousness in. His kingdom, and hence piety suffers, and iniquity of every sort, especially toward God, may flourish in high places. He speaks of the righteous, as under His eye, in the highest honor, but presently as bound with fetters of humiliating sorrow, which God, nevertheless, uses for good, in showing them their ways of pride, opening their ears to discipline, and turning them back from the evil which they had failed to judge. Obedience is the path of good and joy; heedlessness, of ruin in every way. They do always err in their heart; they have not known His ways. Corruption, or hypocrisy, and its course and end, are graphically set forth; as is the patient goodness of God in using affliction for the blessing of him who is taught by it. Not that He has pleasure in inflicting sorrow, but contrariwise, when the lesson is learned, brings out the sufferer into a large place, where is no straitness, but all abundance. Still wrong is wrong in whomsoever, and he that does it, though righteous in the main, must bear his own burden, and justly, for nowhere is it worse than in one who has so far forgotten God, after, it may be, long serving Him.

Job, therefore, had reason for care, lest his excited feeling might stir him up against the blow, and a worse thing befall him, where all resources fail, and the night, wherein none can work, is no comfort. It is dangerous, but very possible, to choose what is worse than affliction, or because of it. Elihu presses how God works loftily by His power, as he challenges anyone to say, Who is a Master like Him? Who hath given Him a charge concerning His way? or who has ever said, Thou hast acted unjustly? It wore better to reflect that His work should be magnified which men have beheld, or celebrated, all looking at it with amazement, mortals gazing at it from afar.

Again, does he assert that God is great, or exalted, and to us incomprehensible, as the number of His years cannot be searched out. If the phenomena are so admirable, what the wisdom, power, and goodness that devised and formed all, with the most evident view to the earth, and man on it, unto His own glory! What skill and care in this production of every drop of water filtered into rain, in or with His mist What bountiful provision, as the high clouds drop down, and distil it on the multitudes of men! Then what outspreadings of the clouds, and what the tumult of His tabernacle! Not that there is any lack of light which He spreads over it, whilst He wraps up in darkness the roots of the sea. By these (the clouds and lightning) He judges nations, whilst He gives food in abundance; and most graphic is the image of God covering His hands with light, while He

commands it, the one that strives against Him, the noise of the storm telling of Him, a store of wrath against iniquity, or, as others understood, the very cattle telling of the rising tempest.

There is every reason to connect, not to sever, chapter 37. “Yea, also, at this my heart trembleth, and is moved out of its place.” And what can be finer than the description that follows of the thunder and lightning, so vivid, that not a few conceive that Elihu sees a storm in progress, with its attendant roar and rumble, followed by the fall of snow or rain, in varying measures? What can man do, in presence of God's awful voice, but seek to learn? Even the wild beast retires to covert, and keeps to his abodes, while the whirlwind comes out of its chamber, and out of the north the cold. But God's breath, too, works marvelous change. Out of it is given ice, and the broad waters are compressed; and He loads the cloud, too, with moisture, and scatters the clouds of His light. Turn about as it may, it none the less executes what He commands it on the face of the world of the earth. Whether it be as a chastising rod, if this be destined for His earth, or for kindness, it is God's causing it to come.

Who and what was Job, then, to arraign His ways? It were better to weigh all, stand still, and consider His wonders. Granted, that there is such a thing as law in the universe; but did Job know in whom to speak of them now, how God imposed it on the atmosphere, and caused the light of His cloud to shine? Did he know aught about the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge, and gives the earth rest [and so sultriness] from the south wind, so that all is changed to scorching heat? Man can feel, but can he explain? Had Job, with God, spread out the skies, strong as a molten mirror If so, he could inform us what we should say to Him: otherwise we have no ability to sot aught in order because of darkness. Shall it be told him that I would speak? or did he say that he would be swallowed up? as Elihu insinuated for his presumption. Yet now man sees not the light which glances brightly in the skies. But a wind passes, and clears them. From the north comes the golden light: as around Eloah is terrible majesty. Shaddai, whom we cannot find out, excellent in power and in justice, and abounding in righteousness, will not oppress. Therefore men fear Him, as He regards not those that are wise in their own conceit.

Chapter 104

Notes on Job 38:1-33

JEHOVAH'S INTERVENTION.

IN a material age which questions the personality of Him who created and governs, who saves and will judge, one cannot wonder that it seems wholly incredible that He should appear and speak. Yet the great facts which abide before all eyes, and attest to every upright mind and conscience the only writings worthy to be considered divine revelations, bear witness to the same great truth, only on a larger scale. For it is impossible adequately to account for either the law or the gospel, either Old Testament or New, apart from the intervention of God. How God manifested His voice at this time is no more set out in detail here than elsewhere, save that He is said to have answered Job out of the storm or whirlwind. The fact is distinctly revealed, and this is enough for faith. It was what Job had ardently longed for, though dreading it, not because his conscience was bad, but through not yet knowing himself in His presence, and the end of the Lord that He is exceedingly pitiful and of tender mercy. The moral profit of such an intervention is beyond man's estimate.

And Jehovah answered Job out of the storm and said,

Who [is] this darkening counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up now thy loins like a man, and I will ask thee, and make me know.

Where wast thou when I founded the earth?

Declare if thou hast understanding.

Who fixed its measure that thou shouldest know,

Or who stretched the line upon it?

Whereon are its sockets sunken,

Or who laid down its corner-stone,

When the morning stars sang together,

And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

And [who] shut up the sea with doors,

When it burst forth—came out of the womb,

When I made the cloud its garment,

And thick darkness its swaddling-band,

And broke for it my law, and set bars and doors,

And said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther,

And here let one set against the pride of thy waves?

Hast thou, from thy days, commanded the mornings,

Made the dawn to know its place,

To take hold of the wings of the earth,

That the wicked might be shaken out of it,

That it may change like signet-clay,

And things stand forth like a garment,

And from the wicked their light is withheld,

And the uplifted arm is broken?

Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea,

And walked about the secret of the deep?

Have the gates of death been disclosed to thee?

And seest thou the gates of the shadow of death?

Hast thou strictly attended to the breadths of the earth?

Declare if thou knowest the whole of it.

What [is] the way the light dwelleth,

And darkness, where [is] its place,

That thou mightest bring it to its bound,

And that thou mightest know the path [to] its house?

Thou knowest! for thou wast then born,

And the number of thy days [is] great.

Hast thou entered into the storehouses of the snow,

Or hast thou seen the storehouses of the hail,

Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,

Against the day of battle and war?

Where is the way the light is distributed,

The east wind is dispersed over the earth?

Who divideth watercourses for the torrents,

Or a way for the lightning of thunder,

To cause it to rain on the land [where is] no man.

The wilderness wherein [is] no man,

To satisfy the desolate and waste,

And to make the place of the green herb to sprout?

Hath the rain a father? or who begetteth the drops of dew?

Out of whose womb cometh the ice?

And the frost of heaven, who bringeth it forth?

The waters hide themselves like stone

And the face of the deep cleaveth together.

Canst thou bind the bands of the Pleiades,

Or unloose the traces of Orion?

Canst thou bring forth the Zodiac in his season,

And as for Arcturus with its young, guide them?

Knowest thou the laws of heaven?

Canst thou set its dominion over the earth?

Canst thou apply thy voice to the cloud,

And abundance of water shall cover thee?

Canst thou send forth lightnings, and they shall go

And say to thee, Here we [are]!

Who put wisdom in the inward parts?

Or who gave understanding to the perception?

Who regulateth the clouds by wisdom,

Or who inclineth the pitchers of heaven,

When the dust is poured into hardness,

And the clods are compacted together?

Thus magnificently does Jehovah challenge Job to that conference he had yearned after. But where is the here now? Why silent before Him to whose seat he was so prompt to go? Doughty words he had uttered in abundance when he silenced his three friends. But now he must learn his own measure from Jehovah and confess it to Him, if the words of Elihu still left him silent, and his

own mouth failed as yet to vindicate the unfailing ways of God with His people.

The first thing done is to overwhelm him, who pretended to sit in judgment on God's moral ways, with the sense of his utter ignorance and powerlessness in the least things, of divine energy, even in the creation. Where was Job when Jehovah founded the earth? What knew he of its measure fixed, or the line stretched on it, any more than of its deep sunken bases, or its corner-stone? And where when He set limits to the sea? He whose understanding stood baffled at such a question was not in a position to judge of His deep things. Angels were there indeed to shout for joy when the sea was born and swaddled in the clouds and thick darkness; but, while its wild lawlessness strove to rise up against the divine restraint, bars and doors were set and the irrevocable sentence fixed, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther; and here be the pride of thy waves staid. Where was Job in all this? Yet was it but a little and comparatively low part of the Creator's power and wisdom. For what of the sky, of the dawn? Had Job, since the beginning of his days, commanded the morning, or caused the day-spring to disclose the wicked in their ways, setting all out plainly as the impression of a seal, or the embroidered figures of a robe, so that evil had no longer its congenial darkness, and the arm was arrested in the very act of striking? Had Job so much as visited the fountains of the sea, and gone to explore the secret of the great deep? Had the gates of death been revealed to him, or those realms of darkness impenetrable to mortal eye? Or even to the breadth of the earth, could he say that he had bent his attention, or assert that he knew it all? Where the way to light's dwelling, and where the place of darkness, that he might undertake their direction at their source? Of course Job must know, whose immense space of life took in their creation! And then the magazines of snow and hail, had he entered and seen their vast stores reserved by Jehovah for the time of trouble when the day of battle rages for men that war? And where the way whence light or the lightning is parted, and the east wind is driven over the earth? Who divided the courses of the torrents from above, or the path of the thunder flash, followed on the one hand by rain, where man is pot, but all is desolate and Waste, and on. the other to swell vegetation where it is already? And what could Job say of the rain or the process of dew, of ice or of hoar-frost? What part did he play in these arrangements of God for the supply or the check of moisture here below? And what force could he exert on the heavenly bodies? Could he bind the Pleiades or loose the traces of Orion? Could he lead forth Mazzaroth in its times, or guide the Bear and its sons? What did Job know of the laws of heaven? and could he arrange their dominion over the earth? Could he call aloud to the clouds to cover him with abundance of waters? Could he commission the lightnings to stand submissive at his summons? Yet how small a part is all this of God's ways, whose it is to put wisdom within and to give understanding to the spirit, who numbers the clouds and inclines (or stays) the pitchers of heaven, when the dust is dissolved, and the clods are compacted together!

Chapter 105

Notes on Job 38-39

From the wonders of inanimate creation above, beneath, and around, Jehovah now turns to the phenomena of the animal kingdom. The lion, the raven, the wild goat or ibex, the wild ass, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the eagle successively appear, to convince of ignorance and powerlessness him who ventures to sit in judgment on God's doings.

Dost thou hunt prey for the lioness,

And fill the desire of the young lions,

When they couch in dens—abide in the covert in ambush?

Who provideth for the raven his meat,

When his young cry to God [El]—wander without food?

Knowest thou the time when the wild goats bear?

Watchest thou over the calving of the hinds?

Numberest thou the months that they fulfill?

And knowest then the time of their bearing?

They bow themselves, they bring forth their young,

They cast away their pangs.

Their young fatten, grow up in the desert,

They go forth, and return to them no more!

Who sent forth the wild ass free,

And who loosed the bands of the fleeing one?

Whose house I made the desert, and his abode the salt land.

He laugheth at the tumult of the city,

The cries of the driver he heareth not,

The range of mountains [is] his pasture,

And he seeketh after every green thing.

Will the wild ox choose to serve thee?

Will he pass the night over thy crib?

Dost thou bind the wild ox in the furrow of his cord?

Doth he harrow the valleys after thee?

Wilt thou trust him because his strength [is] great?

And wilt thou leave unto him thy labor?

Dost thou trust him that he will bring back thy seed,

And gather up thy threshing-floor?

The wing of the ostrich waveth joyously:

Is it the pinion and plumage of the, stork?

For she leaveth on the earth her eggs,

And warmeth [them] on the dust,

And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,

And that the wild beast may trample them.

She (lit. he) is hard on her young [as if] not for

her;

Without fear her labor is in vain;

For God hath caused her to forget wisdom,

And hath not given her a portion in understanding;

What time she lifteth herself up on high,

She laugheth at the horse, and at his rider.

Dost thou give to the horse might?

Dost thou clothe his neck with quivering mane?

Dost thou make him leap like the, locust?

The majesty of his snorting is terrible.

They paw in the valley, and he exulteth in strength;

He goeth forth to meet the armor.

He laugheth at fear, and trembleth not,

Nor turneth back from the face of the sword.

Against him rattleth the quiver, the blade of spear and lance.

With lash and rage he swalloweth the ground,

And stayeth not fixed when the trumpet soundeth.

Among the trumpets he saith, Aha!

And from afar he scenteth the battle,

The thunder of the chieftains, and the shouting.

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom,

And spread his pinions to the south

Doth the eagle mount up at thy bidding,

And build his nest on high?

He inhabiteth a rock, and lodgeth

On the tooth of a rock, and a fastness.

Thence he espieth food; afar his eyes behold, And his young ones lap blood,

And where the slain [are], there [is] he.

If the king of wild beasts is first named, it is not without purpose that the raven follows. The contrast is marked; but Jehovah cared for both. He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. Was Job the one to hunt prey for the lioness, and fill the craving of her young, themselves soon enough learning to catch the prey, and springing from the thickets where they couched? Was it for Job to provide the raven with meat Did not the cry of its young enter the ear of God, as they wandered, voracious, without food? Again, was it Job that looked after the mountain goat, or kept watch over the hinds at a time most critical for themselves and their offspring? Assuredly there is not one whose months El does not count, whose time of bearing He does not know. He that reckons the hairs of our heads, sees every sparrow that falls, and has His part in all, as the Savior let the trembling disciples know for their encouragement, as they went forth at His word. So here Jehovah shows that, if man boasts His scanty knowledge of beasts and birds, and counts their classification science, it is His province, not man's, to enter into and watch over the need of every one, the most removed from human habitation, no less than those whose croakings disturb man's ease, it may be, but are ever before God, who has made them all, and provides for each as a faithful Creator.

Think of the blindness of rationalism, which, in so magnificent a disproof of human presumption and complaint of God, sees no more than Job's ignorance of the time a hind, or other animal named, takes in gestation! Clearly it is a question here, not of zoological lore, but of that beneficent care which accompanies perfect knowledge of every creature. If God exercised such vigilant oversight, according to the goodness and wisdom which made them, over young or old, beast or bird, even the least familiar or most inaccessible, was it not for Job to listen and learn, instead of darkening counsel by words without knowledge? And certainly His ways with saints are incomparably deeper than His dealings with the mere animal realm. Yet there we see everywhere His sovereign disposal. He, not man, has made them what they are, and ordered their habits and their habitations. If He has given some to be the burden-bearers of man, He has given others immunity from any such servitude, as the wild ass, with its house in the desert, and its dwelling-place in the steppe, where a city's tumult, and a driver's cries are unknown, and the

mountain range he can reconnoiter, as he searches out every green thing.

Nor can Job, or any other, pretend, whatever their thoughts or talk, that they can reduce the wild ox to the purposes of man in ordinary labor, or to submit quietly to his control or care. His strength might be invaluable; but He who made all, and gave Adam dominion over fish and fowl, cattle, all the earth, and every reptile, did not bind the wild ox to the furrow of his cord, nor to harrow after Job; nor did He ask Job to leave labors of the field to his responsibility, whether at the beginning, or at the end.

And as to the ostrich, let its wing speed ever so joyously, still God is sovereign here, let man reason as he may, and makes it to differ as widely as he can conceive, from the pinion and plumage of the stork, whose care for its offspring is proverbially familiar. No bird is, on the contrary, so stolid as she, where natural instincts are usually strongest, none less cautious. But this is not without God, who takes in more than man can grasp, and is pleased, of His own will and wisdom, to deprive the ostrich of wisdom, though He has also endowed her with a swiftness which mocks the swiftest horse with its rider. Let man, then, mark, learn, and worship, and not set up to judge God or murmur. This were folly more guilty than the racer's of the desert, as well as irreverence and rebellion.

From this Jehovah turns to the war-horse, described in a way worthy of Him who spoke, which makes the more vivid impression, as here He comes down to where we might be disposed to think ourselves at home. Other animals might be more or less strange and distant; but though man, and Arab man above all, might conceive himself to have some title to speak of what he most loves to use for use or ease, for pride or love, what had he to do with giving the horse its might or fluttering mane? its locust-like bound? the glory of its snorting, a terror to others? its pawing, impatient of restraint, and exulting in its strength? or its undismayed advance, no matter what the clang or t the flash of arms? See with impetuous rage it seems to bite the ground, so that it is not to be held in when the trumpets sound, and it answers each blast with Aha as it scents the fight from afar, and the thunder and the shouting of the chiefs.

Next, was it man that taught the hawk to soar, and spread his wings to the land of Teman? Was it he who bade the eagle mount up, and build his house on the high rock, whence his piercing eye descries food, or gives his young ones to lap blood? or himself to be where the slain are found?

Notes on Job 40-41

It is Jehovah-God, then, who alone orders, alone knows, with a beneficent wisdom which takes in every creature, and not least those which are obviously outside all the care or even ken of man. Is he, then, either to contend with God, or, if he be so presumptuous, can he pretend to instruct God? Job feels and owns his vileness; he proceeds no farther in such a path; and Jehovah gives a final word in what follows.

Chapter 40.

And Jehovah answered Job, and said,

Is the censurer to correct with the Almighty?

The reprover of God, let him answer it.

And Job answered Jehovah, and said,

Lo I am vile: what shall I answer Thee?

I have laid my hand on my mouth;

Once have I spoken, but I will not reply,

Yea, twice, but I will add no more.

And Jehovah answered Job out of the storm, and said,

Gird up now thy loins like a man:

I will ask thee, and cause thou Me to know.

Wilt thou also annul My judgment?

Wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be justified?

Or hast thou an arm like God (El),

And with a voice like Him dost thou thunder?

Put on, then, majesty and grandeur,

And honor and beauty put on;

Scatter abroad the outbursts of thine anger,

See every proud one, and humble him;

See every proud one—make him bow,

And tread down the wicked in their place;

Hide them in the dust together; bind their faces in secret:

Then even I will praise thee, that thy right hand saveth thee.

Behold, now, Behemoth, which I made with thee:

He eateth chives as an ox. Behold, now, his strength [is] in his loins,

And his might in the muscles of his belly.

As a cedar he bendeth his tail;

The sinews of his thighs are knit together,

His bones [are] tubes of copper, his spine as a bar of iron.

He [is] chief of the ways of God: his Maker presented his scythe,

For the mountains bring food for him,

And all the beasts of the field play there.

Under the lotuses he lieth down,

In the covert of the reed and the fen;

The lotuses cover him with their shade,

The osiers of the water-course cover him.

Lo, a flood overfloweth—he hasteth not away,

He is confident when a Jordan rusheth to his mouth.

Doth [one] take him before his eyes?

Doth [he] pierce through the nose with snares?

Chapter 41

Dost thou draw leviathan with an angle,

Or, with a cord thou lettest down, his tongue?

Dost thou put a rush in his nose,

Or bore his jaw with a thorn?

Will he multiply supplications to thee?

Will he speak to thee tender things?

Will he make a covenant with thee?

Wilt thou take him [for] ever as a slave?

Wilt thou sport with him as a bird, and bind him for thy girls?

Let partners bargain for him—divide him among traders!

Dost thou fill his skin with pikes, or his head with fish-spears?

Put thine hand on him—remember the battle—Thou wilt not do it again:

Behold, his hope proveth false.

Even at the sight of him is not [one] cast down?

None is so fierce as to provoke him.

And who [is] he that maketh a stand before Me?

Who first gave to Me, and I must repay?

Under the whole heaven it [is] Mine.

I will not be silent about his parts,

And the matter of his powers, and the beauty of his structure.

Who hath uncovered the face of his garment?

Into his double jaws who entereth in?

The doors of his face, who hath opened?

Round about his teeth [is] terror;

A pride [are] the concave shields, shut up [as] a close seal;

One to another they join, and air entereth not between them.

One to another they adhere, they hold together, and separate not.

His sneezing flasheth forth light,

And his eyes [are] as eyelids of the dawn.

Out of his mouth proceed torches, sparks of fire escape.

Out of his nostrils issue the smoke, as out of a seething pot and caldron.

His breath kindleth coals, and a flame cometh out from his mouth.

In his neck strength lodgeth, and before him danceth terror.

The flakes of his flesh are fitted close together;

They are fixed fast on him, immovable.

His heart [is] firm as a stone, as a nether [millstone].

At his rising up the mighty tremble; from terror they miss their mark.

The sword of his overtaker doth not hold, spear, mace, nor lance;

He reckoneth iron as straw, copper as rotten wood;

The (Child) bolt of the bow causeth him not to flee;

Sling-stones are changed into stubble for him;

Clubs are reckoned as stubble;

He laugheth at the shaking of a javelin.

His under parts [are] the sharpest of shards;

He spreadeth a threshing-roller on the mire.

He maketh the deep boil as a pot,

He maketh the sea like a pot of ointment;

After him he maketh the path to shine—

One would think the deep hoary.

There is not on the dust dominion over him [or, like his],

Who is made to be without dread;

He looketh on all that is high,

He [is] king over all the sons of pride.

It is one thing to review the opinions of men, as Job might those of his friends, quite another to sit in judgment on Jehovah's ways. Job had wished to come near His seat, and plead his own cause. Here He was now, if Job could answer, according to the boldness of his reproofs. The only answer he does make is to acknowledge himself vile. He had no answer to the divine challenge beyond the confession implied in laying his hand on his mouth. Once he had spoken, but he would not reply; twice, but he would add no more. The folly of insubmission is now before his soul. He had spoken too much: silence became him. It was for Jehovah to speak.

And Jehovah does answer out of the storm, and challenge Job to gird up his loins as a hero: let the creature, then, cause the Creator to know, seeing that He now asks questions at his mouth! What a proud thing is the flesh, and no better in the saint than in the sinner! Would Job also arraign and set aside the moral dealings of Jehovah?—nay, more, condemn Him, in order to have himself justified? Exactly the reverse is that which grace produces in every soul that is born of God—readiness to take His part against self, to sit in judgment on one's own ways, and bow to the word, let it blow ever so witheringly on every way or word, thought and feeling. Such is repentance, always found in a saint, but often needing to be more inwrought where its solemn lessons were too hastily learned at the first. Wisdom is beyond power, and in nothing more than in moral ways. Perhaps then, if Job fail here, he can compare in strength. Has he an arm like El? Does he thunder with a like voice? Let us see him deck himself with majesty, and grandeur, and honor, and beauty. What! that poor object of compassion! Let him scatter abroad the outbursts of his anger. What! that woe-begone sufferer! Yes, if he venture to sit in judgment on God's dealings, let him first see every proud one and humble him, see every proud one—make him low, and tread

down the wicked in their place. Compared with such a title to speak of God, it were a light thing to hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret; yet Jehovah declares that even then He would praise Job, and own that his right hand saves him. What painstaking goodness in casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, that he who glories may glory in the Lord!

Then his attention is drawn to two creatures of God, not now land-animals or birds, as in the former discourses, but amphibious, though there have not been wanting people of erudition who contend for the elephant as meant by Behemoth (chap. 41: 15), thinking that the name is a plural. majest. of äÈîÅäÀá. This, however, does not suit the description, particularly as to the tail; and the name is, as competent men believe, an Egyptian designation (p-ehe-mo, literally water ox) of the hippopotamus in Shemitic form. Again, the Leviathan here described (chap. 41.) seems to be beyond doubt, not the dolphin or the whale, as some learned men have argued, but the crocodile. So most have been convinced since Bochart (Hieroz. iii. pp. 705, &c., 737, &c.). It is impossible to conceive anything more graphic than the accounts of each, nor more forcible than the inference for Job Or any other. If such the might of mere brutes, the effect of God's creative will, what folly to resist, censure, or even judge His ways.

One cannot doubt that there was divine design in the detailed description of the river-horse (or ox), on the one hand, and, on the other, in the still more minute particulars of the crocodile. To an upright mind like Job's, they were directly and powerfully suited to overwhelm him under the sense that He who could do everything deigned to make man the object of His ways on earth, and ordered all things to form him in submission of heart to Himself. It is not here the vast height, and depth, and extent, and variety of His arrangements in inanimate nature, or in the animal world, which, inexplicable as they may be to man, constitute so admirable a whole; but now two mighty objects, familiar to those near the Nile, which vindicate God's title as the only One who can judge absolutely in wisdom and goodness, as supreme in power and providence. Job, therefore, should be deeply ashamed of his self-sufficiency.

Huge as Behemoth is, he eats herbage like the ox. Unlike the elephant, which is vulnerable underneath, sinews are there of surpassing strength, like a cedar he bends his tail, and the sinews of his thighs are firmly knit together, his bones as copper and iron: yet, masterpiece as he is of God's ways, he is furnished only with a scythe-like tooth to graze the mountains, where all the beasts of the field gambol. And high ground is not where he loves to lie down, but under the lotuses, where the reed and the fen yield a covert, as the lotuses act as a shade, and the osiers too. No swelling floods startle him: he awaits with composure a Jordan rushing to his mouth. The closing words are difficult, and very different the impressions on the translators' minds, some regarding them not as a question, nor ironically, but as descriptive of his capture.

But in this at least we may see a contrast with what follows of the crocodile, where ordinary means are ridiculed in the opening words of chapter xli. for securing that formidable saurian. But, if secured, is he soft and yielding, ready to do perpetual service? or can you sport with him as a bird or hind, as a plaything for girls? Ah! no commodity for traders is he, nor game for the hunter, nor safe adversary for battle; the very sight might prostrate, and foolhardy the man that would provoke! Yet what is that to making a stand before God? and who ever gave to Him that He should repay. Whose is all under heaven?

Details are then given, from verse 12 to the end. Who would divest that creature of his coat? Who would enter his double jaws, or open the doors of his face, with terror round his teeth? Then what majesty or pride the concave shields close as a seal, so that breath cannot enter, and that every part holds together inseparably! What light in his sneezing! Eyes and mouth emit brightness, or sparks of fire, and smoke out of his nostrils as of a caldron. Strength lodges in his neck, and terror characterizes all before him: what is left elsewhere in him is firm and immovable, his heart solid as stone, as the nether millstone. No wonder the mightiest tremble at his uprising—that they miss their mark through fear—that, if one does overtake him, the sword does not hold, nor spear, mace, nor lance, for he counts iron as straw, copper as rotten wood, and pays no heed to arrows, sling-stones, clubs, or javelins. Nor can any account be more condensed or expressive than of the lower parts, the underneath being compared to the sharpest of shards, as he rolls it like a sledge over the rivers. He is still more at ease in the water, making the deep boil as a pot, and the sea like an apothecary's mixture. A ship does not more distinctly make its path shine after it with its hoary wake. And that there is no such sway on earth as his is attested remarkably by the famous Lacepede, cited by the late Mr. Carteret Carey, who tells us that, not sharing his subsistence with the vulture (like the eagle), nor with the tiger (like the lion), he exercises a dominion more absolute than that of the lion and of the eagle; and he enjoys an empire so much the more durable, as, belonging to two elements, he can the more easily avoid snares; as, having less heat in the blood, he has less need to repair power not so soon exhausted; and as being able longer to resist hunger, he less frequently engages in dangerous conflicts. These, and other elements, still more obvious and already stated, of a physical kind, instinctively contribute to his fearlessness; so that, though a reptile, he can look the highest in the face, as formidable with his tail as with his teeth, not to speak of his impenetrable armor: a veritable king over all the sons of pride or ferocity.

But this may suffice. It was in no way intended to send Job, or any other, to study the external works of God as a means of learning His mind, but a most impressive proof taken from His least things, which nevertheless overawe him who regards them with the smallest attention, and fill him with the sense of his own feebleness. What, then, are His great things far beyond man's province? What the unseen and eternal, the existence of which, and his own relation to which, none can exclude, save by the most hardening unbelief, to his own degradation and destruction, as well as God's dishonor! This, however, was not Job's fault, nor yet of his friends. But the unparalleled trials which had put him to the proof had been used of God, not only to disprove the narrow and uncharitable hypothesis of those who see in God only a Judge, and in trials only a proof of the wickedness of those who suffer them, but also to detect the folly of a saint's indulging a good opinion of himself, to the forgetfulness of God's sovereign grace, and to convince him of the need of his dependence on Him and of the value of confidence in Him. Whatever appearances may say, whatever the trials, God is above all evil, working by all things for the good of those that love Him, And this, assuredly, is love, though it be not that deepest demonstration He gave later on, when He sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. It is the love of the same God, who is love.

Notes on Job 42

We have now the second and closing answer of Job to Jehovah, while the three friends have not a word to say, as silent before His solemn intervention and appeal, as they had been silenced by the sufferer, and unable to speak with Elihu. Here is the moral solution of the book before formal sentence on the great controversy was pronounced in verses 7, 8, or the open mark of divine blessing followed, as in verses 10-17.

And Job answered Jehovah, and said,

I know that Thou canst do all things,

And no purpose is cut off from Thee.

Who [is] this darkening counsel without knowledge?

Therefore I declared what I understood not,

Things too wonderful for me, that I knew not.

Hear, I pray Thee, and I will speak:

I ask Thee, and make Thou me to knew.

By the hearing of the ear I heard Thee;

But now mine eye seeth Thee:

Therefore do I loathe [myself], and repent in dust and ashes.

The work is now effected in the sufferer's soul. Sincerity there had been throughout; but the very consciousness of integrity had put off the lesson when taught, or rather turned aside, by the thorny suspicions of the three friends; and he who needed to learn his own nothingness before God, and absolute indebtedness to grace, was as much lifted up in spirit above their insinuations, as crushed by dealings of God, of which he could understand nothing. Elihu had brought in the blessed light of soul discipline, whether to make God known where utter darkness reigned, or to purge away hindrances to a better knowledge and deeper faithfulness. But Jehovah's intervention brought him into His presence, in a self-judgment which made him feel, not the glory of God only, as never before, but himself nothing but an object of His grace. How much more should this be true of us who now know Him in redemption, and behold His glory in the face of Jesus glorified on high.

The friends are silent; Job does not believe in his heart only but makes confession with his mouth. He murmurs, he resents, he questions no morn, but frankly owns, as a thing realized in his soul, that Jehovah is able for all things, and no purpose withheld from Him. Evil in men or Satan, ruin everywhere in this fallen world, had touched Him in no wise. His own difficulties and reasonings were but the insubmissiveness of heart of one who, as Jehovah had Himself said in His exordium,

darkened counsel without knowledge. It was Job that proclaimed his own ignorance, declaring that he did not understand, things too wonderful for him that he knew not. Not a word now about his friends, or their lack of intelligence, as of candor and charity, however true. He judges himself before God; and uses the words which God had applied to him, the withering proof of his presumption, as the lowly expression of one who felt his need of learning from God, and of desire that it might be wrought in him. Finally, he acknowledges that anything he had previously known of God was but like a report from afar, compared with that near and deep sight of Him which made him loathe himself, so as to repent in dust and ashes. He humbles himself under God's mighty hand, that he may exalt him in due time.

But God humbled the proud, and this meanwhile where He is more or less known, as He will for the most stubborn in a day at hand. So He turns to those who had displeased Him in His dealings with Job—

“And it came to pass that, after Jehovah spake these words to Job, Jehovah said to Eliphaz the Temanite, Mine anger is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken to (or of) Me rightly as My servant Job. And now take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go unto My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and Job, My servant, shall pray for you—for surely his face I accept—that I may not deal with you [after your] folly, for ye have not spoken to (or, of) Me rightly as My servant Job. And Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite [and] Zophar the Naamathite, went and did as Jehovah had said unto them; and Jehovah accepted the face of Job. And Jehovah turned the captivity of Job in his praying for his friends; Jehovah increased all that Job had two-fold. And there came unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all his former acquaintance, and ate bread with him in his house, and condoled with him, and comforted him over all the evil which Jehovah had brought upon him; and they gave him each a kesitah, and each a ring of gold. And Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. And he had seven sons and three daughters; and he called the name of the first Jemima, and the name of the second Kezia, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And there were not found in all the land women fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them inheritance in the midst of their brethren. And Job lived after this a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations; and Job died, old and sated [with] days.”

Thus did the Supreme Arbiter of all moral relationship decide in Job's favor, not because of his patience, great as it was proverbially, but because, in spite of the most severely searching trial—and not least from those who should have helped on the work of grace, instead of judging him ruthlessly according to appearances, which made. them unjust to the sufferer, and left them wholly ignorant of God's mind—he had at length submitted absolutely to God, and vindicated Him in the recognition of his own worthlessness; while his friends failed to own their error, not to Job only or Elihu but even to Jehovah, preserving to the last the sullen reserve of pride, not judged but wounded. No repudiation of themselves did they manifest, no repentance in dust and ashes, like Job, any more than a real and thorough magnifying of Him who thus deigned to make known His decision for the profit of faith throughout all time here below. It is clear and certain that all done in the body, yea, that the counsels of the heart, with the hidden things of darkness, are all to stand out in that day that is coming; but God reveals this to act on our souls now, in promoting, to the

highest degree, both self-judgment and the refusal of censoriousness. No notion can be more false, or less holy, than putting all off till then. Faith seeks and finds the blessing of it now; but if of faith, it is by grace, which judges self in God's light, and abhors all hasty and censorious judgment of others. In that day shall every true soul have praise of God, who may, as in this ease before us, vindicate one, and rebuke another, even now. But then, and only then, does the Christian look for it absolutely, which keeps him peaceful and dependent while waiting till, the Lord come.

Here the reversal was complete. Jehovah intimated to Eliphaz His anger against himself and his two companions: they had not spoken to Him rightly, like His servant Job. They must needs, therefore, approach Him by sacrifice through the very one they had so grievously misjudged, Godward and manward, persecuting him whom, we may perhaps say, God had smitten, and certainly talking to the grief of one whom He had wounded. And His servant Job, whose prayers they had contemned, would pray for them, lest they should be blotted out of the book of the living, for indeed they had wrought folly, in their thoughts and words at least, and Jehovah otherwise must deal with it on them, for they had not vindicated Him like Job. They, therefore, had thus to bow; while favor and blessing more than ever crowned Job, Jehovah turning his captivity when he prayed for his friends. How gracious, as well as righteous, His ways! How holy and wholesome! So He proved Himself then; and so He is still, when far more fully, yea perfectly, revealed in Christ. And as we see then the form of pious confession by burnt-offering, so, in accordance with that day, the outward seal follows of earthly blessing in divinely marked abundance. Men may point to the twofold increase with wonder, and compare Job's household and stock at the end of his trial with its account before the trial began. Do they think God cannot act as He will, or count, or write? What senseless unbelief! He is Sovereign, and nothing could be more suitable or impressive then, and in itself be a lesson for man always; and if He does not so bless now, it is because other and higher ways of grace are in accomplishment, in harmony with the cross of Christ on earth, and His glorification in heaven. But He is the same God, and ever good and wise, and His end then, as also His beginning now, is, that He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Nor does it seem to me uninstructive that the daughters are singled out by name, especially in a quarter, and before the days, where men are all, and women but playthings, or upper slaves. Not such was God's mind, even for those who feared Him, outside the privileges and polity of Israel. How contrasted the imposture of man more than two thousand years after! The days of Job, confirmed by all else in the book, fall in with the patriarchal condition; as the style of the book seems to point to Moses.

John 1-3

John 1; 2 are complete in themselves. What Christ was (not relatively, however, but what He was), then what He became (σ■ρξ ■γ■νετο); then His work and operation, Lamb of God, and Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, and then John's gathering when He is owned as Messiah, and His gathering on earth (specially the remnant in Israel), then the guileless Nazarite, known under the fig-tree, that is, in Israel owning Him, according to Psa. 2, and the Lord assuring Him he should thenceforth see Him, according to Psa. 8, that is, as Son of man, with the highest creatures waiting on Him. Then comes the marriage (of Israel), and the water of purification turned into the wine of joy, and judgment purging His Father's house, His death and resurrection being the warrant for such acts of authority.

But this before His public ministry, which, though in Israel, was not in Judea, brings in the whole new ground of what was coming in. Reception by outward just human conclusions is of no avail; subjectively we must be born again, a new divine life (■νωθεν), even for the kingdom, to see or enter in, and Messiah rejected and crucified, the Son of man bringing in redemption and eternal life, association with what is heavenly, meeting man's necessity as Son of man, and revealing God's love as Son of God given, and this for the world, the wind blowing where it listed, though even for Israel's future earthly part in the blessings promised in the kingdom, the teacher of Israel might have known, e.g., from Ezek. 36 that this new state must be. Eternal life is connected with the cross, not with being born again, though it was the action of sovereign grace, and went out where God pleased, as the wind. But men were perishing, and now received eternal life, salvation, through the cross. He did not come into the world to judge it now, but to save it; but then came the responsibility and consequent judgment which hung on the believing on Him or not. This was from light coming into the world, and men loving darkness rather than light.

On the other hand, in the end we have the fall blessing in Him by faith. He is above all coming from heaven, tells what He has seen and heard, and now receives this new kind of knowledge. So verse 11. But His words are God's, the Spirit not being given by measure. Such is His place on earth. Further, as Son the Father loves Him, and has put all into His hand. The believer in Him bas everlasting life; the unbeliever shall not see life, but God's wrath abides on him. He is set up as God's testimony, with God's words from heaven whence He came, and besides, as the loved Son, the Father has put all things in His hand. Eternal life and wrath depend on His being believed in, or the contrary. The responsibility is light come into the world, but the full character of what is involved in His presence. (Vers. 31, 36.) Here we are far away beyond Judaism; even if the bride is taken as Judaism, though it be a generic idea. Chapter 4 begins the history of sovereign grace in a rejected Savior, neither at that mountain, nor at Jerusalem.

Chapter 109

Notes on John 13:1-5

We enter now on a new section of our Gospel—the last communications of the Lord to His disciples, closing with His opening out His heart to the Father about them. The entire drift is in all points and ways to lead His own into a true spiritual understanding of their new place before God the Father, and in the world in contrast with that of Israel. It is not the church, but most fully and distinctively the Christian position.

“Now, before the feast of the passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto his Father, having loved his own that [were] in the world, loved them unto [the] end.” (Ver. 1.) He was the only man whom nothing took by surprise. All was read, and known, and felt in the presence of God His Father. Not only did He know throughout that He was to die, and its form, character, and object in God's purpose, as well as in man's and Satan's malice, but we see here that its immediate proximity was before His mind. Yet in John it is not man's or God's forsaking Him in that bitter hour, but the hour came for His departure out of this world to His Father, instead of staying here as Jews expected according to the Old Testament in their Messiah. As the other Gospels bring out the evidence of His rejection by the people, our evangelist sees Him from the first rejected, and at the end preparing the disciples for the immense change at hand, when the Messiah should be in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down to be in and with His own on earth, the Father too being the relation of God not to Him only, but in due time and way to them also.

Further, He would show His love in fresh and suited forms: “Having loved his own that were in the world,” He loved not merely till the end, but taking up each need, and incurring all labor for them, whatever the draft in it, unremittingly and without wavering. Such is the love of Jesus to His own in the world, where it is constantly wanted. We know what love He expressed to them at that last passover (Luke 22:15) and how infinitely it was proved in His blood and death for them as a lamb without blemish and without spot, foreordained before the foundation of the world, but manifested at the end of the times for their sakes who believed. But now He would show them a love as active for them when He should depart to His Father, as when He fulfilled the passover in dying for them.

“And, supper being come, the devil having already put [it] into the heart of Judas, Simon's [son], Iscariot, that he should deliver him up, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments, and, having taken a towel, girded himself.” (Vers. 2-4.)

The Authorized Version regards the phrase δ. γ. as implying the end of the repast; but I agree with those who take it to mean the arrival of the time for supper, which is confirmed by the wondrous action we are about to hear of. It cannot be doubted that it was usual to have the feet washed before, not after, supper. But if Jesus had ways of love before His heart, the devil had already planted in that of Judas Iscariot the awful treachery to his divine Master, which no rolling ages can erase. So it was with Jesus; the enemy's hate came out most, as the love of God manifested itself in and by Him; but how withering to human pretension it was, the devil working by a man and a

disciple, the close personal honored follower of the Lord Jesus! “It was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance.” In that holy companionship he had trifled with sin, with his besetting covetousness; and now the devil prompted the gratification of it by betraying the Son of God. The Lord, as we shall later see, deeply felt it, but here He pursues the design of love with the consciousness of the Father's purposes and plans, with the consciousness, too, that He was going back to God with the same absolute purity in which He had come out from Him. It was no merely Messianic sphere, not even that of Son of man. The Father had given all things into the bands of His Son, and He was going back a man with not a shade over that intrinsic holiness which marked His coming out from God to become a man. He abode ever the Holy One of God, yet rises from supper, lays aside His garments, takes a towel and girds Himself.

Jesus occupies Himself with a new service, the removal of the defilements of His own in their walk as saints through the world. This is the meaning of what follows. “Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.” (Ver. 5.) Be it carefully observed, that it is a question here of water, not of blood. The reader of John's Gospel will not have overlooked that he makes much of “water” as well as “blood.” So did the Lord in presenting the truth to His own, and no one shows this more than John. His first epistle also characterizes the Lord as “he that came by water and blood; not in water only, but in water and blood.” He purifies as well as atones. He employs the word to cleanse those who are washed from their sins in His blood. The apostles, Paul, Peter, and James insist on this power of the word, as John does. It is disastrous and dangerous in the highest degree to overlook purification by the washing of water by the word. If “the blood” is Godward, though for us, “the water” is saintward to remove impurity in practice as well as to give a new nature, which judges evil according to God and His word, of which it is the sign, adding to it the death of Christ, which gives its measure and force. Out of His pierced side came blood and water. (John 19.)

As to this grave and blessed truth, Christendom remains, I fear, as dark as Peter, when he declined the gracious action of the Lord. Nor did Peter enter into the truth conveyed by that most significant dealing till afterward, that is, when the Holy Spirit came to show them the things of Christ. On the occasion itself he was wrong throughout. And so are men apt to be now, even though light divine has been fully afforded. They still perversely limit its extent to teaching humility. This only Peter saw, and hence his mistake; for he thought it stooping down excessively, that the Lord should wash his feet; and, when alarmed by the Lord's warning, he fell into an opposite error. We are only safe when subject to His word in distrust of ourselves.

The fact is that, since apostolic times, the truth has been either wholly lost, or perverted into a lifeless ordinance. Evangelicals, as the rule, ignore it, or merge it in the blood of Christ. Catholics (Anglican, Roman, Greek, or Oriental) misapply it to baptism. Hence not only do they miss the Lord's special lesson of washing in water, but they enfeeble propitiation. Consequently non-imputation of sins is all but unknown from the earliest fathers till our own day. The Reformers wrought no deliverance in this respect; and the Puritans increased the confusion and darkness by pressing not ordinances, but the law as the rule of life, instead of recalling by the Spirit of the Lord to Christ as the object according to which the Christian is being transformed here below. The Lord suffered once for sins, Just for unjust. The efficacy is as perfect for the believer as is His person; and the unity of this sacrifice is therefore the great argument of Heb. 9; 10, as contrasted with the repetition of Jewish ones. By His one offering we are not only sanctified but perfected in

perpetuity. Is there no failure in the saint afterward? Alas, there may be. What then is the provision for such? It is the washing of water by the word which the Spirit applies in answer to the Son's advocacy with the Father.

Chapter 110

Notes on John 13:6-11

The Lord proceeds to the work in hand. “He cometh then unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, what I am doing thou knowest not just now, but shalt know afterward. Peter saith to him, In no wise shalt thou wash my feet forever. He answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed [bathed] hath no need to wash [other] than his feet, but is wholly clean; and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that was delivering him up: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean.” (Vers. 6-11.)

In divine things the wisdom of the believer is subjection to Christ and confidence in Him. What He does, we are called to accept with thankfulness of heart, and as Mary said to the servants at the marriage feast, “whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” This Simon Peter did not. For when the Lord approached him “in the form of a servant,” or bondman, he demurred. Was there not faith, working by love in Peter's heart? Both undoubtedly, yet not then in action, but buried under superabundant feeling of a human sort: else he had not allowed his mind to question what the Lord saw fit to do. He had rather bowed to Christ's love and sought to learn, as He might teach, what deep need must be in him and his fellows to draw forth such a lowly yet requisite service from his Master. Ah! he knew not yet that Jesus must go lower down far than stooping to wash the disciples' feet, even to the death of the cross, if God were to be glorified and sinful man to be justified and delivered with an indisputable title. But the grace which was undertaking that infinite work of propitiation, the groundwork for meeting every exigency of the divine nature and majesty and righteousness in view of our guilt, and unto the glory of God, would provide for every step of the way where defilement abounds, that we might enjoy communion, spite of Satan's power and wiles and our own weakness, yea spite of failure be restored to communion with Him in the light and glory of God to which He was going back, and into which we shall in due time follow Him.

Peter did believe, but he did not yet believe “all that the prophets have spoken.” He feebly entered into what He Himself afterward called the sufferings as to Christ, and the glories that should follow them. He continued to regard the Lord too exclusively as Messiah, little estimating till afterward the depths involved in the Son of the living God, though his own lips had thus confessed His glory before. Nature was too little judged in Peter, so that he did not yet appreciate its meaning and application and results as subsequently under divine teaching when the cross manifested its worth or rather worthlessness before God and man. Too self-confident and indeed ignorant not only of himself and the defiling scene around, but of the depths and constancy of Christ's love, Peter says to Him, “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” Granting that he could not know what was not yet revealed, but was it comely in him, was it reverent, to question what the Lord was doing? He may have thought it humility in himself, and honor to the Lord, to decline a service so menial at His hands. But Peter should never have forgotten that as Jesus never said a word, so He never did an act, save worthy of God and demonstrative of the Father; and now more than ever were His words and ways an exhibition of divine grace, as human evil set on by Satan, not only in those outside, but within the innermost circle of His own, called for increased distinctness and intensity.

The truth is that we need to learn from God how to honor Him, and learn to love according to His mind. And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. This too was Peter's mistake. He should have suspected his thoughts and waited in all submissiveness on Him who, as many confessed that knew far less than Peter, “hath done all things well,” and was absolutely what He was saying, truth and love in the same blessed person. The thoughts of man are never as ours; and saints slip into those of man, unless they are taught of God by faith, in detail too as well as in the main; for we cannot, ought not, to trust ourselves in anything. God the Father will have the Son honored; and He is honored most when believed in and followed in His humiliation. Peter therefore was equally astray when he once ventured to rebuke the Lord for speaking of His suffering and death, as now when he asks, “Dost Thou wash my feet?”

But the meek Lord answered in fullness of grace and said to him, “What I am doing thou knowest [οδας] not just now, but shalt know [γνσ] afterward.” Was not this a grave but compassionate intimation to Peter, had he been in the mood to learn?

He ought to have gathered from the Lord's words, if he did not at once bow to His act, that there was a meaning worthy of Him who deemed it due to the Father in truest lowliest love to the children to wash their feet; he ought to have gathered more than this, that what he did not know of himself then, he was to learn afterward, I presume, after the things now in progress, His rejection an death, resurrection and ascension, when the Holy Spirit should be given guiding them into all the truth.

But Peter was not yet of those who are guided with the Lord's eye, he did not feel the need of being instructed and taught the way in which he should go. There was too much of the horse or of the mule in him, too much need of being held with bit and bridle; and, failing to receive of the Lord that he should submit now and learn later, he plunges farther and more boldly into error with himself. “In no wise shalt Thou wash my feet forever,” the strongest repudiation of it, and this not merely in this life but for that to come—forever.

It was feeling, it was ignorance, no doubt; but should he have trusted himself to utter words so strong of the gracious way and act of his Master! How blessed that he had, that we have, to do with One who does not hold His peace so as to bind the soul with a bond, who knows when and how to disallow the foolish and even God-dishonoring word, so that it shall not stand and the soul be forgiven! See Num. 30. The Lord made Peter's words utterly void the moment He heard them, as we shall see, in the grace which corrects every fault, and bore all our iniquity.

“Jesus answered, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” Solemn assurance, not for Peter only, but for all who slight the same gracious provision on His part, who forget or have never apprehended their own need of it. It is a question not so much of life as of fellowship, of a part with Christ, rather than in Him, though not really separable. Christ was going on high to God, Peter and the rest still on earth and surrounded by defilements in the way. Christ would neither abate His love to His own, nor would He make light of their, failures. Hence the need of washing the disciples' feet, apt to be soiled in walking through the world. And this is carried on by the word applied to the conscience by the Spirit. The believer bows, judges himself, and is practically cleansed. His communion is restored, and He can enjoy the things of Christ. He has part with Him.

Alarmed by the Lord's warning, His servant instantly flies to the opposite extreme: “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Now Peter cannot have too much. He seeks to be bathed all over, as if all the value of his previous washing could evaporate, and he needed it afresh, no less than if it had never been. But it is never so. To see and enter the kingdom of God, one must be born afresh, born of water and of the Spirit. But this is never repeated. The new birth admits of no such repetition. It was wrong to suppose that, born of God, one needs nothing else, that defilements either cannot befall a believer, or that, if they do, they are of no consequence. What Simon thus thought in his ignorance, a certain school of divinity has formulated in its presumption. But this is not true knowledge of God. If law punishes transgression, grace condemns sin still more deeply. Impossible that any system of religious thought could be of God which slurs over or ignores evil. But Simon Peter convicted of danger on this side falls into another on that side, and, roused to own the needful washing to have part with Christ, claims it all even for the believer as for the natural man. And here too an opposite school presents its corresponding dogma, denies the standing of the believer if unhappily he be yet defiled, and insists that he must begin over again, perhaps many times in his life. Thus eternal life as a present possession in Christ is done away, and the constant responsibility which flows from the constant relationship of a child of God. One might be often lost, often saved spiritually!

The Lord corrects by anticipation both schools in correcting Peter. “He that is washed (λελουμ■νος) hath no need to wash (ν■ψασθαι) [other] than his feet, but is wholly clean; and ye are clean, but not all. For He knew him that was delivering him up: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean.” Thus simply, but perfectly does He put each truth in its place and in relation to the truth. Grace is maintained, but so is righteousness. Not a sin is passed over lightly. Not a believer has reason for discouragement; his every failure is an object of fresh concern to the Lord, a fresh proof of love that will not let him go, but bless him, spite of the carelessness which let the Lord go. But He will not go. He washes the feet of him that is already washed all over, that he may be wholly clean. Thus the new birth holds and is never renewed, because it abides true and good; while the failure of him who is born again comes under Christ's active love and advocacy, and the soul is brought to judge himself in order to restored communion. And the case of Judas is not one of losing life, but of manifesting that he never had been born of God, as indeed no scripture ever affirms it. It was not a sheep of Christ becoming unclean, but a dog returning to his vomit, yea far worse, because of such proximity to Him whose intimacy he abused to betray Him for lucre to His enemies.

Notes on John 13:12-17

It is of capital moment to hold fast along with atonement the washing of water by the word. Else the blood of Christ is diverted from its true aim and effect before God, and practically used as the resource in case of failure. Let us hear Calvin as an influential witness of the error it involves, where he teaches from the word of reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:20 (“Be reconciled to God"), that Paul is here addressing himself to believers, instead of illustrating the message of grace to the world. “He declares to them every day this embassy. Christ therefore did not suffer, merely that He might once expiate our sins, nor was the gospel appointed merely with a view to the pardon of those sins which we committed previously to baptism, but that, as we daily sin, so we might also by a daily remission be received by God into His favor. For this is a continued embassy, which must be assiduously sounded forth in the church till the end of the world; and the gospel cannot be preached unless remission of sins is promised. We have here an express and suitable declaration for refuting the impious trust of Papists, which calls upon us to seek the remission of sins after baptism from some other source than from the expiation that was effected through the death of Christ. Now this doctrine is commonly held in all the schools of Popery—that, after baptism we merit the remission of sins by penitence through the aid of the keys (Matt. 16:19)—as if baptism itself could confer this upon us without penitence. By the term penitence however, they mean satisfaction. But what does Paul say here? He calls us to go, not less after baptism than before it, to the one expiation made by Christ, that we may know that we always obtain it gratuitously. Further, all their prating as to the administration of the keys is to no purpose, inasmuch as they conceive of keys apart from the gospel, while they are nothing else than that testimony of a gratuitous reconciliation, which is made to us in the gospel.” (Comm. Epp. to the Cor. Calvin Soc. ii. 240, 241.) Clearly this teaching is erroneous, not only founded on a misapplication to saints of the gospel ministry to sinners, but consequently unsettling their reconciliation as a great finished fact. It is not true that the apostle declares this embassy to believers every day. He declares on the contrary that the work is done, and the worshippers once purged so as to have no longer any conscience of sins, that is, no question of imputing sins or errors, nor of God's judgment of them by-and-by. The error undermines or excludes the constant relationship of the Christian on the ground of peace made by the blood of Christ's cross, and present and permanent fitness for showing the justice of the saints in light. (Col. 1) The one offering of Christ does not merely once expiate our sins but has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. The Romanist meets the need created by failure after baptism by penitence aided by the keys; the Protestant by fresh approach to the sacrifice of Christ, the one being as ignorant as the other of the washing of the defiled feet by the word in answer to the advocacy of Christ with the Father. The continued embassy is by the Lord's servants in proclaiming the gospel to the world. There is no such thing as God's receiving the believer by a daily remission into His favor. There may be the necessity of removing the uncleanness of flesh or spirit which hinders communion, but this supposes the groundwork of propitiation undisturbed and of the favor in which we stand. That the Christian requires to be reconciled afresh, that the call “be reconciled to God” goes out to failing believers proves that Calvin, able as he was and a saint himself, was ignorant even of the elementary and distinctive

truth of the gospel, and opened the door to the opposed error of Arminianism which takes its stand more consistently on the same mistake, that the failing believer has to start afresh, as if eternal life had no meaning, and the blood of Christ lacked everlasting efficacy.

The truth puts everything in its place. The blood of Christ abides in its unchangeable value before God sacrificially and judicially; but the failing believer is inexcusable, and needs to wash his feet. The word must deal with him morally, producing self-judgment and confession; and the Lord looks to it in His ever watchful grace by taking up His cause in living love with the Father. The Spirit too has His own suited function in producing, not the joy of fellowship with Christ in the things of Christ, but grief and shame, pain and humiliation in recalling the man's own ways—haste, levity, pride, vanity, and perhaps corruption or violence; for of what is the flesh unjudged not capable? By that word of truth he was begotten of God, awakened to self-judgment in His sight; by the same word in each defilement judged day by day, making it so much the more painful because He reminds the soul of what Christ suffered for the sins which the flesh feels so light. But far from dissolving the relationship, it is the sense of inconsistency with it, and with the grace which at so much cost and sovereign grace withal conferred it on us, that most of all tries and humbles the erring one. Flesh would like exceedingly to have its way and indulge its pleasures, and the soul begin again; but God holds the believer to a relationship, which if real, is everlasting and makes every delinquency therefore to be so much the deeper sin, because it is against not conscience and righteousness only, but the richest grace God could show Christ. We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. There is no repetition of reconciliation any more than of the new birth. There is complete remission of sins through His blood, and hence no longer a sacrifice for sin. The one and only offering which could avail is made and accepted. But there is, whenever needful, a fresh application of water. And this ever deals with the soul. The word detects whilst it removes the defilement, applying the death of Christ thus to the man, as the blood dealt with the sins before God. Thus is the work carried on holily without weakening the sole foundation for a sinful man's peace as well as for His glory.

“When then he washed their feet and took his garments and reclined again, he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, wash your feet, ye also ought to wash. one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that even as I did to you, ye should also do. Verily, verily, I say to you, A bondman is not greater than his lord, nor yet an apostle greater than be that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” (Vers. 12-17.)

Undoubtedly the humility of the Lord was beyond question in His washing the disciples' feet, and that He would have them cultivate it He had solemnly urged on them in the plainest terms, as we see in all the synoptic gospels. But then there is another and deeper instruction. It is the renewal of their defilements in walking through the world which is before His mind, now that He is about to leave them; and about this He would exercise their hearts by the question, “Know ye what I have done to you?” It is His way indeed to teach us afterward the good He has already done us; and as we grow up to Him in the truth we appreciate better what we understand but slightly at first. Grace teaches us, as well as acts on our behalf; and it is humbling to find out how little we have understood while its activity has never staid. But how good and strengthening it is to learn its ways and lessons

The Lord next enforces what He had done by appealing to the titles they habitually gave Him. “Ye call me the teacher and the Lord; and ye say well; for I am.” One to obey as well as to instruct, as could not but be where His personal glory is known. If He then stooped in love to wash their feet, what did they not owe one another? It is not only that we should serve the Lord in the gospel. By this shall all men know, He says, later on in this very chapter, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Here however it is a definite call where we are apt most to fail to share His grace, in seeking the restoration of each other where failure has come in. On the one hand it needs faith and self-denial and divine affections. Indifference about it detects our own failure. But on the other hand the righteousness that censures another is as far as possible from washing the feet, resembling rather the scourge than the service of the towel and basin. And assuredly, if grace be needed to bear the washing, a far larger measure must be in action to wash the feet. Hence says the apostle, “Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any fault, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in a spirit of meekness.” Where flesh was judged, love could act more powerfully and with deeper sense that all is of grace. Self is the greatest hindrance in dealing with another's trespass.

The service of love in every form is the mind which was in Christ. Hence He calls them here to weigh what they had first seen. “For I have given you an example that ye also should do even as I did to you. Verily, verily, I say to you, A bondman is not greater than his lord, nor an apostle greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” The Lord knew the end from the beginning, and how soon His ministry would degenerate into a worldly institution, and become a title of pride, instead of being a work of faith and labor of love. Hence the need for His solemn formula, as a standing witness to all His own so prone in a world of vain show and selfishness to forget His word and wander from His way. But there His warning abides, to decline His service in washing the feet of His own is to set oneself above the Lord and to claim a greater place than His who sends even an apostle. O for the blessedness of doing as well as knowing these things! It is the fellowship of His love in one of its most intimate forms; and love is of God, and everyone that loveth hath been begotten of God and knoweth God.

Notes on John 13:18-22

The hint which closed verse 10 is now expanded into the growingly solemn intimations in word and deed that follow. It is no longer Christ's love caring for His own, either once for all, in atoning self-sacrifice to God for them, everlasting in its efficacy; or in unintermitting cleansing by the word, as for them He died on earth, living for them in heaven, that they might be practically in unison with the relationship of grace into which they had been brought, spite of the defilements of the way. Here it is the faithless indifference of nature, with a conscience increasingly seared by indulgence in a besetting sin, which Satan was about to lure into and blind to high treason against Christ, availing itself of the closest intimacy to sell the Master and Lord, the Son of God, for the paltriest price of a slave—to sell Him into the hands of enemies thirsting for His blood. It may not be the hatred of these; it is utter lovelessness, betraying Him who was at this time more than ever showing and proving His love, not only up to and in death, but in life beyond it evermore. Now the unbelief which, having eyes and heart, sees not nor feels such love, precipitates, above all, into Satan's deceit and power. This we sorrowfully behold in Judas; and no one felt the sorrow as the Lord.

“I speak not of you all: I know whom I chose out, but that the scripture may he fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me [hath] lifted up his heel against me. Henceforth I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it hath come to pass, ye may believe that I am [he]. Verily, verily, I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, that one of you shall give me up. The disciples [then] looked one on another, doubting of whom he spoke.” (Vers. 18-22.)

The Lord, then, did, and does, look for activity of love among His own. If they were objects of a love which could never fail, He would have them instruments or channels of it one toward another, and this in respect of evil to remove it, whereas legality could only condemn. Himself the Son, yet the servant in love, He would exercise them in the service of love, where defilement otherwise would repel. But as He came to suffer for our sins, so also He was going away to form us while on earth into His own mind and affections, through the truth, and in doing so to cleanse from every way which might grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby we are sealed till the day of redemption. For it is not a question of removing the guilt of a sinner only, but of restoring the communion of a saint, whenever interrupted by allowed evil. And in this last dealing of love, He would have His own caring one for another. But He did not speak of all the disciples then present: sad presage of what was to be far more common in after days! He knew whom He chose out: Judas was not among such, though called to be an apostle. He had never known the Lord—knew nothing truly of His grace or of His mind—was not born of God. Why, then, had he been selected for that place of honor, the apostolate, in immediate and constant attendance on the Lord here below?

It was not that the Lord was unconscious of his character, conduct, or coming catastrophe, but that the scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread [hath] lifted up his heel against Me. Jeshurun

waxed fat and kicked of old; he forsook God his Master, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. Judas went incomparably farther in his guilty indifference to the Son of God come down in love and humiliation, and in his eagerness to serve himself at all cost, betraying his gracious Master for the merest trifle. Never was such love, never such slight and abuse of it, and this in one of those specially responsible to be faithful. Doubtless it would be through Satan's power; but to this flesh exposes, and so much the more because of nearness outwardly to the Lord who is not believed on to salvation. There comes out, most palpably and fatally, the hard baseness of the unrenewed heart, and this against the grace of the Lord above all. Thus, if the disciples were in danger of being stumbled by such an one's defection, the evident fulfillment of scripture was meant to strengthen their faith in every written word of God. By this man lives Godward: bread, money, anything here below, may be the occasion of his ruin. How wondrous the patience which, knowing all from the beginning, bore all to the end, without a frown or sign of shrinking from the traitor. But so much the more withering must be the sentence of judgment when it comes from His lips, the Lord of glory, the hated and despised of man!

The Lord gives precision to ancient oracles, hitherto applied only to others, as here to David suffering from Ahithophel. But the Holy Spirit wrote of Him preeminently; and He too, before the event, cites the word about to be verified in the treachery toward Himself. Thus did the Lord prove alike His perfect and divine knowledge of what lay yet in the future, while He taught the inestimable worth of scripture, and, not least, of not yet fulfilled prediction, meeting in every form the incredulity of believers as well as of unbelievers. For who knows not the accepted maxims which assume the dark and doubtful character of unfulfilled prophecy, which denies prophecy even to the prophets, still more to the Psalms and to the law? At least men should fear to give the lie to Him who declares Himself the Truth, and spoke as never man did; they have reason to fear, if they turn away from Him to lying vanities, which, far from being able to save their votaries in the day of need, shall themselves be as stubble to burn themselves, and all who trust them. Jesus, on the contrary, is never so transparently the Messiah as when beforehand He points to the word of scripture about to be accomplished in His own rejection and death of the cross, and affords in it a firmer ground of blessing for the poorest of sinners than in all the glories of the kingdom to be fulfilled in their season.

Then, with His usual mark of profound solemnity, the Lord binds the reception of His sent ones with Himself and His Father. “Verily, verily, I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I may send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” This was the more important to be added here, for some might question their standing before God because of the awful doom of Judas, when and where known. The Lord comforts such, and turns from occupation with the fallen servant to the Master who abides forever the same, as does the Father. Did Judas betray the Lord? This sealed his own doom, but touched not the authority any more than the grace of Christ, as of God Himself. If they received one whom Christ sent, be his end even what it might, they received the Son, and so the Father, instead of sharing in the guilt or danger of punishment of the servant who dishonored his Master.

The Lord then, manifesting the deepest emotion, proceeds to urge the sin home, limiting its worst form to one only of the disciples. “Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, that one of. you shall give me up.” It was holiness, it was love, which took thus to heart the impending iniquity of Judas. In every point of view the Lord

felt it—in itself, in its contrariety to God, in its bearing on others, as well as on Himself, and in its awfulness for the wretched guilty one. It is not self, but love, which is associated with the truest sensibility; and the Lord expresses it as a testimony also, “Verily, verily, I say to you, one of you shall give me up.” They were all faulty, but one, and only one, thus about to become a prey to Satan, and the tool of his malice against the Lord. Their doubts were as honest, as his place in their midst was now a lie against the truth. If he joined the rest in looking one on another, it was hypocrisy, for he could not really doubt of whom Jesus was speaking. Yet no blush, no paleness, betrayed Judas. The disciples must have recourse to other means of learning the sad truth.

Notes on John 13:23-30

The announcement of a traitor among the twelve troubled the disciples and led to anxious thought, as they looked one on another. What a testimony to His perfect grace who had known it all along, and had given no sign of distrust or aversion! How solemn for the saints who have to do with the same unchanging One day by day! Nothing precipitates into the enemy's hands more than grace abused and sin indulged, while outwardly one is in the presence of the only One whose life rebukes it absolutely. Let us look a little into the scene.

“[Now]” there was at table one of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter then beckoneth to this one and saith to him, Tell who it is of whom he speaketh. He then having just fallen back on the breast of Jesus saith to him, Lord, who is it? Jesus [then] answereth, That one it is to whom I, having dipped the morsel, shall give [it]. Having then dipped he giveth the morsel to Judas [son] of Simon Iscariot. And after the morsel Satan then entered into him. Jesus then saith to him, What thou doest do more quickly. But no one of those at table knew why he said this to him; for some supposed because Judas had the bag that Jesus saith to him, Buy the things that we have need of for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the morsel went out immediately; and it was night.” (Vers. 23-30.)

Peter and John are often seen together. So here in their perplexity Simon Peter beckons to John as he reclined at table in the bosom of Jesus; for that John and no other was this favored disciple cannot be doubted from chapters 19:26; 20:22; 21:7,20,24. And how truly of the Spirit that one enjoying such favor should describe himself, not as loving Jesus, though indeed he did, but as beloved by Him, and this too as the disciple whom Jesus loved, withholding his name as here and elsewhere of small account, though plainly described at the close, where needed, and named where men might deny the authorship as they have done I It is intimacy with Jesus that gathers secrets, but imparts them, for others' good. Falling back just as he was on the breast of Jesus, John asks who it is; and the Lord answers, not in word only but with a sign, strikingly according to Psa. 41:9, though an even more special mark of intimacy. In Judas' state that token of love only hardened the conscience long seared by secret sin, which shut out from the heart all sense of love. His very familiarity with Christ's passing through the snares and dangers of a hostile world may have suggested that so it would be now with his Master, while he himself might reap the reward of his treachery; the knowledge of His grace, without heart for it, may have led him to hope for mercy he had never known refused to the most guilty. The moment comes when holy love becomes unbearable to him who never relished it; and the sin he preferred blinded his mind and hardened his heart to that which had otherwise touched the most callous. “After the morsel, then Satan entered into him.” The devil had already put it into his heart to deliver the Lord up; now, after receiving without horror or self-judgment the last token of his Master's love the enemy entered. At being thus designated, there may have been irritation, which if retained gives room for the devil, even in ordinary cases, much more in his who had trifled with unfailing grace, and thus forgot wholly His glory, as he had ever been insensible to God's nature and his own sin. Jesus then saith to him, What thou art doing do more quickly, that is, sooner than was indicated by his pretension to

share the doubts of the disciples or to join in what was before their hearts.

Never does God thus abandon to Satan poor man, however wretched and sinful, till he rejects His love and holiness and truth, above all shown in the Lord Jesus and this Gospel. There He may and does judicially harden, and this to irretrievable ruin, but only after the heart has steeled itself to the appeals of His most patient goodness. Still judicial hardening is a real thing on God's part, whatever may be argued by those who seem unwilling to allow frankly and fully the activity of God on the one hand and of Satan on the other. Not a whit better is the opposite school which seems to banish from conscience the solemn fact of responsibility, whether in a man or in a Christian, or as here in one who, though in the unremoved darkness of a man, drew so near the Son of God, the personal expression in man of all God's light and love. We have heard already how deeply our Lord felt the sin of Judas as the Moment approached and the design was allowed in his heart. Now the sentence goes forth, which closed the door of life for the earth on the Savior—of everlasting wrath on Judas. Yet did the disciples look on and listen without knowing the awfulness of the issues then pending. Not even John penetrated the meaning of words soon to be clear to all. It was not to buy things needful, but to sell their Lord and Master; it was no preparation for the feast but that to which it, not they, had ever looked onward, the fulfillment of God's mind and purpose in it, though it were the Jews crucifying their own Messiah, by the hand of lawless men; it was not that Judas should give to the poor—the last thing which would occupy his mind, but that He should who was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. It was man's, a disciple's, worst sin; it was God's infinite love, both meeting in the death of the. Lord on the cross; but where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

Judas then having received the morsel immediately wept out. What darkness rested thenceforward on that soul! “It was night,” says our evangelist. And that night deepened in its horrors on the faithless man; given to see his irreparable evil only when done, till it closed on his going to his own place.

Notes on John 13:31-32

The Lord felt the gravity of the moment, and sew the way and end from the beginning. All the wondrous and everlasting consequences of His death were stretched out before Him, and now that Judas is gone, He gives free expression to the truth in divinely perfect words. “When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” (Ver. 31.) His own cross is fully in view, and there was laid the basis for all true abiding glory, not for God only (though assuredly for God, for there can be none really unless He be foremost) but for man also in the person of the Lord, the Son of man, who alone had shown what man should be for God, as He had shown what God is, even the Father, in Himself the Son.

It is indeed a theme of incomparable depth, the Son of man glorified, and God glorified in Him; and no statement elsewhere, though from the same lips, was meant so to present and fathom it, though each was perfect for its own object, as the one before us.

In chapter 12, when certain Greeks came to Philip the apostle, desiring to see Jesus, and Andrew and Philip tell Jesus, He answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified, and forthwith, with His most solemn emphasis, He speaks of His death as the condition of blessing to others. So only should He bear much fruit. Otherwise the grain of wheat abode alone. A living Messiah is the crown of glory to Israel; a rejected One, the Son of man, by death opened the door, for the Gentile even, into heavenly things, and is the pattern thenceforth; so much so that to love life in this world is to lose it, to hate it here is to keep it to life eternal; and hence following Him who died is the way to serve Him, secure the Father's honor, and be with the heavenly Master and Lord. It is by death that He takes the place, not of Son of David, according to promise (though this in grace He does also, according to Paul's gospel), but of Son of man, and thus have all things and all men, Greeks no less than Jews, according to the counsels of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. There was no other for guilt to be taken away, for heaven to be opened and enjoyed by those who were once lost sinners. Thus the heavenly glory follows the moral glory; and every hope, for the Gentile most manifestly, turns on Christ's obedience even unto death, wherein Satan's power was utterly broken, and the judgment of God perfectly satisfied; but if the world was therein judged, and its prince to be cast out, Christ lifted up on the cross becomes the attractive center of grace for all, spite of degradation, darkness, and death.

In chapter 17, the Son looks to the Father whom He had glorified, that the Father might glorify Him in heaven. He was Son before time began; He had therefore, of course, glory with the Father before the world was; but He had taken the place of servant in manhood on earth, and now asks that the Father should glorify Him along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him eternally. A Man to everlasting, He would receive all from the Father, albeit Son from everlasting; and when glorified, it is that He may glorify the Father.

Here, in chapter 13, He speaks of the Son of man glorified, and of God glorified in Him. This has its own peculiar force. The first man was an object of shame and judgment through sin; the second Man, Jesus Christ the righteous, was glorified, and God was glorified in Him. He sees it all

summed up in the erode, and so speaks to the disciples, now that the traitor's departure left His heart free to communicate all that filled it. It is not the Father, as such, glorified livingly by His Son in an obedience which knew no limit but His Father's will, but a man, the rejected Messiah, the Son of man, devoting Himself at all cost to the glory of God. This was indeed the Son of man's glory, that God should be, as He was, glorified in Him. Blessed Savior! what a thought, and now a fact and a truth, the truth made known to us, that we might know, not merely God come to us, but ourselves brought to God, and this in peace and joy, because man is glorified in this person of Christ, and God is glorified in Him, a Man, the man Christ Jesus.

And in deed and in truth God is glorified in the cross as nowhere else—His love, His truth, His majesty, His righteousness. Herein, in our case, was manifested the love of God, that God has sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. And His truth, majesty, and righteousness have been maintained, no less than His love; for if God threatened guilty man with death and judgment, Jesus bore all, as man never could, that His word might be vindicated fully. Never did man prove his enmity to God, never did Satan prove his power over man, as in that cross where the Son of man gave Himself up, in supreme devotedness and self-sacrificing love, to the glory of God. Nowhere was so demonstrated the holiness of God; the impossibility of His tolerating sin; nowhere such love to God, and such love to the sinner. The Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him. When, where, was Jesus so glorified as in stooping to the uttermost when God made sin Him who knew no sin, that we, might become the righteousness of God in Him? where Jesus, feeling the, truth of death and judgment as none ever could, bowed His head, not merely to man's contemptuous hatred and to Satan's wily malice, but to God's indignation against sin-despised of man, abhorred of the nation, abandoned of the disciples, forsaken of God, when most of all needing comfort, doing and suffering His will perfectly in the only unstormed fortress of the enemy's power—to God's glory, and. in His grace? No, there is nothing like it, even where, and where alone, all was perfection, in the life of Christ. This was glorifying the Father as to good in a devotedness and dependence with which none can compare; that, a glorifying God as to evil by an endurance of all that the Holy One of God could suffer from all that God could, and did, inflict in unsparing judgment—both the one and the other, in absolute obedience, and love, and self-renunciation to His glory. And all this, and more than this, blessed be God! we see in Man, the Son of man; that in Him, in that nature which had wrought foul dishonor and rebellion against God from first to last, God might be glorified. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

In that person, and by that work, all was reversed. The foundation was laid, the seed was sown, for an entirely new order of things. Previously God forbore, not only with man, but even with the saints, looking unto Him who should come; and sins were, not remitted exactly, but praeter-mitted (Rom. 3:25), if we would speak with dogmatic propriety. Man was simply and solely a debtor to God's mercy. Nor would we weaken for a moment that man is still a debtor to His mercy, and must ever be. But there is a revelation now in virtue of Christ's death, a new and different and infinite truth, that God is a debtor to the Son of man for glorifying Him as to evil no less than good, not only fulfilling all righteousness, but suffering for all unrighteousness, and this alone in the cross, which constitutes its specific glory, ever fading away from feeble man's eyes, unless filled with light from Christ in glory, never forgotten of God the Father, who, in answer to the cry, “Glorify thy

name," said, "I have both glorified and will glorify it again." And so He does, and ever will, whatever appearances may for a little while say to the contrary.

His righteousness, once so dreaded a sound, armed (as it could not be without Christ) against us, is now by His death as distinctly for us, as is its spring, the grace which reigns through it unto eternal life. And we boast in hope of His glory, which, without Christ's death, had been instant and everlasting destruction to us, as surely as we have an access by faith into His favor, in which we stand as a present thing. Oh, what has not the death of Christ done for God and for us?

Hence the Lord adds, in verse 32, "If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately." If we may reverently so speak, it is God now who has become debtor for the vindication of His glory to the Man who suffered on the cross. Was He not God, from everlasting to everlasting, no less than the Father? yet did He become most truly man, and as man the Son of man—which Adam was not—brought glory to God, even in the matter of sin. Therefore it is that God, having been glorified in Him, could not but also glorify Him in Himself. This He has done by setting Him (not on David's, but) on His Own throne in heaven, the only adequate answer to the cross. There He alone is sat down, the Son, but a man, on God's throne, and this" immediately." God could not, would not, did not, wait for the kingdom, which will surely come, and Christ in it, when the due time arrives. But the work of Christ was too precious to admit of delay, and God had counsels, long hidden, to bring out meanwhile. There should He glorify Christ immediately; and so it is, as we all know now, however strange to Jewish expectation then.

Notes on John 13:33-38

Not only was His death before the Lord, but His departure from the world—a notion absolutely new to a Jewish mind in connection with the Messiah. The more such an one believed Him to be the promised One, the less could it be conceived that He should quit the scene which He had come to bless. “We have heard out of the law,” answered the people not long before, that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” There too He had intimated to the Jews, not only His death, but what death He should die, and His retirement from their midst. A new creation and heavenly glory were beyond their field of vision. But here the Lord prepares His disciples more fully for what was then coming and is now come—facts simple enough for us who have to do with them every day, but wholly unlooked for in Israel, who expected the kingdom immediately to appear, not the things unseen and eternal, with which our faith is called to be conversant.

“Little children, yet a little I am with you. Ye will seek me; and, as I said to the Jews, where I go away ye cannot come, also to you I say now.” (Ver. 33.) None had passed this way heretofore. It must be a new and living way, and only His death could make it possible, consistently with God or with man. But to His own there is a title of endearment; and if He was to be but a little with them, they were to seek Him. Heaven, however, was in no way accessible to man, like the earth, of whose dust his body was made. Christ came from God, and went to God, as He will come by-and-by and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. But no more is the Christian able to go there than any other man; Christ alone can bring any therein, as He will surely do with His own at His coming.

But He meanwhile lays a characteristic injunction on them here below. “A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love among one another.” (Vers. 34, 35.)

The nation disappears. It is no question of loving one's neighbor, but of Christ's disciples, and their mutual love according to His love. New relationships would come out with increasing plainness when He rose from the dead, and sent down the Holy Spirit; and this new duty, loving one another, would flow out of the new relationship: a convincing proof to all men whose they were, for He alone had shown this throughout His life and death, as also alive again—love unfailing. How far were the Jews from such love! The Gentiles had not even the thought of it. And no wonder. Love is of God, not of man, which accounts for the blank till He came, who, though God, manifested love in man and to man, and was thus, through His death and resurrection, to bear much fruit. Their love was to be, if we may so say, of His own material and mold—to abide, if it did not begin, when He went away. It is not here activity of zeal in quest of sinners, however precious, but the unselfish seeking of the good of saints, as such, in lowliness of mind.

An irrepressible disciple, with a curiosity habitual in him, turns from what the Lord was enjoining to the words before: “Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, where goest thou? Jesus answered him, Where I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward. Peter saith to him, Lord,

why cannot I follow thee now? My life for thee I will lay down, Jesus answered him, Thy life for me wilt thou lay down? Verily, verily, I say to thee, in no wise shall a cock crow till thou shalt have denied me thrice." (Vers. 36-38.) Peter knew and really loved the Lord, but how little he as yet knew himself! It was right to feel the Lord's absence; but he should have heeded better the mild, yet grave, admonition, that where Christ was going away he was not able to follow Him now; he should have valued the comforting assurance that He should follow him later. Alas, how much we lose at once, how much we suffer afterward, through not laying to heart the deep truth of Christ's words! We soon see the bitter consequences in Peter's history; but we know, from the further words of our Lord in the close of this Gospel, how grace would ensure in the end the favor compromised by that self-confidence at the beginning, which he is here warned against.

But we are apt to think most highly of ourselves, of our love, wisdom, power, moral courage, and every other good quality, when we least know and judge ourselves in God's presence, as here we see in Peter, who, impatient of the hint already given, breaks forth into the self-confident question, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Peter, therefore, must learn, as we also, by painful experience what he might have understood even better by subjection of heart, in faith, to the Lord's words. Where He warns, it is rash and wrong for us to question; and rashness of spirit is but the precursor of a fall in fact, whereby we must be taught, if we refuse otherwise. He that slighted the warning when Christ spoke it, lied through fear of a servant-maid. True Christian courage is not presumptuous, but well consorts with fear and trembling; for its confidence is not in the resources of self, or the circumstances of others, but in God, with a due sense of the power of Satan and of our own weakness.

When ignorance slips, as it often does, into presumption, the Lord does not spare rebuke. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" Was this Peter's resolve? Soon would that stout heart quail at the shadow of death. Yet what was death for any saint to compare with Christ's death, when tasting rejection as none ever did, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, as it was His alone to suffer for them from God!

But ignorance works often in another way. They will not believe their own utter weakness, spite of Christ's plain warning, and want light to prove His truth and their folly. Nor is this all. They assume that if a believer fail once, he must immediately repent in dust and ashes. How little they know themselves, or have profited by scripture! "Verily, verily," said the all-patient Master, "in no wise shall a cock crow till thou shalt have denied me thrice." I recall Peter's repeated denial of his Lord, and with oaths too, under the most solemn circumstances, not to lower him but for the profit of our own souls, and to exalt Him who alone is worthy. How infinite the grace which made the measure of his sin to be the signal and means of his repentance, under the Lord's use of His own word, and in His wonder-working mercy! And what He was to Peter, He is, and nothing less, to us.

Chapter 116

Notes on John: 14:1-4

The way was now opened to bring out the Christian's hope. Death, in its most solemn and most blessed aspect, had been put before the disciples, however little, as yet, able to follow their Master in thought, impossible, then, in deed in any way, as the Lord let the too confident hear, though he learned it not till he proved his own utter powerlessness by the basest denial of Him he loved. How much we have to learn by most painful and humbling experience of ourselves, because we fail in sustained subjection to, and dependence on, our Lord! But now, this cleared, the Savior turns to what is unfailingly light, because it centers in Himself. It is no coming as Son of man to judge, no appearing in glory, to set all that is crooked straight, and govern all righteously. It is His own coming for His beloved ones, that they may be with Him where He is, in the Father's house on high.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe in me also. In my Father's house are mail), mansions: if not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am ye also may be. And where I go ye know the way.” (Vers. 1-4.)

A greater break with Jewish feeling could not but be than such a hope, a shock, assuredly, as wholly changing all they had expected, but only as supplanting an earthly prospect, however blessed, by a heavenly one incomparably more blessed. If His going away by death, not yet understood, either in its depth of suffering or in its efficacy, but as departure from them on earth, might naturally disturb their heart, He begins to explain its all-importance as making way for faith. He was no longer to be as the Messiah of Israel, according to prophetic intimation, on earth, still less displayed there in indisputable glory and resistless power. He is about to go a man yet to heaven, and there to be an object of faith, as no longer seen, even as God is. “Ye believe in God, believe in me also.” This was a quite new thought about the Messiah, rejected here, glorified in heaven, believed on in earth: simple enough now, but then a. strange sound, and an entirely new order of associations, which set aside for a time all that saints and prophets looked for; not that these were more than postponed, but that those things, altogether unprecedented and unexpected, were to come in by the Lord's going on high after redemption, with just enough in the Old Testament (as in Psa. 110:1) to stop the mouth of a Jew who might pervert the law to deny the gospel.

This, then, is the central fact for the Christian as for the church—Christ not reigning over the earth, but glorified on high, as the fruit of His rejection here below. But it is far from all, though all else be but consequences in divine grace or righteousness. The next thing He proceeds to unfold is that there is room above where He is for the saints who follow their rejected Lord. “In my Father's house are many mansions: if not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you.” He would not have raised a hope incapable of realization for these saints. If He discloses His own bright abode with the Father, there is ample room for them as for Him, and His love, which was giving Himself for them, would keep back nothing else. His love, and the Father's love—for

indeed they were one in purpose as in nature—would have them near Himself there. There are many abodes in the Father's house. It is no question of crowns, or cities, or place in the kingdom. There will be reward according to walk, though grace will secure its own sovereign rights. But here differences vanish before the infinite love that will have us with Himself before His Father. Were it too much, or not so, He would have told us, because He goes to prepare a place for us. Love never could, nor does, wittingly disappoint its object.

There is another thing of deep moment contingent on this, but plainly revealed, instead of being left for us to infer. He is coming to fetch His own to heaven. And this was meant to be ever acting on the heart, as we see by the subsequent teaching of the Holy Ghost throughout the rest of the New Testament. Our new place and home is where Christ is, and whither He is to translate us, we know not how soon. Times, dates, signs, circumstances, are purposely excluded. The Christian understands them by a sound intelligence of the word which takes cognizance of all things, but knows nothing of them for his own hope. He reads them about the Jew or the Gentile for the earth; but his are heavenly things, where such measures do not govern. He looks above sun, moon, and stars, where Christ sits at God's right hand, and knows that Christ is coming again, as surely as He went, and this to prepare a place for us. And mark, He is not sending angels to gather us above. This were a great thing, but how immeasurably more the love as well as honor, since He, the Son of God, is coming again, and will receive us to Himself, that, where He is, we also may be. He came for us to die for our sins, to God's glory; He is coming again, to have us with Himself in the same home of divine love and nearness to the Father where He is. He could not do more, He would not do less. There is no love like that of our Lord Jesus; nor is the predicted exaltation for Israel, still less for others, to be compared with it, any more than earth is with heaven.

“And where I go ye know the way.” His own Person, the Son of the Father, in grace and truth, presented to man, and revealing the Father, is the way which could not but lead to heaven. He came from God, and was going to God. No earthly blessedness could adequately express His glory: He might, and would, take it, and glorify God in glory as in humiliation; but the saint constantly feels there is, and must be, more and higher. Heaven is His who could communicate with His Father, and command its resources, though never whilst here abandoning the place of the lowliest of men and servant of all need. Yet, as He was the conscious Son, so the saints knew He must be going to the Father, as He was the way there.

Notes on John 14:5-12

The Lord had laid down the inward conscious knowledge of the disciples, according to God, and the glory of His own person, whom they confessed soon, by redemption and the gift of the Spirit to bloom in full intelligence. But in this they were as yet dull to apprehend His meaning; and he who was remarkable among them for his gloomy thoughts expresses this for all.

“Thomas saith to him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; [and] how know we [or can we know] the way? Jesus saith to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (Vers. 5-7.)

No the thoughts of Thomas limited the Lord to that earthly horizon which formed the boundary of his own hopes of Israel clustering around their Messiah. He could not conceive, any more than the rest, whither the Lord was retiring, now that He had come to the people and the land which, he knew, He was pledged to bless richly and forever. How, then, know the way? His mind was yet earthly. As he had no thought of heaven for the Lord Jesus, so he overlooked the way. But this furnished the opportunity for the Lord to announce, in words as simple as profound, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Much conveyed in them might have been gleaned from testimonies to Him, most from His own previous discourses, as given in this very Gospel, but nowhere so much combined with so brief an expression. It was worthy of Him, and at that moment above all.

A way is a great boon, especially through a wilderness which characteristically has no way. Neither had Eden, or unfallen creation, a way; but then it needed none. For all things everywhere were good, and as long as man ate not of the forbidden tree, there was no straying. All else it was for him to enjoy, giving thanks to God. But sin came in, and death, the harbinger of judgment, and all was changed into a wilderness, and men wandered in all directions, and all of them away from God and irreparably wrong: a wilderness-world truly, a void place, where there is no way. Not that promise did not, less or more, bold out the hope of better things; not that law did not, in due time, thunder and lighten; but God's way was not known, as His grace alone could show it. Now it is; for Christ is the way, the only sure way, for the most erring of sinners, avowedly for the lost, whom He is come to seek and to save; and He is the way to the Father, not to God displayed in power and glory on the earth, as the Jew should expect for the day that is coming, when the rejected Messiah returns as the glorious Son of man. But He is much more, and above all time or change, the deepest rejection only forcing out what was there always, His own personal glory as Son of God superior to every dispensation. And in the fullest consciousness of it, He says to dimly-seeing Thomas, “I am the way.” Why should one wait for the time when the wilderness shall be gladdened by His presence and power? Then, doubtless, the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; and a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. But He is this, and more now, to all that believe in Him, and faith delights to own, as God to make known, all He is, when unbelief disowns and slights and casts

Him out. He is accordingly the one divine way; and as there is none other, so is He all, sufficing for him who has no strength or wisdom or worth in any sort. But Christ is the way now for the steps of such as know Him, the wisdom of God in an evil world—Himself the highest and perfect expression of that wisdom, and thus open to the babe in faith, no less than to an apostle.

Further, He is the truth, the full expression of every one and of everything as they are. He tells us in His own person what God is; He shows us the Father, being Himself the Son. But He, not Adam, shows us man. Adam, no doubt, shows us falling, or fallen, man; Christ alone is man according to God, both morally, as once here below, and in counsel, as now risen and in heaven. Moreover, as He shows us holiness and righteousness, so also He brings out sin in its true colors; as He says Himself, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth Father also. If I had not done among the works Which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Hence He, and He only, brings out His adversary the devil personally, the prince of this world, but the constant enemy of the Son. Even the law, holy, just, and good as the commandment may be, is not the truth; for it is rather the demand, on God's part, of what a man should do; but Christ tells out, not merely what he ought to be, but what he is. The law claims his duty; Christ declares that all is over, and he is lost. But Christ also shows us a Savior in His own person, and this from God, and with God. Not that He is not the Judge, for He will judge living and dead, as surely as He will appear and set up His kingdom; but He is Savior now and to the uttermost. Indeed it would be impossible to say what of good and glorious He is not, nor from what evil He does not deliver. He is the truth, the exhibition of the true relation of all things with God, and consequently of the departure of any from God. He, and He only, to the challenge, Who art thou? could answer, Absolutely that which I am also saying to you. He is what He says, as no other man was, the truth; and this, as He intimates in the same chapter viii. of our Gospel, because He is not man alone but God.

But He is more than the way and the truth; He is life, and this because He is the Son. In communion with the Father, He quickens. It is not so in judgment; for the Father judges none, but has given every kind of judgment to the Son, and this because He is the Son of man; and as men dishonored Him because He deigned in love to become man, so the Father will have Him honored, not only as God, but as man in judgment. Believers honor Him in a very different and far more excellent way. They bow to Him now, they willingly gladly exalt Him while rejected by the world. They are thus by grace in communion with God, who has set Him on high at His own right hand, and will by-and-by compel every creature to bow and own Him Lord, to His own glory. But those that believe have life in Him now, Which issues, by the Spirit's power, in the practice of good, and hence they will enjoy life-resurrection at His coming; as those that have done evil must be raised to resurrection of judgment in its day.

Thus the believer had Christ for all possible need, and all the blessing that our God and Father can bestow. One cannot have Him as the way and the truth without having Him as the life also, for indeed He is the resurrection and the life; And this life, which we have in Him, the, Son, the Holy Spirit strengthens and exercises, as His word flourishes it, revealing Him afresh to our souls. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord; and as the way in Christ is a path of love and liberty and holiness, so the end also is everlasting life.

Nor is there any other means of blessing: “No one cometh unto the Father but by me,” says the Lord.

There is the surest guarantee, the amplest and the highest good, but it is absolutely exclusive. By none but the Son can one come to the Father; by Him can come any, the proudest Jew, the most debased Gentile. Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father, as says the apostle expressly, when showing the nature of that church which now takes the place of the ancient people of God. And be it observed that it is not to God only in sovereign grace above sin, saving the most guilty and wretched it is to the Father; in that relationship of grace which the Son knew eternally in His own right and title, and none the less, but the more, to His Father's honor, when He glorified Him on earth as the perfectly dependent and obedient man. How wondrous that we should come to the Father, His Father and ours, His God and ours: all glory to Him and His work of redemption, through which alone it could be to us who believe!

Next the Savior lets them know that the knowledge of the Father is inseparable from that of the Son. “If ye knew me, ye would know my Father also; and henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.” He is the image of the invisible God; in the Son is the Father known; and this the disciples are given to learn now objectively.

But there is no capacity in the bright and active-minded disciple to enter into divine things, any more than in the most reserved or sombre one. “Philip saith to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” (Ver. 8.) An excellent wish for one who had not seen Jesus and helped others in their desires to see Jesus. But it was sad unbelief in Philip, especially after the patient gracious words just uttered to lead them on.

“Jesus saith to him, Am I so long with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; [and] how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I [am] in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words which I says to you, I do not speak from myself; but the Father that abideth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me; but, if not, believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works which I do shall he do also; and, greater things than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father". (Vers. 9-12.)

The Lord thus poured a flood of light on the perplexity of the disciples. The Messiah Himself was not a mere man, however endowed and honored of God. He was a man, and the lowliest of men, but who was He that was pleased to be born of the virgin? He was the Son—He was God, no less than the Father, and in Him the Father was displaying Himself as such. It was God in grace, forming and fashioning His children by the manifestation of His affections and thoughts and ways in Christ the Son, a man on earth. This they had known, and yet had not known. They were familiar with Him, and the facts of His every-day works and words, little feeling as yet that they were words and works for eternity of the Creator displaying Himself in incomparably deeper fashion than in the wonders of His creation, or of His government in Israel. No one hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. It was for this He came, not only to annul sin by the sacrifice of Himself, but to manifest the eternal life which was with the Father, and this as the Son revealing the Father. How new the order of being, how strange the range of thought, to the disciples! Yet this had Jesus been ever doing here below, occupied with His Father's business long before the beginning of His ministry.

“Believest thou not that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me?” All turned on the glory of His person; and the very unity of the Godhead, the cardinal truth Israel had to testify, makes a difficulty to the reasoning mind of man, unable to rise above its own experience. Not only had law and prophets prepared the way, and John the Baptist's witness, but the words that Jesus said were not as any other man spoke. They were no mere human things, nor independently of His Father. He had been made flesh, but never ceased to be the Word, the Son; and the works He did bore the unmistakable imprint of the same gracious One—the Father. It was He that did the works, or His works. The disciples were therefore called to believe that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him; a state of being only possible in the divine nature, to which the works themselves gave a witness that left the incredulous without excuse.

And this the Lord follows up with His formula of special solemnity in verse 12, wherein He intimates the testimony that would be rendered to the glory of His person when, and because, He was going to the Father, the power which should invest the believer, and enable him to do, not only what they had seen Jesus do, but things greater still, in honor of His name. And this was to the letter fulfilled. For never do we hear of the Lord's shadow healing the sick, nor were napkins taken from His body (save in lying legends) to cure disease, or expel demons, not to speak of the multitudes which were brought in, far and wide, by apostolic preaching. What greater proof of divine power than to work as He Himself did, and yet more by His servants; and more, again, when He went on high than when He sent them out from His presence on earth! But if the power displayed—if the works were to be greater, who could compare himself with the Lord in self-renouncing love, dependence, and obedience Certainly none that believed on Him.

Notes on John 14:13-19

Thus had the Lord guaranteed the solemn and withal cheering promise, that His proceeding to the Father was in no way to stem and dry up the mighty stream of gracious power in which He had wrought here below. The believer in Him was to do what He did, and yet greater things. This He now follows up and explains by the place given to that exercise of faith which issues in prayer, henceforth to have its fullest character in His name who had glorified the Father to the uttermost.

“And whatsoever ye shall ask [or beg] in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask [or beg] anything in my name, I will do it.” (Vers. 13, 14.) The disciples were thus to count on power that could not fail, if sought in His name; for Jesus was no mere man, whose departure must terminate what He used to do when present. Absent, He would prove Himself divine, and none the less interested in their petitions because He was risen from the dead. Whatever they might ask, He would do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son. And, not content with a broad assurance in verse 13, no matter what the difficulty, He repeats it in verse 14, as to any particular petition on their part, with a yet more emphatic pledge of His personal action.

But the Lord adds a great deal more, and of the deepest moment. “If ye love me, keep [or, ye will keep] my commandments; and I will ask my Father, and he will give you another Advocate, that he may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it beholdeth him not, nor knoweth him; but ye know him, because he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I am coming unto you. Yet a little, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye also shall live.” (Vers. 15-19.) The way to show their affection and devotedness to their Master would be by obedience; for, whatever His grace, He does not disguise from them His authority. To obey His commandments, then, would prove their love far better than zeal in work or sorrow for His absence. For His absence, however serious in itself, is turned by God's goodness and wisdom, to better blessings and deeper ways for the saints, even as it furnishes the occasion for bringing out the bidden counsels of God to His own infinite glory in Christ. Their place was to obey His commandments, as they loved Him; whilst He would ask His Father, who would send them Another, a Paraclete or Advocate as He Himself had been, One who would undertake and carry through their cause, as a Roman patron of old did for his clients, or a modern solicitor does in his measure and sphere. “Comforter” seems too narrow a word, and separates the Spirit unduly from our Lord, who could hardly be so styled in John 2:1, where Paraclete is applied to His action on high, as here to the Holy Ghost's on earth.

Further, this other Advocate, given by the Father in answer to Christ, was not to be for a brief season, like the Savior here below. “He will give you another Advocate, that he may be with you forever.” This is a truth of the deepest consolation, but most solemn for Christendom. Who believes it? Certainly not those who boast of evangelical views, yet proclaim their unconscious unbelief by regular prayers at the beginning of every year, that God would pour out afresh His Holy Spirit on His children in their low estate. Is it meant that the self-complacent mass in Christendom, (which utters no such special petitions, but assumes that the Holy Ghost acts, necessarily and

infallibly, through popes, or patriarchs, or kindred officials,) are more really believing? Far from it. They are inflated with pride, as if God sustains and sanctions their position, and utter blindness holds their eyes, so that they cannot see their state to be one of departure from God's will and truth and grace. But the opposite pole of an error may he also an error; and the assumption that the Holy Spirit directs Babylon, in her confusion of the world and the church, is not remedied by the practical denial of the abiding presence of the Spirit in the periodical petitions for a fresh outpouring on us.

It were well to ask for a single eye and a spirit of humiliation, that we might cease to do evil, and learn to do well, and this with a truly contrite heart, and a deep sense of whence we have fallen, and of Christ's speedy coming. It were well to judge ourselves by the word of God, not only in our individual walk, but in our corporate ways and worship, to see to it that we neither grieve nor quench the Spirit, to desire earnestly that we be strengthened with power by the Spirit in the inner man, if indeed we do not also need first to be enlightened of Him, so that we should know what is the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are our true wants, even where peace with God is enjoyed individually; for there is nothing in general so little, known to the Christian or the church, as what the Christian and the church really are; and how can the functions or duties be discharged where the relationship is ignored? Now all this turns on the great truths before us in these chapters of our Gospel, the absence of Christ from the world, to take His place as the risen Man in heaven, on the footing of redemption, and the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down to be with the saints forever. Faith, then, shows itself, not surely in imputing to Him failure in abiding, spite of our failure, and praying for a fresh outpouring, as if He had fled in disgust, and needed to be sent down again, but in separating from every evil condemned by the word, and doing the will of God as far as we learn it, counting on the assured presence of the Spirit according to the Savior's promise. Blessing and power follow obedience, even as the Lord puts it here. Nothing can be conceived more false morally than to abide in what we know to be wrong, waiting for power, and then obeying. Not so; more especially, too, as even this hollow excuse denies the distinctive privilege of the Christian, that he has the Spirit already in being a Christian. And so has the church of God; if not, it is some other church, not His, for only by the presence of the Spirit is the church, as such, always and in all things, responsible to he guided of Him, even “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it beholdeth him not, nor knoweth him; but ye know him, because he abideth with you, and shall be in you.”

The Lord herein looked onward to the presence of the Holy Ghost with the saints, not only assuring them that it should be perpetual, but explaining why the world could have no portion in Him, whereas they might behold and know the Messiah objectively, though feebly and in vain for eternal life. But with the Spirit, as now given, what could the world have in common? He could but, by His presence with the saints outside the world, prove sin, righteousness, and judgment; but He is no object of sight or knowledge, and the world has no faith, or it would not be the world; whereas the saints, the Christians henceforth, would be characterized by knowing Him, invisible as He is, “because he abideth with you, and shall be in you.” Not that I think with Euthymius Zigabenus, that His abiding in Jesus who was among them is the meaning, but that, when given, He was to abide with them, instead of it brief sojourn like the Lord's, and that He should not only abide, but be in them, which Messiah, as such, could not be, however companying with them. It was to be a new,

special, intimate presence of God in and with the saints, in contrast with the world which had rejected Christ; and there is no surer sign of, or preparation for, the final apostasy, in its complete form than that unbelieving departure from God which binds together the saints and the world, whether in a popish assumption of the Spirit's sanction, or in a Protestant unbelief of His presence, because of their experience of a name to live, with death around and within, which prompts them to cry for the Spirit as if He were gone, instead of quitting all that grieves Him, and hinders the manifestation of His gracious action.

But, said the Lord, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you.” It is not here by His future advent, but by the gift of the Spirit. Thus would He comfort them in His own absence. “Yet a little, and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me: because I live, ye also shall live.” Nothing could be more opposed to their thoughts of, and expectations from, the Messiah of Israel, seen by every eye, though in special nearness to His own people on earth. Now they were by the Holy Ghost to see Him whom the world had rejected and lost, and should see no more, save in judgment. And the saints should not behold Him only, but live of the selfsame life, having Christ living in them, as says the apostle Paul, or as the Lord here, Because I live, ye also shall live. Christ is their life, and this in resurrection-power, to which the future tense may point.

Chapter 119

Notes on John 14:20-24

BUT there is more than life, blessed as it is, living because Christ lives, Himself their life, not as Son simply but as risen and gone to heaven. The Spirit is power to see and know, in contrast with flesh and world. And here He is supposed to be given, known, abiding with them and in them. A most solemn thing is His power, where Christ is not the life: unspeakably blessed, where we live of His life.

“In that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (Ver. 20.) It is not here simply the glory of His person as in verses 10, 11. This was true and an object of faith then. “Believed thou not,” said the Lord to Philip, “that I [am] in the Father and the Father is in me?” Words and works both attested it. “Believe me,” He said to all, “that I [am] in the Father and the Father in me.” His being man in no way hindered or lowered His dignity, nor His essential oneness with the Father; and it was and is of all moment to believers unwaveringly to hold it and adoringly. The Son is God, even as the Father. But now more was to be, and to be known, impossible without His personal glory, but dependent on His work and the gift of the Spirit. This we have now, for that day is come. It is not the future glory, but present grace putting us in the closest vital association with Him who has gone into heavenly glory, and yet is one with us here, as we with Him there, by the Spirit given that we might know it all.

In this knowledge saints, true saints of God, are painfully dull, not merely to their privation in countless ways of the utmost moment, but to His dishonor who cannot be duly served or worshipped now but in Spirit and in truth. The day of forms and shadows is closed; the true light now shines in Christ only, of whom His saints are the responsible light-bearers as they hold forth the word of life. But there is more here, though all is bound up with Him. It is not Christ present in the world, and reigning over the land or even all the earth. He is here the despised and rejected of men, but glorified on high. “In that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father” —a relationship and sphere incomparably more glorious than the throne of His father David. It is not only heavenly, but also expressive of infinite nearness to the Father; and this gives its character to Christianity. All its blessedness turns on who and what and where Christ is. Unbelief in saints, walking with the world and numbed by tradition, treats all as lifeless fact, not as truth which by the Spirit forms and guides the soul; unbelief in men learns fast to deny and deride even the fact. So much the more urgent call is there on those who believe by grace, to walk in the heavenly light; and the more so, as we know not only that He is in the Father, but that we are in Him and He in us, as the Lord proceeded to say.

There can scarce be conceived a more striking contrast in position and relationship than of Christ and His own as here described with the Messiah and His people, as those then present had gathered, not from the tradition of the elders, but from the ancient oracles of God. But God is sovereign, though ever wise and never arbitrary. All His ways are good and glorious, as they all turn on Christ His image and their center, the prime object before Him for heaven and earth. On earth government was and will be the aim; for heaven grace reigns, first however suffering to His

glory, yet morally and infinitely superior to evil, by-and-by supreme when evil is dealt with and disappears by divine judgment. Between the humiliation of the cross and the coming again is the place of the Son as now known in the Father, as of us in Him and of Aim in us. No Old Testament saint knew or could speak thus; nor did an expectation of it even dawn on a single heart of old! No millennial saint will ever know such a relationship of Christ or of those then on earth. It is wholly and necessarily a part of what God is now intermediately working for the glory of the Lord; and as faith beholds Him in such a height of divine intimacy, so it owns the incomparable grace which has put us in Christ, and gives us to feel the grave responsibility of Christ in us. What can tell out our nearness more than such an identification of new life and nature, and this in power by the Spirit? Truly “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;” and the union is just so much more seal and permanent than natural oneness, as the Spirit is mightier and closer and more abiding than the flesh. But if thus one with Him and in Him by the Spirit, He is in us by the same Spirit. There is thus alike the highest privilege and the strongest obligation; and we must beware of sundering what the Lord there joins together. If we have life in the Son, we need to remind our souls that Christ lives in us, and that we are to show out Him, not ourselves. Doubtless this demands true and deep and constant self judgment, and the faith that always bears about in the body the dying of Jesus; and God helps us by trials of all sorts, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh. Thus only does Christian practice flow from Christian principle and privilege; and all is of Christ by the Holy Ghost in us. How comforting that our duty as Christians supposes our blessedness! How humbling that the gift of the Spirit makes our failure inexcusable!

But there is meanwhile, and especially connected with Christ being in us, not yet government of the earth by Christ reigning righteously and in power, but moral government of our souls in obedience, which assumes a twofold shape. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; but he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.” (Ver. 21.) To the superficial mind of man it may seem strange that our Lord should speak of having His commandments, not observing them only, as a proof of loving Him; but it is profoundly true. The wicked, the disobedient, the careless do not understand, but the wise, even those whose wisdom ends not, though it begins, with the fear of the Lord. The single eye is full of light. The desire to do His will finds and knows what it is. Thus the loving heart has and keeps His commandments; and loving Him draws down His Father's love, who honors the Son and will not be exalted at His expense. Obedience springing from love is thus the condition of the disciples which ensures the love of Jesus and the manifestation of Himself to us here below.

Such a manifestation took the disciples by surprise; and one of them, Jude, carefully distinguished from the betrayer, could not but ask for explanation. “Judas, not the Iscariot, saith to him, Lord, [and] how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make an abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my word; and the word which ye have is not mine, but the Father's that sent me.” (Vers. 21-24.) When Messiah manifests Himself to the world as He will, when the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His anointed is come, there will be a feigned obedience rendered by many kept in check by the display of His power and glory. Obedience now that He is absent must be more put to the proof, and is precious to Him as being real; and it should grow as being of life in: the Spirit, as the knowledge of His will becomes better known. Compare Col. 1:9, 10. Hence it deepens from His commandments to His word. His

commandments were not grievous, His word is treasured, because He Himself is loved; and so the Lord counts it; and fuller manifestation is enjoyed of the Father and the Son, and more abidingly.

It will be noticed that in verse 28 it is “My word,” not, as in the Authorized Version, “My words.” He that loves the Lord will keep His word as one whole, because it is His; as He adds in verse 24, that he who loves Him not does not keep His words, or sayings. It is not his habit or way to keep any of them in detail. Disobedience betrays absence of love for Jesus; and this is the more serious, because it is not simply the Son who is in question, but the Father that sent Him, whose word is slighted. There is nothing so characteristic of a saint now as obedience. It was so perfectly with our Lord Himself. He came to do the will of God; He did, and suffered it to the uttermost. Thus only is God known growingly by His children, and most intimately as the Lord here declares. We must know Him to do His will, which can only be through knowing Jesus Christ whom He sent; but keeping His word, (as the expression not of His authority alone, though this is dear to us from the first, but of His will,) we grow by the knowledge of God, and this indefinitely while here below, though ever in unsparing judgment of ourselves, and in confiding dependence on Him. And how cheering to the heart the abiding sense of the presence of the Father and the Son with us as thus walking! Would that we knew it better! A manifestation is much, an abode is more.

Chapter 120

Notes on John 14:25-31

The value of what directs the life, of which it was also the revealing means, cannot be exaggerated; and this we have seen in the commands and words of our Lord Jesus, by which He exercises the life He has given to the believer, as indeed He is their life. But now He adds fresh consolation and blessing in the relation borne by the Advocate, or Paraclete (for so now the Spirit is not only characterized but called). “These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things which I said to you.” (Ver. 26.) How blessed that the same Holy Spirit, who anointed and abode in Him while ministering here below, was to teach the disciples all things, and to give them back all the words of Jesus 1 And so it was fulfilled, and more, as became a divine person who deigned to serve in love, sent by the Father in the name of the Son. It is not here the on asking the Father, and the Father giving, as in verse 16, but the Father sending in the name of the Son the One who could, and would, teach all things, besides recalling all that Jesus said to them. Room is thus left, not only for His reviving in their memory all the injunctions of Christ, but also for His own unlimited teaching.

But there is more than doctrine. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world giveth give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (Ver. 27.) Throughout the Lord supposes His death. This was necessary to peace; His own peace goes farther still. It was the peace He enjoyed while here—a peace unruffled by circumstances, and in unbroken communion with His Father; a peace as far as possible from man's heart, in such a world as this, ignorant of the Father, and on all points at issue with Him. But it characterized the second Man, who gives it to as. In the faith of Him who loves us perfectly and to the end, who has accomplished all to God's glory and for us, we are entitled to it. And the Holy Ghost would have us enjoy it according to His word. He who gives it gave it not away, and had it not the less because we were to receive it. Like all else that He gives, it is enjoyed unimpaired in its own divine fullness, everyone that shares rather adding to it than taking from it. The question is not merely of reality, but of its course and character. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Why, indeed, with His peace, should the heart be confounded or fearful?

But the Lord looks now for hearts purified by faith to delight in His glory. “Ye heard that I said to you, I go away, and come unto you; if ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced that I go unto the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe.” (Vers. 28, 29.) Thus, whatever His essential and personal glory, He never forgets that He is man on earth. As such He goes away, and comes back to the disciples. As such He calls upon them to rejoice in His proceeding to the Father. It was no small thing that man in His person should thus enter into glory; and there is almost as much unbelief in Christendom's taking it as a matter of course, in utter indifference to its value, as in Jewish rejection of it as incredible, if not impossible. The Jew, as such, looked for man, that is for himself, to be blessed in the highest degree by God on the earth, and so, doubtless, beyond his

thought it will be in the kingdom by-and-by. But the Lord would have the Christian rejoice in the second Man, gone up even now into the paradise of God, the sure pledge of our own following Him there when He comes back again for no. And therefore does He the more impressively call attention, not to the fact only, but to His mention of it then before it came to pass, that when it did, they should believe. Himself in glory is the living object of faith, full of weighty and fruitful consequence for us. It is well to give His death the deepest value. Never can we lose sight of His profound humiliation in self-sacrificing love to glorify God, and to bear our burden of sins and judgment, without incalculable loss to our souls; but we do well to have our eye fixed on Him received up in glory, and ever to wait for Him as about to come and have us there with Himself in the Father's house.

“No longer shall I talk much with you, for the prince of the world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded me, so I do. Arise, let us go hence.” (Vers. 30, 31.) The Lord thus intimates that He has not much more to talk with them. He had another task on hand; for the enemy was coming, characterized now as the prince of the world which had rejected the Son of God, proving thereby its opposition to the Father, and its subjection to Satan; but, come when he might, he had no more in Christ at the end than at the beginning. Then he would gladly have enticed the Savior out of the path of obedience, by offering gratification; now he strives to fill Him in that path with fear and horror of the death which was before Him; but in vain: “The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?” In us, naturally, there is everything which can afford a handle to Satan; in Christ he had nothing. So it could not but be because of the glory and unsullied perfectness of His person, true God and unblemished Man; and so, it must be for us, if we were to have eternal life in Him, and He to take away our sins, and all this in obedience and to the glory of God His Father. Therefore does He add, “'but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded me, even so I do.” It was indeed the Son's love to the uttermost, it was also unqualified obedience.

Here the Lord ends this part of His communications, and marks it by the closing words, “Arise, let us go hence.”

Notes on John 15:1-4

The change of subject having been made thus apparent, the Lord now proceeds to set forth His mind for the disciples, in one of the allegories peculiar to our Gospel. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me not bearing fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean, because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit from itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither [can] ye, unless ye abide in me.” (Vers. 1-4.)

Thus the Lord sets aside Israel as any source of fruit-bearing for God. Long since had the prophets denounced the nation as bearing wild grapes, or an empty vine, or only fit for the burning. But the Lord brings to light Himself, as the true and only stock acceptable unto God. This was an immense truth for Jews to learn. In Israel was all that they trusted of religion. There was the temple, there the priesthood, there the sacrifices, there the feasts; there every ordinance, public or private, great or small, instituted of God. Outside Israel were the heathen, who knew not God. Now the Lord does not merely strip the veil from the elect people's hollow state, but makes known the secret—He is the Vine, the true Vine. He is not merely a fruitful branch, where all others were unfruitful; He is Himself the true Vine. Thus we have the positive Object before us, the one source of fruit-bearing.

“And my Father,” He adds, “is the husbandman.” But there is another truth needed, the revelation of His Father (not yet revealed as theirs, though soon so to be in His resurrection), no longer of Jehovah as once in the vineyard of the nation, nor as the Almighty as to their fathers. As Father, He deals with the branches of the Vine, which is Christ Himself on earth, object of all the active and watchful interest of His Father, who looks for fruit. But it is not Himself alone; there are branches in Him. And here their responsibility enters; for they are the disciples, Jews in their natural condition, henceforth called to bear fruit unto God.

And what then are the terms laid down? “Every branch in me not bearing fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Clearly it is the Father's government of those who bear the name of the Lord. The fruitless professor He removes, the fruitful one He cleanses, that more fruit may be borne. It is the Father judging according to every man's work. The disciples were primarily in view; but the principle, of course, applies to us, now that Israel is still more manifestly set aside. As the apostle teaches us in Heb. 12, He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Here, if not taken away, we are cleansed, in order to bear more fruit. It is a wholly different state of things from a Messiah reigning in power, and His people in nothing but prosperity. Doubtless, it is not union with Christ in heaven, nor even the privileges of grace generally in Him, but the call to make Him everything on earth in daily ways, if we would indeed bear fruit. He, not the law, is the rule of life, and the source of fruitfulness; nor is there any other for the Christian, not even the Spirit, who uses the word to glorify Christ, not Himself.

The disciples had already proved the purging power of the word. “Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” They had received it, and knew that He came from God, though they knew the Father imperfectly, if at all. And Christ's word had wrought in their souls; it had cleansed their ways, it had judged their worldly thoughts, it had laid bare their carnal desires: the effect was real in their consciences. Judas was now gone, so that the Lord does not need to say, “Ye are clean, but not all;” but, on the contrary,” Ye are clean already,” even before the Holy Ghost was given as power from on high. The cleansing efficacy of the word is a cardinal truth of scripture apt to be forgotten, not merely by the Catholic, who trusts in ordinances, but by the Protestant, who speaks exclusively of the Savior's blood” that cleanseth from all sin.” God forbid that a word should be said to obscure that blood, or to turn a soul from its justifying value. But out of the Lord's side flowed water and blood, and we need both. The blood atones, the water purifies; and as the blood abides shed and efficacious once for all, in contrast with the ineffectual and many sacrifices of the Jews, the washing of water by the word is not only applied at the first, but is needed to purge all through. Where this is not seen, confusion follows, and the enfeebling, if not destruction, of fundamental truth.

But here the Lord insists on more—the necessity and the importance of dependence on Him, of intimacy with Himself. This is to abide in Christ; and His word is, “Abide in me, and I in you.” It is not sovereign grace to the sinner, but His call to the disciple; and hence His abiding in us, as a matter of daily communion, depends on our abiding in Him. “As the branch cannot bear fruit from itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither [can] ye, unless ye abide in me.” Nothing simpler than the fact outwardly, nothing surer in our experience than that so it is inwardly. He, and He only, is the dwelling-place for the soul in this world of snare and danger, in this desert where no water is. Make Him the resource, make Him the object, and the sap, as it were, flows without hindrance, and fruit is borne. Without Him no teaching avails, and all religious excitement fails; bring Him in, confide in Him, and, no matter what the difficulty or the pain or the shame, no matter what the opposition or the detraction, He sustains the heart, and fruit-bearing follows. Apart from Him we can do nothing; with Him, all things. So said one who had learned it well, “I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me.”

It seems scarcely needful to remark, that the relation of head and body serves quite another purpose in scripture, and must be kept wholly distinct. Heavenly grace forms that one body by the one Spirit, united to the glorified Head; and therein we do not hear of rending, maiming, or cutting off. It is the church viewed as the object of Christ's unfailing love, till He present it to Himself in glory. Responsibility on earth, under divine government, is another thing; and this, not the unfailing heavenly relationship of the church, is taught by the Vine and its branches. Hence Calvinistic devices are as uncalled-for as the Arminian assaults they are meant to avert. No one doubts that profession may fail. Life is eternal for all that; and in Christ there is nothing short of eternal life; but this is not the teaching of the Vine, any more than the unity of the body. It is a pity that learned commentators do not read with care the scriptures they essay to comment on.

Chapter 122

Notes on John 15:5-8

The opening words had laid down the principle of Christ as the source of fruit, in contrast with Israel, and under the living, watchful, care of the Father. It was wholly distinct from government of the flesh by the law before Jehovah, as in the chosen nation to which all the branches belonged. Christ here displaced the old associations. He had shown fruit to be so indispensable in the Father's eyes, that not to bear it involves the removal of the branch, whilst that which bears fruit is cleansed in order to bear more. He had pronounced the disciples already clean by reason of His word, and had urged them to abide in Him, as He in them; and this because they could not bear fruit except they abode in Christ, any more than the branch itself except it abide in the vine.

Next, He sums up and applies this weighty truth of communion with Him, in its great positive elements, and in strong contradistinction from abandonment of Him. “I am the vine, ye the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, he beareth much fruit; because apart from me ye can do nothing.” (Ver. 5.) Nothing more precise. The Lord leaves no uncertainty in a matter so nearly affecting both Himself and them. As surely as He was the Vine, they were the branches. There is, and could be, no failure on His part. It is easy for us to fail in dependence, and to lack confidence in Him. To abide in Him supposes, not merely distrust of ourselves, but cleaving to Him and counting on Him. Every influence around us is adverse to this; every natural feeling not less so. Faith working by love alone secures it, for self and the world are then alike judged in the light of God. It is not only that we need, and cannot do without, Him for the least things as truly as the greatest, but He attracts us by His positive excellency. If He is the one source of fruit according to the Father, He cannot be slighted with impunity, least of all by those who confess Him. It is not the grace which gives eternal life in Him, of which the Lord speaks, but throughout these verses the responsibility of the disciples. Hence, as we shall see presently, there is danger of ruin, no less than fruitlessness, where one does not abide in Him.

This, then, is the secret of fruit-bearing. It is not in saints, any more than in self, but by abiding in Christ, and Christ in us. Then there is more than promising blossom; fruit follows. Where He is intercepted from our view, or we look elsewhere, there is no such power: we manifest our nature, not Christ. Nor does the character of the circumstances affect the result. He is superior to all, spite of our weakness. Abiding in Christ, we may safely face the most hostile; and if traps be laid, and provocation given, what matters it, if Christ abides in us, as He then does? For that the two are correlative, He guarantees, and we know. Again, does fruit follow because we are with dear children of God? Alas! how often the very reverse is proved, and the levity, if not the bitterness, in the heart comes out so much the more because we are saints not abiding in Christ. For gossip about saints to saints is even more painful than among the sons of this age, not a few of whom are above it, though on grounds of nature—of course not of Christ. Trials, again, cannot shake off spiritual fruit, nor blighting influences enter, if we abide in Christ, and Christ in us; but the greater the pressure, the more fruit where we thus abide. And the heart feels that so it should be, as it is. For, as ordinances fail, and law is the strength of sin, not of holiness, flesh being what it is, Christ here, as everywhere, has the glory by faith, and to faith; “because apart from him ye can do

nothing.”

On the other hand the peril is proportionally greater. “If one abide not in me, he is cast out as the branch, and is dried up: and they gather it, and cast [it] into the fire, and it burneth.” (Ver. 6.) Christ being the sole source of fruit, to abandon Him is fatal; and so much the worse, if at the last, when He should be the more precious, as the worthlessness of all else is learned practically, and His excellency better known to faith. So it was with Judas, so in general with those not born of God, who essay to follow Jesus. Not only their lusts, but His words, may give the occasion, as we see in John 6. It is vain and mischievous to distinguish between the person and the work, as theologians and others do who reason on either side of the equator of truth. The Calvinist fears to compromise his doctrines of grace; the Arminian is anxious to push his advantage on the side of falling away. Hence the former is apt to evade the solemn warning of personal ruin and final judgment conveyed here, as the latter argues that the passage implies that a saved soul may be lost after all. They both confound the figure of the Vine with the body in Eph. 2-4, and hence are alike wrong, and of course, unable to expound these scriptures satisfactorily, so as to hold all the truth, without sacrificing one part to another. The error comes put plainly in the Anglican Baptismal Service: “seeing now that this child is regenerated, and grafted into the body of Christ's church.” To be grafted into the olive of Rom. 11 is equivalent, in this teaching, to being made a member of Christ's body; and the results of such confusion are ever favorable to the adversaries of the truth. The answer is that the body is the expression of unity by the Holy Ghost, the vine insists on communion as the condition of bearing fruit. In no case do such trees necessarily imply life, but the possession of privilege as the olive, and the responsibility of bearing fruit as the vine. To leave Christ, therefore, is utter ruin, not only to be fruitless, but to burn. It is not merely to suffer loss, as in 1 Cor. 3:18, but to be manifestly lost, as in 1 Cor. 9:27. Thus each scripture renders its own testimony, and has its own value, while none can be broken, though men may stumble at the word, being disobedient.

But now, from the sad case of the man that quits Him, the Lord returns to the disciples, and, with divine simplicity and fullness, gives the way of blessing and abundant fruit. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask [or, ye shall ask] what ye will, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and [ye shall] become my disciples.” (Vers. 7, 8.) Thus is each thing put in its place. The first need for the Christian is to abide in Christ; the next, to have Christ's words abiding in him; then he is emboldened to ask, with the assurance that the resources of divine power effect accordingly. For thus Christ Himself has the first place, and the saint is kept in dependence as well as confidence. Then His words direct, as well as correct; and we need and have both, though doubtless, in so abiding, direction would here be the characteristic, rather than that holy correction which we deeply want in our walk through this unclean and slippery world. So led, prayer is encouraged to expect the surest answer, for the heart is in fellowship with Him who prompts the desire, in order to accomplish it in His love and faithfulness. Further, in this is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit, and become disciples of His. What enlargement of heart that so it should be in the midst of what, apart from Him, would be but a grief and worry to the saint, if not worse! With Christ all is changed, and even the most distracting cares turn to fruit; so that to live in flesh, instead of being with Him in glory, becomes worth the while, but only when to live is Christ. Thus is His Father glorified even now, and we become Christ's disciples in deed and in truth.

Chapter 123

Notes on John 15:9-11

Another element of incalculable value in the disciple's path is the consciousness of the Savior's love. This is next set before them. “As the Father loved me, I also loved you abide in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be fulfilled.” (Vers. 9-11.)

We must bear in mind that the subject is fruit-bearing daring the disciple's passage through this world. It is not eternal purpose, nor is it that love in relationship which secures unfailingly from first to last, but Christ's love toward each in his path of daily walk and trial. He knew what this was on His Father's part to Himself as man, though never ceasing to be Son here below. Such was His own love to the disciples; and now He calls on them to abide in it, not in Him only, but, what is more, in His love: an immense and unfailing spring of comfort in the necessarily painful and otherwise disappointing current of earthly circumstances so strongly opposed to them for His sake. Give wine, says the Book of Proverbs, unto those that be of heavy hearts. But His love is better than wine, cheering and strengthening without fleshly excitement. There is thus not only dependence on Him, but that confidence in Him which His love is meant to inspire.

But there is more that follows, even obedience. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” (Ver. 6.) It is manifest that we have nothing here to do with the sovereign mercy of God which goes out to the lost, and reconciles enemies by the death of His Son. For as by the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one (Christ) shall the many be constituted righteous. Grace in Christ surmounts every hindrance, and reigns righteously above all evil, whether of the individual or of the race. Here not the sinner's ruin or deliverance, but the disciple's path, is in question; and his obedience is the condition of abiding in his Master's love. He who in all things has, and must have, the pre-eminence trod the same path and accepted the same condition as man here below; though He counted it no robbery to be on equality with God, He became obedient, and this to the lowest point, for the glory of God the Father. He in unwavering perfection did the will of Him that sent Him, and enjoyed its fruit in a like perfection; we follow Him though with unequal steps; and assuredly he that says be abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked. And obedience is the way. None other morally befits us; as this but verifies our love to Him and sense of relationship to God. Nothing is so lowly, nothing so firm, as obedience. It delivers from self-assertion on the one hand, and on the other from subjection to the opinions or traditions of men. It brings us face to face with God's word, and tests our desire to please Him in the midst of present ease, honor, lust, or passion. Here too it is a question of keeping Christ's commandments, as that which secures His love, as in chapter 14 we saw that it proved their love to Him.

The last motive the Lord brings to bear on the disciples as to this is contained in the next verse. “These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be fulfilled.” (Ver.

11.) Nor is there a better criterion of our state, and consequently of our failure or success in entering into His mind. For if we take up the words of this chapter legally, scarce any words in the Bible are surer to plunge an upright soul into sorrow and depression; but if we understand them as He intended, they are expressly given to impart His joy to us and make our joy full. His joy when here was in pleasing His Father; to obey His commandments was not burdensome. This joy of His He would now make ours. What a contrast with the unfruitful groaning of a soul, even though quickened, under law, as in the close of Rom. 7! What a mercy, if we have tasted such bitterness, now to know our joy in obedience fulfilled! The latter part of Rom. 7 is a wholesome process for us to pass through, but a miserable ground of standing: for this God never intended it. Chapter 8 shows us the Christian delivered, holy, and abounding in good fruit.

This is clearly His desire concerning us. Those who ignore or deny it would deprive us of His joy, as no doubt they lack it themselves. Nor need we wonder; for as philosophy never can conceive divine love, so theology, pandering as it does to human science, ever misses the Savior's joy, seeking pleasure and applause in the schools of the world, which knows the Father no more now than of old. O righteous Father, said He a little later, the world knew Thee not; but I knew Thee, and these (the disciples) knew that Thou didst send Me; and I made known to them Thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.

What ineffable goodness! Does not every thought, feeling, word prove itself divine? Settled peace is a great thing as the soul's foundation, never to be moved, and God would have us know it simply and immutably; but we must not forget the joy of obedience and the favor of the Lord as a present thing in our daily ways. This has been too much overlooked by children of God, and scarcely more through the slipshod laxity of evangelicalism than by the morose hardness of the legalists, ignorant alike of the full ground of grace, and of the true character of God's government which is bound up with it.

Chapter 124

Notes on John 15:12-17

The Lord now specifies one special character of fruit, ever precious, but here in the disciples' relation one to another, as before we had the relation of Christ and the Father to them.

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I loved you. Greater love no one hath than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do what I command you. No longer do I call you bondmen, for the bondman knoweth not what his master doeth; but you I have called [my] friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I made known to you. Not ye chose me, but I chose you and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, and your fruit abide; that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he may give you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.” (Vers. 12-17.)

Love is emphatically the Lord's injunction on His disciples, the love of each other. It is not the general moral duty of loving one's neighbor, but the mutual love of Christians, of which His own love to them is the standard. The nature of the case excludes the love of God which went out to them in their guilt, enmity, and weakness, when objects of sovereign grace. They were now born of God, and hence love; for love, as it is of God who is love, is the energy of the new nature. Hence, whatever else the Lord may enjoin, this is His commandment: He loved them, and would have them love one another accordingly. So Paul tells the Thessalonians that he needed not to write about it to them, for, young as they were in divine things, they were taught of God to love one another. This too was the more excellent way he would show the Corinthian saints, pre-occupied to their hurt with power rather than love, at best the display of the Lord's victory in His creation over Satan rather than the inward energy which enjoys His grace toward our own souls or others to God's glory. On the Roman saints again love is repeatedly urged, as that which should be unfeigned, and also which, wherever it is, has fulfilled the law practically without thinking of it. It is needless to go over all the epistles where the Holy Spirit unfolds its immense place and power.

But every believer acquainted with the New Testament will remember how large a part it fills in the First Epistle of our evangelist. Not that love is God, but God is love as He is light, and he that loves is born of Him and knows Him. For men as then made knowledge all, as before some made power; but it is a question of life in the Son of God, and the Holy Ghost works in that life by virtue of redemption, and those who have life, as they walk in the light, so also walk in love. And even as to knowledge, there is none true save in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life: every object outside Him is an idol, from which we have to keep ourselves, be it knowledge, power, position, love, truth, or anything or anyone else, for whoever denies the Son has not the Father, he who confesses the Son has the Father also. And as the Father has bestowed on us love beyond all measure, giving us even now to be children of God, so loving the brethren marks those who have passed from death to life. The old commandment is the word of Christ that we should love one another, but it is also a new commandment as being true in Him and in us. If Christ lives in me, I live by faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me: and this life is characterized not only by obedience but by love according to its source.

And so here. The Lord had laid it down as a new and distinguishing commandment He was giving them in chapter 13. Here He repeats love to one another according to the pattern of His love to them. How pure and unbounded it was! Do we believe this as His will about us? Do we love as if we believed Him and appreciated His love? Can anything be more hollow, or dangerous, or nauseous than the highest words with low and inconsistent ways? Gnosticism ate out the heart of early Christendom, where it fell not into superstition and formality, ever growing more dark and cold; and the same spirit is no less destructive now, because it has more abundant materials. Loving one another, not merely those who think alike, least of all those who think alike on some comparatively small and external point, but loving those who are Christ's, spite of ten thousand things trying to our nature, is of all moment along with the truth, and guarded as it is here, loving one another as He loved us. He delights in love up to death itself. (Ver. 18.) Greater love none has than to lay down his life for his friends. The love of God in Jesus went infinitely beyond this; but then necessarily it stands alone, and it is meet that it should. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, as we are taught elsewhere. But where is the worth of such a theory if we fail in every-day going out of heart to common wants and sufferings of God's children? And the Lord at once binds love up with obedience, without which it is but self-pleasing, not having Him in it or before the soul. “Ye are my friends if ye do what [ever.] I command you.” (Ver. 14.) It is not reconciling enemies He speaks of, but why He calls us His friends. Obedience is the character and condition. Nor does He here indicate how He stood as our friend when we were enemies, but He calls us His friends if we practice what He enjoins.

Is this all? Far from it. He treats us as friends according to His perfect love, for He lets us into His secrets, instead of merely pressing our duty. “No longer do I call you bondmen, for the bondman knoweth not what his master death, but you I have called friends, because all things whatsoever I heard from my Father I made known to you.” (Ver. 15.) He who of old was called “the friend of God” enjoyed this intimacy with his Almighty protector in the midst of the doomed races he lived amongst, a separated and circumcised pilgrim; and so it is with His own now that the Lord dealt in still more lavish grace; for what did He keep back? In another sense it is our boast to be His bond-men, as one said who was pre-eminently separated to the gospel of God. But none the less—indeed very much more truly—do we enter in, and value and act on the free communications of His love if we are habitually obedient, as we may see in Joseph of old or in Daniel later. It ought to be, it is in principle, the cherished privilege of the church thus to know His mind and by it to interpret the tangled web of human life or even the world's changing fortunes; but practically we must be exercised and constant in obedience if the privilege is to be a living reality and not a bare title. Christendom has given it up, counting it nothing but presumption, and content to walk by sight, not by faith.

But God is faithful, and there are those who, walking obedient to His word, enter into what He has made known, and find the blessing. Doubtless the responsibility is great no less than the privilege; and therefore do His own need to be cheered with the grace that underlies all. Hence it is that He adds; “Not ye chose me, but I chose you and appointed [or set] you that ye should go and bear fruit, and your fruit abide; that whatever ye may ask the Father in my name he may give you. These things I command that ye love one another.” (Vers. 16, 17.)

Blessing ever comes from the Lord Jesus and the grace that is in Him. Obedience follows, and ought to follow, such unmerited favor, as in obedience there is surely fresh blessing. But the heart

needs to turn from our obedience or the blessing to the Blesser, if it would escape fresh dangers and positive evil; the spring of power is never known save in Him, and the grace that sought and found, saves and blesses. Hence it was of the greatest moment, in pressing the divine government of the saints, that they should ever remember Him and His sovereign will, as the source of all that distinguished them. Not they chose Christ, but He chose them. Nor was it only to know and follow their Master. He appointed, or set, them that they should go and bear fruit, and their fruit should abide.

Thus, while responsibility is maintained intact, grace is shown to be the fountain of all that is looked for and made good; and further the connection of both with dependence on the Father, who alone brings to a successful issue whatever they should have asked in the name of Jesus. The deeper and higher the blessing, the more need of prayer; but then the character and confidence of prayer should rise with the sense of grace in Christ, and the Father's unwavering purpose to put honor on His name in which they draw near with their petitions. His name by faith in it can make the weakest strong, and the Father is thus glorified in the Son who glorifies Him. Distrust or negligence are equally precluded.

It is hardly necessary to say many words in disproof of Calvin's exposition, and of others, who make this a question of choosing and ordaining to the apostolate, and consequently who take the fruit abiding to mean that the church will last to the very end of the world as the fruit of apostolic labor continued also in their successors. The love enjoined here is accordingly restricted to mutual affection among ministers. Undoubtedly a free and unsuspicious flow of loving confidence is essential to a good state, and among those who labor especially, as the lack of it here is most deplorable; but the Lord does not limit His words to the apostles or even to such as follow them in the public service of His name.

Notes on John 15:18-21

To love one another then is the new and repeated commandment of Christ to His own. To love is the positive and proper and constant exercise of the new nature, as acted on by the Spirit's ministration of Christ, not always brotherly kindness in exercise, but love never failing. But this very affection, strange here below, exposes those in whom it is found to the direct counter-working of Satan, a murderer and liar from the beginning.

“If the world hateth you, know [or, ye know] that me it hath hated before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, on this account doth the world hate you. Call to mind the word which I told you, A bondsman is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also; but all these things they will do unto you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me.” (Vers. 18-21.)

To be Christ's is enough to rouse the world's rancor. Circumstances may be needed to call it forth, but there it is. The world hates those who, being His, are no longer of the world. But the Lord would have us know that, not more surely does it hate us, than it had hated Himself before us. (Ver. 18.) Is it not sweet and consoling to us that so it is, however awful in itself, to have such a conviction of the world? For it bates us because of Him, not Him because of us. It is not our faults therefore which are the true cause, but His grace and moral excellence, His divine nature and glory; it is the world's repugnance and enmity to what is of God, and to Him who is God. The world hates the Father shown in the Son; hence it hates the children who were the Father's and then were given to the Son. Christ was hated first, they next, and for His sake.

Not that the world does not love in its own way those who are of it, in most pointed contrast with the grace that goes out to the stranger, and the wretched, and the lost, to such as have wronged and have despitefully treated us. But grace is of all things most offensive to the world, which can love nature in its fallen state. Even righteousness, with its necessary condemnation of the sinner is not so repugnant as the grace which can rise above the sins it condemns in compassion toward the sinner to save him by and in Christ; and this because it treats man as nothing, giving the entire glory to God: indignity intolerable to the flesh, the mind of which is enmity against God. Hence the world's hatred and rejection of Christ, who had revealed God perfectly, and perfectly glorified Him in all His nature and ways. Hence also the world's hatred of us who confess Christ, not only because we are not of the world, but chosen out of it by Christ, which implies its utter worthlessness and condemnation. (Ver. 19.)

The Lord then recalls to their mind His word that no bondsman is greater than his lord. They must rather expect His position, who was despised and rejected of men. They themselves and their teaching would be equally odious for His sake. (Ver. 20.) If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. His person and His word brought God too near their souls which drew back unwilling either to own their sins, or to be debtors to nothing but grace for pardon and deliverance. But this aversion assumes a stronger

form where religion is honored and men have a character to lose; and as these things were true in the highest degree among the Jews, they broke out to the last degree in resentment which claimed to persecute, as a duty to God, the Master first and then the disciples. And here the Lord graciously forewarned them that no sorrow might befall them unawares.

But He does more. He gives His own the comfort of knowing in such hours, it might be of bitter woe, as beforehand also, that all the contempt and suffering they might endure from the world was for His sake, because of the world's ignorance of Him that sent Himself, ignorance of the Father. How profoundly true! Impossible that a professing religion could persecute if it really knew Him that sent Christ.

There might be discipline according to His word; and there must be in that which bears the name of the Lord: else the very grace it knows would tend to sink it below the world's level if there were not vigilant, constant, and holy discipline. But discipline is never holy but worldly, when it takes the shape of persecution. What can one think then when that which arrogated the loftiest name invoked the civil arm to enforce the punishment of men's bodies for the pretended good of their souls? What, when it sought and found means to inaugurate ecclesiastical tribunals with torments up to the bitter end in congenial secrecy with an unrelenting cruelty which never had a match even in this dark world? Truly it was the self-same spirit of worldly hatred which first animated the Jews against the Lord and His disciples, and later wrought in the world-church, when it exchanged its pagan for its papal garb, and baptism was more easily adopted than circumcision. “But all these things they will do unto you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me.” (Ver. 21.) No I forms avail not: God will have reality, and never more plainly and stringently than since Christ and His cross which proved the vanity of religious man and of a worldly sanctuary. Christianity came into being and manifestation when it was demonstrated that man in his best estate was not only worthless before God, but would not have God at any price, even in the person and mission of His own Son come in grace. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” Yet is there no eternal life for man save in the knowledge of the only true God, the Father, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. The world is lost, and nowhere more evidently and guiltily than when, in religious pride, it hates Christ and those who are His.

Notes on John 15:22-25

The presence and testimony of the Son of God had the gravest possible results. It was not only an infinite blessing in itself and for God's glory, but it left men, and Israel especially, reprobate. Law had proved man's weakness and sin, as it put under curse all who took their stand on the legal principle. There was none righteous, none that sought after God, none that did good, no, not one. The heathen were manifestly wicked, the Jews proved so by the incontestable sentence of the law. Thus every mouth was stopped, and all the world obnoxious to God's judgment. But the presence of Christ brought out, not merely failure to meet obligation as under law, but hatred of divine goodness come down to man in perfect grace. God was in Christ, as the apostle says, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses. How immense the change! How worthy of God when revealed in His Son, as Man amongst men! But they could not endure His words and His works, and this increasingly, till the cross demonstrated that it was absolute rejection of God's love without bounds. It is not here the place or time, as with the apostle, to show how divine love rose in complete victory over man's evil and hatred as attested in the ministry of reconciliation which is founded on the cross. Here the Lord is affirming the solemn position and state of the world in antagonism to the disciples, after preparing them for persecution: from its hating them as Him, and its ignorance of Him who had sent their Master.

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” (Vers. 22, 23.) Sin before or otherwise was swallowed up in this surpassing sin of rejecting the Son come in love and speaking not merely as man never spoke, yea, as God never spoke; for by whom should He speak as in a Son? It was meet that He who is the image of the invisible God, the only-begotten in the bosom of the Father, should speak above all, as He is above all, God blessed forever. Servants had been sent, prophets had spoken; and their messages had divine authority; but they were partial. The law made nothing perfect. Now He who had thus spoken of old πολυμερ■ κα■ πολυτρ■πως spoke to us ■ν υ■■. He was their Messiah, the Son of David, born where and when they expected, attested not only by the signs and vouchers of prophecy, but by the powers of the world to come; but He was more, infinitely more, He was Son of God, unapproachable in His own glory, yet here on earth the most accessible of men, giving out the words of the Father, as none had ever spoken since the world began. There never had been an adequate object on earth to draw out such communications; now there was in both dignity of person, intimacy of relationship, and moral perfection as man. And the disciples were reaping the benefit; as the Jews, the world, which had Him before their eyes and oars had the responsibility. Flaws, failure, there had been in all others who had spoken for and from God, so as to weaken the effect of their testimony where men thought of men and forgot the God who sent them.

But now the Father had sent the Son who had come and spoken not in law but in love, the true Light shining in a world of darkness which apprehended it not, and sin appeared as never before. What pretext could be pleaded now? It was no question of man or his weakness; no requirement of his duty as measured by the ten words, or any statutes or judgments whatsoever. There was

the Son, the Word become flesh dwelling among men, full of grace and truth, in divine love that rose above every fault and all evil, to give what is of God for eternity, only met by increasing hatred till it could go no farther. Their ignorance of Him who sent Christ was no doubt at the bottom of their hating Him, but it was inexcusable. For He was God as well as Son of the Father, and so perfectly able to present the truth and render man thoroughly and evidently guilty if he bowed not. What then did their not bowing prove but sin, without excuse for it, and hatred of the Father also in hating the Son?

And there was this further aggravation of their sin, the works that He had wrought. For some men are affected powerfully by suited words, others yet more deeply by works which express not power only but goodness, holiness, and love. Here they had in perfect harmony and mutual confirmation such words and works as never were save in Jesus the Son of God. But what was the effect? “If I had not done among them the works which no other hath done, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [it is] that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” (Vers. 24, 25.)

Such was man's gratuitousness in presence of divine grace. Full manifestation of grace can have no other issue. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. Not only is there insubjection to His law, but hatred of His love: and this was proved now. Anything short of Jesus thus present, speaking and working among men as He did, would have fallen short of the demonstration. The testimony was complete; the One who is the sum and substance, the subject and object of all divine testimony, was there; and they had seen Him, as well as the Father in Him; and they had hated both They, the people of God once, had nothing but sin—they were lost. So they were then, and so they abide still, whatever grace may do another day to save the generation to come. But hatred of the Father and the Son is in itself irreparable, complete, and final.

Nor did the law in which they boasted to the rejection of their Messiah speak otherwise; on the contrary it was fulfilled in the word there written of Him, long suspended over them, now applied by His own lips to His own person, They hated me for nothing—gratuitously. How true, and how solemn! “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” O Israel, what have you not lost in the rejected Messiah, in the Father and Son alike seen and hated? And what have not we, once poor sinners of the Gentiles, gained? Life eternal in the knowledge of a God no longer dwelling in thick darkness, but fully revealed in Christ, and in the utmost nearness to the believer, His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Truly Israel's fall has proved the world's wealth, and their loss the true wealth of nations; but the nations so blessed boast and are high-minded, and will be spared no more than the Jews who, no longer abiding in unbelief, shall be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved. Meanwhile they have lost their Messiah to their ruin, and their sin cannot be hid.

Notes on John 15:26-27

Thus had the Lord prepared His own for the world's hatred, not only because He had known it before them, but because it had fallen on Him with an intensity and groundlessness beyond all experience. As even their law had forewarned of it, they were the more inexcusable. But nothing is so blind as unbelief, nor so cruel as its will irritated by the light of God which treats it as sin, and sin refusing God in sovereign grace, the Father and the Son. For they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, as Paul could say elsewhere, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

It might seem then all must be swept away by the murderous rancor of man, and especially religious man. But not so. It is not that the Lord was not to die as well as suffer; nor that His feeble followers should escape the lot of their Master, as far as God was pleased to let them taste it; but that He was about to leave the world for glory on high, and to send down the Holy Ghost thence, as a new, divine and heavenly witness here below.

[“But] when the Paraclete is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth out from the Father, he shall testify concerning me; and ye too testify, because ye are with me from [the] beginning.” (Vers. 26, 27.)

Here the Holy Spirit is viewed as sent by the ascended Christ from the Father, and consequently as witness of His heavenly glory. This is an advance on what we saw in the preceding chapter, where Christ asks and the Father gives the Paraclete to be with them forever, sending Him in the Son's name. Here the Son Himself sends, though of course from the Father. The Spirit of truth is thus the suited testifier of Christ as He is above; the disciples also testify, as His companions and so chosen from the beginning. For the first time it is said “when the Paraclete is come,” not merely given or sent. He is a divine person in the fullest sense, not only to abide, teach and recall to remembrance, but to testify concerning Christ, and that which the chosen companions, the apostles, of the Lord could not testify; for they as such could not go beyond what they had seen and heard, at any rate what fell within the range of their being with Him from the beginning. The Spirit of truth which proceeds out from the Father could not merely strengthen them to do perfectly that task, but add quite another testimony of hitherto unknown blessedness, as sent by Christ personally from the Father.

Thus is clearly defined the position of the disciples, henceforward in due time called Christians: not of the world, but chosen by Christ out of it, commanded to love one another as loved of Christ, and hated of the world, with the Paraclete the Spirit of truth sent by Christ to testify of Him, of whom they too were bearing witness as being with Him from the beginning. Who so competent to tell of Christ's glory with the Father as the Spirit proceeding forth from the Father; and sent by the exalted Christ? Thus was secured full testimony to His glory morally on earth by the disciples (though not without the Spirit's power already assured), and actually in heaven as the glorified Man by the One who in every way could make it best known.

It is evident that those who personally followed the Lord had a special place in the testimony to His manifestation on earth; and this testimony we have in the Gospels as fully as God saw fit to preserve it permanently for all saints, as the Holy Ghost's testimony to His heavenly glory was pre-eminently presented in the inspired epistles of Paul for like permanent use, though doubtless in no way limited to him or them.

And assuredly in principle the place of testimony abides for those who are Christ's, whatever the change of circumstances and alas! of state. As certainly as Christ abides on high and the Holy Ghost is come, never to leave us, it is not only that we know by faith the Son's relationship to the Father and our blessedness by virtue of it, and in Him who is in the Father as He is in us, but we have all the profit of His place as the True Vine on earth, as we know Him gone on high exalted as man, a quite new thing. And as we have the joy of His relationship to the Father and to us, we are called to bear witness to Him in every way. Wonderful comfort in our weakness! He the Spirit of truth was to testify of Jesus, and especially of Jesus where none could be with Him, none but the Paraclete Himself competent. It was not necessary to repeat here or later that He abides: this had been said at first in relation to us (chap. 14.) where His guaranteed presence with us was most graciously named, lest we might feel orphans indeed. But if we have the comfortable pledge of His being with us forever, it is Without doubt not less but more for testifying of Christ's glory than for our consolation. Of this however we shall hear more in what is to follow, where the Lord renews the subject most fully.

Notes on John 16:1-6

The Lord proceeds to explain why He had now and not before spoken of the things which were then occupying His heart and being made known to the disciples.

“These things I have spoken to you that ye should not be offended. They wilt put you out of the synagogue; nay, an hour is coming that everyone that hath killed you will think that he is offering service to God. And these things will they do to you because they knew not the Father nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when the [or, their] hour shall have come, ye may remember them that I told you; but these things I told you not from [the] beginning, because I was with you. But now I go unto him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Where goest thou? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart” (Vers. 1-6.)

Many were to be stumbled among the Jews who looked for anything but sorrow, shame, and groundless hatred to be the portion of those who follow the Messiah. But the Lord graciously considers His own; and while He uses trial for the blessing of the strong, He would shield and strengthen the weak, both by warning them of the world's undying and of the Holy Ghost's coming to add His testimony to theirs in the face of the persecution of the servants as of their Master. (Ver. 1.)

Two forms should be taken to get rid of Christians and their testimony: one in common when men affect the utmost zeal for divine authority and holiness; the other open to individuals even to the extreme point of death to extinguish malefactors not fit to live. “They will put you out of the synagogue; nay, an hour cometh that everyone that hath killed you will think that he is offering service to God.” Impossible to conceive rancor more deadly, yet sanctioned by all, than that any one who liked might take on himself to kill a follower of Christ, not only with impunity, but claiming therein to do a religious service to God. Saul of Tarsus furnishes a notable example of all this till sovereign grace chose him to bear the Lord's name before all and to suffer great things for His sake. (Ver. 2.)

Doubtless there is a disposition in men generally to fight for their religion, whatever it be. But a special reason gives intensity to the world's, and in particular to the Jew's enmity to Christians. The measure of truth possessed is to the flesh the most powerful motive for disliking and resenting that which claims fuller light; and Christianity cannot but confess the truth in all its fullness in Christ by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. He who confesses the Son has the Father also; as he is the antichrist who denies both. (1 John 2:23.) And this is what the proud unbelief of Judaism ever tends to when confronted with the testimony of Christ. They set their partial and preparatory knowledge against that complete revelation which could not be till He came who shows the Father, and accomplished everlasting redemption. How blessed for the babes of God's family that, if what they heard from the beginning abides in them, they too shall abide in the Son and in the Father

And as it was with the Jew, so it is with every ecclesiastical system of Christendom itself, which in order to embrace the greatest possible number contents itself with the least and lowest

confession, and hence is exposed to the snare of the devil in setting itself against all that go beyond the Christian alphabet. So even the reformed bodies settled themselves on what their founders learned on emerging from popery, and oppose as innovation all that working of the Spirit which recalls to the fullness of Christ in the written word which was long before either the Reformation or Popery. They too persecuted when they had any confidence in their own confessions; till of late they have become so honeycombed with the indifference or the activity of skepticism that they care too little for anything to persecute anybody. But where there is a real holding fast of such a measure of traditional truth as arrogates the name of orthodoxy, there is always a jealousy of the action of the Spirit which insists on Christ more richly known with fresh power to men's hearts, and consequently claiming exercise of faith. So the Jew set the unity of the Godhead to deny the Father and the Son and the Spirit; so men now resist the truth of the one body and one Spirit, devoted to the fleshly unity of Rome or boasting of the active rivalry of Protestant societies. But the more they hold even truth itself in a measure as a form, the less willing are they to allow the activity of the Spirit by God's word as a whole. “And these things will they do, because they knew not the Father nor me.” Yet to know both is eternal life, which every Christian characteristically has by the gospel, though the most advanced is marked by deepening acquaintance with Him that is from the beginning. When and where idols reigned, it needed the energy of grace to turn to God, the living and true; where God was making Himself known in the Son, flesh might avail itself of old truth no longer contested nor costing any sacrifice, and have its tongue set on fire of bell to blaspheme the full revelation which tests actual faith and faithfulness, and seek to exterminate those who testified it. The principle holds good in small things as well as in the greatest, and now as ever.

But as the Lord thus prepared the disciples for harsher things from the professing people of God than from men wholly ignorant, so now He lets them know what they must suffer, that they might gather comfort even in that hour by remembering His words. As the trial that came to pass was known to Him and made known to them, now they could trust His assurance of love and blessing, of deliverance and glory. Besides He explains why He had not told of those things before. He was with them, their shield and Paraclete; and what need was there to say a word? But as He was about to leave them, it was well, and would help all to work for good. (Ver. 4.)

“But now I go unto him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Where goest thou? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart.” (Vers. 5, 6.) This sorrow was more of nature than of faith. No wonder it surprised them to hear of their divine Master leaving them with such a prospect before them, with so little manifestation of the effects of His coming in the world or even in Israel. And they had forsaken their all and followed Him: what could it mean? He had already assured them that He would not leave them orphans, but was coming to them. Had faith been simpler, they would have not only counted on His loving care of them, but had asked whither He was going, and have learned its bearing on His glory and their blessing. It is ignorance of His mind which fills the heart with sorrow at His words, for they are spirit and life, though we may need to wait on God in order to lay hold on them intelligently. But the Lord proceeds to bring out all clearly in what follows.

Notes on John 16:7-11

This leads the way to the main distinctive truth the Lord is intimating, the presence and action of the Holy Ghost when sent down from heaven.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is profitable for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you.” (Ver. 7.)

The Lord had told them before, that had they loved Him, they would have rejoiced because He said, I go unto the Father. What was it not for the humbled, holy, and suffering Son of man to quit the scene of His unequaled sorrows for His Father's presence on high? Now He shows the connection of His departure with their fresh and deeper blessing. It might seem, to them especially, strange to say that the loss of His bodily presence should be their gain. But so it was to be. The truth is not what seems but the manifestation of what really is, nor is it found in the first man but in the Second; nor can we know it but by the Spirit. Now it was to be established and enjoyed more than ever. For Christ was going to heaven on the ground of accomplished redemption, thence to send the Holy Spirit to the saints on earth. It was profitable for them then that Christ should go away. He who alone effectuates any spiritual good would not otherwise come.

And now that the Lord was going above, having obtained eternal redemption, the Holy Spirit was not only to work as He had never before wrought in the children of men or in the children of God, but was to come personally and undertake the entire charge and business of the disciples. For this is the meaning of παρ■κλητος, which our “Advocate” so feebly represents. He had come in person to abide in Jesus; He had sealed the Son of man; He had anointed Him with power. None could have Him thus till God's judgment of sin had taken its course in the cross. Not that compassion or fidelity of goodness, or any other form or way of divine love had been lacking in times past; but this presence of the Spirit could not be till then. Jesus had the Spirit thus descending and abiding on Him, and this as the perfect Man without blood-shedding, for He knew no sin, at His baptism. But others were sinners, and those who believed had a sinful nature, notwithstanding their believing. The flesh still remained, and they are contrary to each other. Here comes in the efficacy of Christ's work. God was then and there glorified even as to sin in His cross. His blood cleanses from all sin. God made Him to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. Not only were the bad fruits gone but the evil root that bore them was judged and sentence executed. Hence could the Spirit come and dwell in us as never before, not to our houses beyond the saints of past ages, but in virtue of Christ's death and its infinite value in God's eyes.

This then is the distinctive character of Christianity: not as in the kingdom Christ reigning in Jehovah power and glory, and the Spirit poured out upon all flesh, but Christ departing to be in heaven and the Spirit as Advocate sent and abiding with the saints.

“And when he is come, he will convince [or, afford proof to] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my [or, the] Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” (Vers. 8-11.)

The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it sees Him not neither knoweth Him. He is the object of neither sense nor intellect. Whatever the effects or displays of His energy, He abides invisible in Himself and outside the ken of the world. But the saints know Him, and that their bodies are His temple, even as they by Him know all else that they really know. God has revealed to us by His Spirit what is beyond human intelligence as such; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, His depths; and just as the spirit of man knows the things of a man, even so the things of God no man knows, but the Spirit of God. And Him we as Christians have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. And not only so, but they are communicated in words by Him, and received by His power in the believer, as truly as they are by Him revealed: all is by the Holy Spirit of God.

Here we have His present relation, not to the saints, but to that world which is outside. And the Lord tells us, that, when come, He ■λ■γξει τ■ν κ■σμον. It is difficult to convey justly the force of this. “Reprove,” as in the Authorized Version, is too narrow a meaning, if not false. “Rebuke” is here out of the question. “Convict” hardly applies even to the first, not at all to the second and the third clauses; and supposes an effect produced which may not really be in any case. Nor is one satisfied with “convince,” save in the sense of affording proof by His presence, rather than by His action. For by His coming and abiding in the saints, apart from the world, He gives demonstrative proof of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The law dealt with Israel as those under it. But now it is the Spirit who demonstrates the sin of the world; and this not because they violate that divine measure of a man's duty, but because they reject the Son of God: “of sin, because they believe not on me.” (Ver. 9.) That was grace, this fatal. It is not merely failure in obligation, but despite of grace. And such is the true and actual gauge of the world before God, who tests and proves the guilt of the whole system which opposes Him by its unbelieving ignorance and refusal of His Son, spite of the fullest testimony to Him.

Further, He affords demonstration of righteousness. Where is this? In the race or first man? On the contrary, there is none righteous, no, not one. And as for the Righteous One, even Jesus, He as we have seen was despised and rejected of men, by none so keenly as by the Jews, but in fact and to the uttermost by the world. Where then is the Spirit's proof of righteousness? “Because I go to my [or, the] Father, and ye see me no more.” (Ver. 10.) Righteousness is on God's part only. Man condemned and killed the Just One; God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. The Son “going to the Father” is the standing witness of righteousness there, and not here; for man He who came into the world in love is clean gone. They would not have Him, and “ye see me no more.” He returns for the world as Judge; but this is a wholly different and most solemn affair. But He is lost to men: all is closed with His mission to the world as He came. And the Spirit testifies and demonstrates only divine righteousness in Him on high, and man lost in casting Him out no longer to be seen as before here below.

But again the spirit gives proof of “judgment;” and this, “because the prince of this world is judged.” (Ver. 11.) Here again it is not a question of the kingdom in power and glory when Jehovah shall

punish the host of the high ones on high, and slay the dragon that is in the sea. The Christian knows what will be for the earthly people's deliverance and the joy of all nations, but he sees already by faith that Satan is judged in Christ's death and resurrection and ascension. The Holy Ghost sums up all in Christ's person; and this is the grand demonstration for the world. Its ruler is already judged in rejecting Him who made known the Father, glorified God, and is glorified of God. All is closed for the world in Him who came in love, and is gone up in righteousness. The ruler of the world is judged in His cross.

Chapter 130

Notes on John 16:12-22

Men are apt to err doubly in their estimate of the Holy Spirit's relation to us. They either overlook the immense effect of His presence and teaching, or they attribute to Him what may be the mere fruit of natural conscience and diffused information. Our Lord here puts in His own perfect way what the Spirit would do as sent down from heaven, not now in external demonstration to the world, but in the positive blessing and help of the disciples.

“I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, shall have come, he will guide you in [or, into] all the truth; for he will not speak from himself, but whatever he shall hear he will speak; and he will report to you the things to come. He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine, and will report [it] to you. All things that the Father hath are mine: on this account I said, that he receiveth of mine and will report [it] to you.” (Vers. 12-15.)

It has been repeatedly shown, and in this chapter most expressly, that the presence of the Spirit depended on the departure of Christ to heaven consequent on accomplished redemption. This changed the entire groundwork, besides morally fitting the saints for the new truths, work, character, and hopes of Christianity. The disciples were not ignorant of the promise that the Spirit should be given to inaugurate the reign of the Messiah. They knew the judgment under which the chosen people abide” until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest;” so vast outwardly, no less than inwardly, the change when God puts forth His power for the kingdom of His Son. They knew that He will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; not only the sons and daughters, the old and young of Israel enjoying a blessing far beyond all temporal favors, but the servants and the handmaidens, in short all flesh and not the Jews alone sharing it.

But here it is the sound heard when the great High Priest goes in into the sanctuary before Jehovah, and not only when He comes out for the deliverance and joy of repentant Israel in the last days. It is the Spirit given when the Lord Jesus went on high, and by Him thus gone. For this they were wholly unprepared, as indeed it is one of the most essential characteristics of God's testimony between the rejection and the reception of the Jews; and the Spirit, when given, was to supply what the then state of the disciples could not bear. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God; and He is a Spirit, not of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind, besides the incalculable facts of Christ's work in death, resurrection, and ascension to which He testifies. Truly the Lord had many things to say reserved for the Holy Ghost, when the disciples had their consciences purged and could draw near boldly into the holiest, and a Man glorified in heaven furnished the meet occasion for the display of all that is in God, even for the secret hid in God before all worlds, of which not John or any other than the apostle Paul was to be the administrator.

But be the instrument who it might, when He is come, the Spirit of truth, as the Lord intimates here, “he will guide you into all truth,” or “in” it all as the Sinaitic, Cambridge (D), and Parisian (L) uncials with other authorities have it. For this two main grounds are given, besides His necessary

competency as a divine person. First, He does not act independently but fulfilling the mission on which He is sent expressly. “For he shall not speak from himself, but whatever he shall hear, he will speak; and he will report to you the things to come.” Secondly, His prime object is to exalt the Lord Jesus, and therefore He will assuredly make this good in testimony to the disciples. “He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine and report [it] to you.”

The reader must guard against the popular error, easily suggested by the Authorized Version of verse 13, as if the sense meant were that the Spirit shall not speak about Himself. But it is neither true as a fact, nor is it of course intended here. The Spirit largely speaks concerning Himself in this Gospel, and particularly in the section we are examining; as He does in Rom. 8 Cor. 2; 12 Cor. 3, Eph. 4, and many other parts of scripture; which makes it the more strange that even the simplest have not learned the meaning here to be, that He shall not speak from Himself, but, as the next clause explains, whatever He shall hear He will speak. As the Son came not to act independently, whatever His glory, but to serve His Father; so the Spirit is come to serve the Son, and whatever He shall hear, He will speak.

But there is more. Not only can He speak of the Son in heaven as sent down by Him, and thus bear the highest testimony to His intrinsic dignity and the new position Christ is in there, but He has not ceased to be the Spirit of prophecy. On the contrary, He, would thus work abundantly in view of the world's total ruin and the blessing that waits on the Lord's return. “And he will report to you the things to come.” The prophetic word is found largely in the New Testament, not only in the Gospels, but also in the Epistles, but most of all in the wonderful book of Revelation. And the effect was immense in detaching the saints from the world as under judgment, however this might tarry. They knew these things before, and thus held fast their own steadfastness. Nevertheless prophecy as occupied with the earth, even though it go on to the kingdom of God there, is but a small and even inferior part of the Spirit's testimony, however astonishing in man's eyes and precious in itself. Christ's own glory, now on high, is the direct object; and this in every way. “He will glorify me, for he will receive of mine and will report [it] to you.” And here also all is in contrast with Messianic light or earthly dominion, however jest and great. “All things that the Father hath are mine: on this account I said that he receiveth of mine and will report [it] to you.” He is sent down to glorify not the church but Christ, and this by receiving and reporting what is Christ's (and all the Father has is His), not by exaggerating the importance or allowing the will of man.

But there is another intimation needful to press the “little while” with its issues of sorrow and joy.

“A little while and ye behold me not; and again a little while and ye shall see me [because I go away unto the Father]. [Some] therefore of his disciples said one to another, What is this which he saith to us, A little while and ye behold me not, and again a little while and ye shall see me, and because I go away to the Father. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, the little while? We know not of what he talketh. Jesus knew [therefore] that they wished to ask him, and said to them, Do ye inquire of this one with another, because I said, a little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily I say to you that ye shall weep and lament, and the world shall rejoice; ye shall be grieved, but your grief shall be turned into joy. The woman, when she bringeth forth, hath grief because her hour is come; but when she hath given birth to the child, she no longer remembereth the affliction for the joy that a man hath been born into the world. And ye now therefore have grief, but I will see you again, and your heart shall

rejoice, and your joy no one taketh from you." (Vers. 16-22.)

The "little while" in any and every sense was a strange sound td Jewish ears; so is His going away to the Father. It is no question here of their lost Messiah, the suffering Son of man. This of course is true and important in its place, and fully treated in the closing scenes of the synoptic gospels. But here we see and hear the conscious Son of God, a man but a divine person who had come from and was now going back to the Father. We need especially to be in the spirit of this to estimate the "little while" and indeed Christianity in contradistinction to what was and what will be. The resurrection brought the disciples into the intelligence of this "little while," though it may not be all out till He comes again. The Jew thought nothing more certain than that the Christ when He came would abide forever. The "little while" was therefore another enigma which His death and resurrection cleared up, and the Spirit subsequently showed to be bound up with all that is characteristic of the present work of God for the glory of Christ. We anticipate by faith what will come and manifestly at His appearing.

Nothing can be more marked than the Lord's avoidance here of introducing His death as such; and it is all the more striking because it is so prominent in chapters 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12. Here no doubt it underlies all, and poor indeed had been the joy without His infinite sorrow on the cross. But that solemn hour is here passed over thus: "A little while, and ye behold me not; and again, a little while and ye shall see, me. Verily, verily, I say to you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be grieved, but your grief shall be turned into joy." This was sorely true when He rose after His brief absence, as it will be fully verified when He comes for them never to part more. And this He illustrates by the most familiar of all figures of sorrow issuing in joy. (Vers. 21, 22.) The absence of the Lord to the world is getting rid of Him; but even now His resurrection is a joy which none takes away. What will it be when He comes to receive us to Himself?

Chapter 131

Notes on John 16:23-28

The Lord proceeds to set forth yet more fully the blessing and privilege which should flow from His going to heaven and so bringing out the Father's love to them.

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing: verily, verily, I say to you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, he will give you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (Vers 28, 24.)

It is well known that the Greek words we are well nigh obliged to translate “ask” in verse 28 are not the same, the first (■ρωτ■ω) being expressive rather of familiar entreaty, the second (α■τ■ω) of lowly petition. Hence, while our Lord often in this Gospel employs the former in His asking the Father on behalf of the disciples, never does He use the latter. However low He may go down in grace, He is ever the conscious Son of God, a man but none the less a divine person; whilst Martha shows her slight appreciation of His glory by supposing that He might fitly and successfully appeal to God after a suppliant sort. (John 11:22.)

But it seems too strong to say that every competent judge admits that “ye shall ask” of the first half of the verse has nothing to do with “ye shall ask” of the second; or that in the first Christ is referring back to the desire of the disciples in verse 19 to question Him. So Euthymius, as well as the Vulgate, and a crowd of moderns from Beza to Trench, including many German and British theologians. But though the word ■ρωτ■ω occurs often in the New Testament, and even in this chapter in the ordinary classical sense of “question” (interrogo), it is used quite as often or more so for “praying” or “beseeching,” &c. (rogo), as in the LXX., and thus like our English “ask,” which means “to request” no less than “to question” or “inquire.” Inquiring of God in Old Testament phrase approaches in fact nearer to prayer for any one or thing than to a question. I think then that varying the English word was not the true solution, though obvious enough on the surface, and that the earlier Greek commentators were nearer the truth, save Origen who like later errorists perverted the passage to deny the propriety of praying to our Lord, thus flatly contradicting the early disciples (Acts 1:24), Stephen (Acts 7:59), and the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:8.) In matters which concern His service and His church it is even more proper according to scripture to pray to Him than to the Father, to whom we instinctively turn for all that concerns the family of God.

The Lord is really signifying the great change from recourse to Him as their Messiah on earth for every difficulty, not for questions only but for all they might want day by day, to that access unto the Father into which He would introduce them as the accepted Man and glorified Savior on high. Till redemption is known, and the soul by grace is set in righteousness, even believers are afraid of God and hide as it were behind Christ. They draw near in spirit, as the disciples did actually, to Him who in love came down from heaven to bless and reconcile them to God. But they do not really know what it is to come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace. They are not in the distinct consciousness of children before their Father, enjoying liberty in Christ by the Spirit of adoption.

This then appears to me what the Lord gives the disciples to know should follow His resurrection and departure “in that day,” a day already come, the day of grace, not of glory, save so far as we enter in by virtue of Him who is gone above and sent the Spirit thence to be in us. He had already and fully told them what the Spirit of truth would do in guiding them into all the truth (vers. 12-15); here He substitutes access to the Father for everything in prayer, instead of personal requests to Himself as their Master ever ready to help on earth. It is not a question then of a declaration of being so taught of the Spirit as to have nothing further to inquire, but of no longer having One at hand to whom they had been in the habit of appealing for each difficulty as it rose. The departing Son of God would draw out confidence of heart in the Father.

Hence the solemnity of making known their new resource. “Verily, verily, I say to you, whatsoever [or, if] ye shall ask the Father [in my name], he will give you [in my name].” The text differs in the manuscripts and other authorities; but the best of them place “in my name” after the assurance that the Father will give, not after the saints asking the Father as in the common text, which however is best supported by the ancient versions. There can be no doubt, as we shall see presently, that the saints are encouraged and entitled in the value of the revelation of Christ to prefer their requests to the Father; but, if the more ancient reading hold in verse 28, we have the collateral truth that He gives in virtue of that name whatsoever they shall ask Him. How blessed and cheering to the saints! What pleasure to the Father and honor to the Son! The rejection of the Messiah only turns to His greater glory and better blessings for His own.

And this is followed up in verse 24: “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated: I do not mean as bearing merely on the use of the blessed prayer given long before to the disciples, but on the broader question of their approaching new relationship and standing by redemption and the gift of the Spirit. On the face of the words however it is plain that to use that prayer is not to ask the Father in Christ's name. The disciples were no doubt in the habit of using it day by day; yet up to the present they had asked nothing in His name. Now so to ask the Father in the Son's name is alone Christian prayer in the true and full sense. Those therefore who insist on going back to the prayer of the disciples fail to enter into the new place on which the Lord here sets all that are His. It may be reverently meant; but is it the faith which really enters into God's mind and honors the Master? I trow not. As a prayer to be used when the disciples knew not how to pray, it was perfection; as a model, it abides ever full of depths of instruction. But the Lord, now at the end of His career here below, lets them know the shortcoming in ground and object of their previous petitions, and tells them what should be their character in future,

It would have been out of season and presumptuous for the disciples in the past to have drawn near to the Father as the Son did, who, in His wisdom and goodness, gave them a prayer really suited to their then state when the atoning work was not yet done and the Holy Ghost accordingly not given. But now, as we have already seen so often in this context, consequent on Christ's glorifying God on earth by death and going up on high, the Holy Ghost would come to be in and with them; and this is the great result Godward, as we have already seen much saintward: they should ask in Christ's name, and they are called to ask and receive, that their joy might be full. Life in Christ would go forth in suited desires, to which the Holy Ghost would impart power as well as intelligence; and assuredly, with such a ground and motive before Him as the Son of man who had devoted Himself at all cost to His glory, the Father would fail in nothing on His part. Their joy would

indeed be at the full.

“These things have I spoken to you in parables: an hour cometh when I shall speak no longer to you in parables, but openly report to you about the Father. In that day ye shall ask (α■τ■σεσθε) in my name, and I say not to you that I will pray (■ρωτ■σω) the Father for you; for the Father Himself dearly loveth you because ye have dearly loved me and have believed that I came out from God. I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and proceed unto the Father.” (Vers. 25-28.)

It is owing, I presume, to the large and various meaning of the Hebrew ξΘωΡΘμ that we have in Greek παροιμ■αas well as παραβολ■ used correspondingly not only in the LXX. but in the New Testament, the synoptic Gospels always use the latter, John only the former as in chapter 10 and here. Perhaps “allegory” might be more appropriate, or even a “dark saying” in our chapter where parable or allegory can scarcely apply. A close examination of the usage will prove that both Greek words are employed with considerable latitude in the four Gospels, as elsewhere,

Here the Lord was conscious that what He uttered fell like enigmas on the ears of the disciples. His plain declaration or report about the Father would clear up all in due time. What did not His resurrection? and His appearances and converse from the first to the last of His forty days' intercourse, as well as His ascension? Take alone the message through Mary of Magdala on the first day of the week. Did He not plainly declare about the Father, His and theirs? But above all when He testified by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, did not the truth shine out more than ever? He made known to them His. Father's name then; He was to make it known when gone above (John 17:26), and did so only more effectively from thence.

This also turned (as was intended) to their increasing sense of the value of Christ's own name. “In that day ye shall ask (α■τ) in my name.” (Ver. 26.) Asking in His name is not merely for Christ's sake as a motive, but in the value of Himself and His acceptance. His worth goes in its, fullness to the account of those who thus plead; and how precious and all-prevailing it is in the. Father's eyes! How glorifying to both the Father and the Son! How humbling and no less strengthening to the saints themselves! It is the title of every Christian now; none ever enjoyed it before. Never was there a soul blessed on earth apart from Him and His work foreseen; but this is known nearness and acceptance applied even to our petitions in virtue of Himself fully revealed when His work was done in infinite efficacy.

“And I say not that I will ask (■ρωτ.) the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you dearly, because ye have loved me dearly, and have believed that I came out from God." (Vers. 26, 27.) This is another of those sentences over which not men and scholars but saints also stumble, because many a believer even is not enjoying the truth of it; and what John's Gospel and Epistles treat of must be entered into really to be understood. This verse 26 not more denies Christ's intercession for us, than verse 23 forbids the servant praying to His Lord about His work or His house. It is not an absolute statement, nor is there the smallest need to apply the technical device of Praeteritio, as it is called, so as to convey not a negation, about a strong affirmation. Thus it would mean “I need not assure you that I will pray the Father for you.” But it is simply an ellipse, which the words following explain: I do not say that I will ask the Father for you, as if He did not love you; for the Father Himself (proprio motu) does love you dearly, &c. This too accounts for the words of special affection, φιλε■ and πεφιλ, which follow. It was grace, the Father's drawing, which

brought them to hear the voice of the Son and believe in Him; yet does the Lord speak of the Father's dearly loving them and of their having dearly loved Him, to whom they clung truly, however feebly. They had believed that He came out from God. They truly believed that He was the Christ of God, and were born of Him.

But this was far short of the full truth which He proceeds to reveal: “I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and proceed onto the Father.” (Ver. 28.) Here they were altogether short. They realized as yet little or nothing of His full, divine, and eternal glory as the Son of the Father. God the Father was fully revealed no doubt in the Son; but the presence and power of the Spirit, personally sent down, was needed to give them communion with Him thus made known. It is this which, when the conscience is purged, brings into happy liberty; and here is what so many saints are still ignorant of, in the state of their souls pretty ranch where the disciples then were; for though they see the glory of the Son, they fail to see in Him and His work their title to rest in the Father's love.

Chapter 132

Notes on John 16:29-33

IT would be difficult to find a verse of John which presents more tersely and completely toe the character of his Gospel than the one we have just had before us; nor one less really apprehended now as then by the disciples. His divine relationship and mission from the Father stand clearly revealed on earth before they join Him on high, His presence as man in the world, no less than His quitting the world, and going to the Father, none the less the Son become now mall, with the immense results of all this for God, and more especially the saints; these great truths wholly transcend all Messianic glory which as yet filled the minds of His followers, who proved, how little they knew by the very fact that they thought they knew all clearly.

“His disciples say [to him], Lo, now thou talkest with openness and speakest no parable. Now we know that thou knowest all things and hast no need that one ask thee: herein we believe that thou didst come out from God.” (Vers. 29, 30.) Their own language bewrayed them. Simple as His words were, they had not taken in their depth. They had no conception of the mighty change from all they had gathered of the kingdom as revealed in the Old Testament to the new state of things that would follow His absence with the Father on high and the presence of the Spirit here below. It sounded plain to their ears; but even up to the ascension they feebly if at all caught a glimpse of it. They to the last clang to the hopes of Israel, and these surely remain to be fulfilled another day, But they understood not this day, daring which, if the Jews are treated as reprobate, even as He was rejected of them, those born of God should in virtue of Christ and His work be placed in immediate relationship with the Father. His return to the Father was a parable still, though the Lord does not correct their error, as indeed it was useless: they would soon enough learn how little they knew. But at least even then they had the inward consciousness that He knew all, end, as He penetrated their thoughts, had no need that any should ask Him. “Herein we believe that then camest out from God.” Undoubtedly: yet how far below the truth He had uttered is that which they were thus confessing! The Spirit of His Son sent into their hearts would give them in due time to know the Father; as redemption accomplished and accepted could alone lay the needful ground for it.

“Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? [or, Just now ye believe]: lo, an hour cometh, and is come, that ye should be scattered, each onto his own, and leave me alone; and I and not alone, because the Father is with me. These things have I spoken to you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world.” (Vers. 31-33)

Their faith was real, but they were shortly to show how small it would be proved to be in the hour of trial already come. If doubt is never justifiable, it is good in our weakness to live in constant dependence. When strong in our own eyes, we are weak indeed; when weak, we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus. But O what a Savior! and what disciples! They scattered to their own, and He left alone in the hour of His deepest need! Would any heart but His own have hastened to add, after such desertion on their part, “and I am not alone, because the Father is with me?” Could any but Himself have added, especially to such saints and under such circumstances, These things

have I spoken to you that in Me ye may have peace? or have given such solid ground for it, at the very moment of contemplating their present portion of trouble in the world? “Be of good courage: I have overcome the world.” As Christ alone could so feel and bless so are these worlds worthy of Him; and one knows not whether to admire most their divine authority, or their matchless grace and suitability to our need here below. As He is absolutely what He also speaks, so He speaks what He is to the unfailing comfort of the believer.

Strikingly characteristic of our Gospel is the omission of the sorrows of Gethsemane, and yet more of God's abandoning Him on the cross. Neither fell in with that account of Him which sets forth the glory of His person whose it was to do the will of Him who sent Him and to finish His work. Others bring out His complete rejection and humiliation, the service He rendered, and the depth of his sympathy as the perfect Man. John sees, bears, and records the Son above all circumstances, the object and the revealer of the Father, even when that sorrow came which nattered them, or that forsaking of God which was unfathomable save to Himself.

With all before Him He spoke what He did here that in Him they might have peace; and se He was: in the world tribulation their portion, not as for the Jew retributively at a specified and measured hour Jeremiah 30:7; Dan. 12:1 Matt. 24:21; Mark 8:19) at the time of the end or even preparatorily meanwhile (Luke 21:22-24), but habitually for those not of the worlds and hence a prey in it: Yet are they called to courage, as knowing Him whom they have believed, His fiery and His grace, who has overcome the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Chapter 133

Thoughts on John 20

In this chapter we have the whole picture of the dispensation, from the remnant of Israel that first received Him risen, to the remnant that will know Him when they see Him again, represented by Thomas.

Mary comes early to the sepulcher, while it is yet dark: her heart is there, and she has no rest without Him. The others came when it was light—the natural hour to come. When they had been buying spices for the body and what they were going to do next morning, they come at the light. But Mary Magdalene has no heart to be without Him, and, before the light, she is there. The church began by a remnant, but John never gives us the church, but the remnant at the end, and in verse 17, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God” —two dispensations if you call them so.

First, Mary goes to the sepulcher and finds the stone rolled away. She runs and tells Peter and John, and they go to the sepulcher. Peter goes in first as usual; those two constantly go together, they both loved the Lord, but in very different characters. They do not shine in this history. They come and see and believe, and go away to eat their breakfasts, or for something at home. They did not know the scriptures, nor did they stay to be anxious about it at all. They saw and believed, for they knew not the scriptures. It was not faith in God's word, but sight convinced them. The clothes all lay quietly there; there had been no stealing away, and they said He must be risen. Afterward Christ reproaches them for their unbelief. At any rate like Mary, they might have inquired. Mary stays when they have gone off; and there she is weeping, and thinks when she sees Him He is the gardener, and says, “If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She feels she has a right to dispose of His body, and talks to the gardener as if he knows all about it— “Tell me where thou hast laid him” —just as I might go to a house where one is ill, and say, “How is he?” without stating a name, because all hearts are full of the sick one. Then Christ brings out (the angel had done so too) where her heart was; and, when that is done, He calls His own sheep by name, and she turns and says to Him, Rabboni, that is, Master. Then she would have taken Him by the feet, but He anticipates her, for she thought she had got Him back again for the kingdom. You must not touch Me,” but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” It is the highest expression of personal relationship, and she is the messenger of it to the apostles themselves. He has accomplished redemption, and they are His brethren, for He has put them into the same place as Himself. The women in Matthew touch Him, but they were no messengers of a higher calling in contrast with the kingdom. They thought nothing about the act save as a mere token of respect and attention, and He let them do it.

The Lord was not seen by Peter first. The women are not named in 1 Cor. 15, because Paul is speaking of witnesses there; he speaks of Peter, and the twelve, and five hundred, and James, and that was all he wanted. “Then of the twelve;” that marks it.

It was written in the Book of Psalms, and his “bishoprick let another take.” That was both reason and authority for choosing another. He has another to witness of His resurrection, because the Psalms said it was to be done. The number “twelve” is the perfection of human things in government: the foundations of the city, new Jerusalem, are twelve: so twelve apostles of the Lord. “Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” There must be twelve.

Luke takes them all in a lump—Mary Magdalene and the other women, and puts them together; this is Luke's way—all in a lump together, and then he picks out perhaps a single circumstance in which deep and interesting moral traits are developed and that he gives at length. In verse 18 we get Mary Magdalene's testimony. The seeing and believing left the disciples at home. Individually put through they receive her testimony. Mary Magdalene is the figure of the remnant.

Then another point. We see them gathered, and Christ pronounces peace upon them. He had said before, “Peace I leave with you” —His own peace in the world, but here there is not only resurrection brought in, in, but the relationship. “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” And then He comes in a sense into the midst of the church gathered together—and, instead of saying, “Fear not,” as He was wont while here below, the door was shut for fear of the Jews, and He says now, “Peace be unto you,” for He had now made peace by the blood of His cross. As though to say, “I cannot stay with you, but I leave peace with you;” and He breathes on them too, and says, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” “As I cannot stay, here is a provision for you if I go;” such is the force of it. It is the Holy Ghost in the power of life in resurrection, not sent down from heaven.

There is nothing special in the “eight” days, in verse 26. In one place you will find “after six days,” and in another, eight. John never gives us the church as a doctrine, but we have historically their gathering together and He in their midst.

As to peace He says, “Peace be unto you; as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.” It is characteristic now to be so. The word “peace” is an amazing word in scripture. “The God of peace shall be with you.” He is never called the God of joy; it is never given as His character. He is, as God, always in peace, and never up and down as we are. Joy is a feeling that a man has when he is up, and presently it subsides, and he goes down again. Christ now brings peace—He has made absolute peace, perfect peace, and He brings it.

Then comes the breathing on them. It was the figure of the Holy Ghost coming after He had made peace; but as a fact it was the power of resurrection life. Just as God breathed into Adam's nostrils, so the resurrection Son of God breathes into them the power of the life He gives them as risen. In Acts 1 you get the sending of the Holy Ghost, not the breathing on them, not the power of life, but the Holy Ghost Himself received anew for others from the Father by the Son, and then by Him shed forth.

As to “Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.” They were the administrators of it in the world; first in the preaching of the gospel if you like; but afterward in the proper administrative sense. Here it is the apostles. But Peter in a sense remitted Cornelius' sins. Paul says,” To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also.” And yet, if such an one is a believer, he has eternal life and forgiveness all the while. That is what I mean by administrative. Not the forgiveness in which the soul is justified, but the present conferring the forgiveness in the ways and government of God. James says, “And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

If discipline is carried out, there the sin is bound upon the person. It is spoken here of the disciples, that is the eleven.

The question has, been raised, I know, whether there were one hundred and twenty that obtained this power or only eleven. The great thing is to get what the Spirit of God is at in the passage, and afterward the context to much se you like. Thomas is not there the first time. There might have been more than the eleven present.

As to binding and loosing the only thing that I see it conferred upon, after Peter, is in Matt. 18 “Where two or three are gathered together in my name;” forgiveness of sins is not named here, though this is part of it. The thing He is here speaking of is their administrative capacity.

In those early days there was no such thought as receiving in anyone, and he not having his sins forgiven. It is the very thing, they, the disciples, were “sent” out for—to announce the remission of sins to give knowledge of the salvation of His people by the forgiveness of sins; only He gives the administration of it to them.

I believe that any assembly of two or three in Christ's name (provided they look to Him, and do it in His name) have the power to bind and loose, and forgive sins; only this is not eternal forgiveness.

As to chapter xviii. 28, it is a question of whether Christ anticipated the Passover, for they began it in the evening, and among the Jews the evening began the next day, and was reckoned with it. It was dark when they went out. I did look into the thing once, but those things do not occupy me much. “That they might eat the passover,” falls in completely with Christ being sacrificed on the paschal day; it is merely a question of why He ate the supper previously, and still it was on the same day.

As to the title on the cross, here we get the whole” Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.” One gospel gives one part, and another another; but here you get it in full.

To return to the forgiveness of sins in chapter xx. He speaks peace to them first in itself, and on the next Lord's day, says, “Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” He brought the peace to them, and then He sent them out with the peace. Then He breathes the Holy Ghost into them, which, looked at as figurative teaching, in the dispensational teaching here given, is the same as sending it from heaven; but historically it was the power of life, and not the giving of a person.

When they brought the message of this peace and preached the gospel, that was the character of their mission; then there was restoring souls in details. The offering once offered, we have absolute remission, when it is a question of our acceptance with God; and then the administrative thing, as “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,” to Paul. It is well to see that, as to forgiveness, it is not a mere perfect work by which I am to be forgiven, but I am forgiven. It is more than mere declaration. The woman in Luke 7 was forgiven in the mind of God, but she herself had it not until the Lord said to her, “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in, peace.” I could not say that a person is sealed in the mind of God, because sealing is not a thing in a person's mind at all, and forgiveness is. I may have forgiven you an offense, but you are not easy until I tell you so; whilst sealing is a different thing in its nature. The woman did not get the forgiveness until He said so, though she saw the grace in Christ that drew her to Him. You find that constantly; you get in it

pious souls, the sense of the grace that forgives without the sense of forgiveness. They love the Lord, but if I say, “Are your sins forgiven?” the reply at once is, “Oh, I could not say that.” You find hundreds such. You see it, as to salvation, in Cornelius. He was to call Peter, and hear words whereby he and his house should be saved. He was safe really already. Justification is in the same way. People talk about eternal justification; but justification is not only what is in the mind of God, but in the man's receiving it, and therefore you get justification by faith. A person really is accepted, and there is the sense of the forgiving grace in the person of Christ, but the word of known forgiveness is not in the mind of the person himself. The same of justification. That is the force of the word, He was raised again for our justification,” because justification there is an active word in Greek—for our justifying—and then it adds, “Having been justified by faith,” and so on. Faith must come in, in order to our actually having it, and the man has not got it until faith. Suppose a thousand pounds given to me, I must sign my name for it. Actually I do not get it until I sign my name.

In Matt. 18:15-18, the inheritance of binding and loosing is given to the two or three. Thus the binding and loosing power which is claimed by clergymen and others, and which was given first to Peter, has its succession in the two or three gathered together, and not in clerical successors. And that has its importance in these days. In Matthew it is not absolutely the same as in John 20:23, for it may apply to other things. The main point is the same, no doubt, and has always been considered so, though not exclusively that. It is almost always “heavens,” not “heaven.” The place is lost sight of when we say, “heaven,” because we talk loosely of going to heaven. It is the “kingdom of the heavens;” that is, belongs to the heavens, and not to the earth. “Heavens” is the place more, but “heaven” is characteristic. You may use both so, but I should say, “The heavens are higher than the earth.” We use the heavens more materially, in a way. There are habits of that kind in language which are not absolute.

Peter is represented as having “keys,” but it is an important point to notice that there are no keys of the church; that is a mere blunder. “I will build,” says Christ; and Peter had nothing to say to it except the privilege of getting the name “Peter.” The administration of the church was not committed to Peter, but of the kingdom. The church in this sense is not even built yet; whereas the keys of the administration of the kingdom of heaven upon earth were committed to him; and he lets in the Jews and the Gentiles. That is the force of “keys.” “The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder.” Isa. 22:22 has the same meaning. It is the charge of administering the kingdom of heaven down here. That is where popery has made an immense blunder, though very natural to the state of that church. It has taken Peter instead of Paul; there is no successor to Paul, and they do not attempt it. Peter had to follow Christ, and Judaism came to nothing, and the circumcision church died away at Jerusalem. They take up with Peter because the church dropped into a Judaical state. You never hear of a pope as the successor of Paul. The entire thing is ridiculous, because, after all, you have no succession of Peter. As to successors to Timothy, whom Paul appointed in a way (but not to be his successor), nobody has thought of that, except in some general idea.

It is curious how and where things come out. There are those now, and doctors of divinity too; one of them goes through all this, and declares there is no ordination to the ministry in scripture, and no sacraments in scripture, and that one person is as competent to administer as another; that certain things must be done, but there is no authority in any clergy from scripture. He says there

was no such thing in the early church at all. And it is so—there was not. He admits that the apostles appointed elders, as indeed is plain, but it must be taken for granted that they did it with the concurrence of the people, because Clement says so. Clement owns no bishop. Vigilantius was cursed by Jerome in an awful way; but he stopped on his way back, and stayed among the Vaudois. Tillemont says of Jerome, “We may learn from this what a church saint is.” He is as abusive and vengeful as possible, only he praises celibacy. Chrysostom and Augustine fell under his lash.

But we were at forgiveness: and now we get the remnant in the last days, and the three times that Christ reveals Himself to them, as it says in chapter xxi. 14: “This is now the third time.” He had seen them ever so many times, but as to this kind of definite public and positive showing Himself, the first time was on the Lord's day (chap. xx. 19); then when Thomas was there eight days after, in verse 26; and then in the last chapter picturing the remnant at the end. Calling this the “third time” is a proof that the third time is used with a kind of specific figurative character. Thomas being absent the first time, had no part in this Christian mission, but he comes in afterward, and believes when he sees.

Let us look now at the different missions in the different gospels. In Matthew you have no ascension, and you get the mission from Galilee. The angels tell the women to “go quickly, and tell his disciples,” not “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God,” but “that he is risen from the dead, and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.” And then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee unto a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him they worshipped, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in, earth; go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” There you get the mission in resurrection from Galilee, and from the remnant of Israel looked at as thus gathered, and going out to disciple the nations or Gentiles. And that never was carried out in scripture, except it be a hint in Mark at the utmost. And not only you do not get it carried out negatively, but you also get positively the going to the Gentiles given up to Paul. The apostles gave it up, and agreed that they should go to the Jews, and “that we should go unto the heathen:” You find it in Gal. 2. And then you get the church an entirely new kind of thing. As Matthew's mission, everything was provisional, not carried out.

But there is another thing which gives an intimation about it, and that is, when the Lord sends them forth, He tells them (Matt. 10), “If they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.” But in Acts you find that, on persecution arising, they all fled, except the apostles, and that must be taken into account as to the way in which the instruction was practically carried out.

For the Gentiles there is an entirely fresh start from Antioch, when Paul is sent out by the Holy Ghost. There was then very nearly a split between Jerusalem and Antioch, but they were united and kept together, as you find in Acts 15.

Well, the mission in Matthew starts from Christ's connection with the remnant in Israel. In Mark it is more general. You get more the service of Christ there; and in chapter xvi. 15, He said unto them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” that is the largest and most

general commission you have, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” It is the more remarkable, because that is the part of Mark which the learned Germans reject, from verse 9 to the end. In what precedes you have this Galilee revelation of Himself, but no heavenly revelation, no Bethany revelation at all. In what they consider genuine in Mark you do not get the ascension; they only go to the instruction in verse 7, and stop with, “They were afraid.” (Ver. 8.) But in Mark they are sent to Galilee, and the history is pursued regularly on that basis up to the end of verse 8, but if you stop at verse 8, it stops all of a heap, and you get no mission at all. In these last verses you get His appearings to them, and the facts are what are recounted in Luke and John, and the mission is added in verse 15; it is not said in what connection, and then He is received up into heaven.

They go forth, the Lord working with them, so that there you get the mission from heaven with power. It is the Luke commission from verse 9. In Luke you only get the last part of Mark, who gives Matthew up to the sepulcher parts of Luke and John. In Luke 24:46, “It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” He, taking the mission from heaven as Paul did, takes in Jerusalem as much as the nations, “the Jew first, and also the Greek.” Then “He hid them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” So Luke's mission practically comes from heaven—it is in Bethany, and not in Galilee. Galilee is the mission to Gentiles only from a risen Savior, in the place where He had the poor of the flock; Luke's commission is from heaven, and is Pauline in character. In Mark you have, “Go to Galilee,” but you have no Galilee mission at all. In John you get no going to heaven, but you get them sent out for the remission of sins: “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” It is a mission from the divine person, not from a place at all. And then it is by the Holy Ghost: He gives them the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sins; and so there is no ascension in John, for this would give a place, though a heavenly one.

Chapter 134

Thoughts on John 14

There are in this chapter various aspects of the truth and grace of God in Christ, connected with the place of government in which we stand related to our God and Father.

First, there is the one hope that grace has given to us. And there is nothing, to my mind, more remarkable throughout such wondrous words than this, that our Lord Jesus gives us credit for the highest motives and for the best affections. This is the more touching when we remember that He was just about to die by the wicked hands of men; and we can only understand it by reminding ourselves that we are now invariably addressed according to a nature that is of God; and if we are made partakers of the divine nature, if we have Christ's life as our life, how can it be anything but that which answers to God? The life that is in the Christian in no wise differs in its character from that life which is seen in its perfection in Christ. It differs in its manifestation, it differs in its measure of action, but it is one and the same life, and can be none other. Just as the old nature that we had does not differ in its character from Adam after he fell, but shows the same distrust of God, the same love of its own way, the same tendency to tax evil on God Himself, to throw the blame on wife or anybody in order to excuse self. Such is the life that was manifested in the first man directly he fell. We have, of course, only touched upon some of the leading points that we find in Gen. 3, and yet we all feel how applicable every point is to the children, as the Holy Ghost has described, it, of our common father. No otherwise is it with the life that we now have in Christ; Christ Himself is its divinely manifested perfection; but Christ is the life of the feeblest soul that belongs to Him, and nothing strengthens that life more than the calm and peaceful consciousness of the believer that it is the same life, while looking to Him as an object. What immense joy and comfort to think that our life is not merely immortal being! Angels, of course, have an existence that never terminates, even as the human soul does not; but ours is the very life of Christ Himself. He is our life, and that now, even in this world. Hence, first of all, we find that the hope is of the very highest character, suited to such as know Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. It is a hope according to Christ, not a hope of seeing this world completely changed, of the Jews delivered from their unbelief and their degradation, and the Gentiles from all their restless, self-vaunting, godless plans, in which the first man magnifies himself, as if there were no second Man, nor His cross, nor His coming again; nor is it even the triumph over Satan put down and the curse removed.

All these things belong to the first creation, and to God's dealings with the creature, and will be displayed on the earth. But Christ does not belong to the earth. Although He was pleased to descend from heaven, and to be a man on earth, yet we know that he who sees no more than a man in Christ, however glorious, knows nothing at all of God. What gives the essence of the truth as to Christ is not even His being glorified as Man in heaven merely. He is God, the Word, the Son, who was pleased to take up manhood into union with His eternal person, and to bring us by redemption into a place with Himself, and to be like Himself, glorified in the presence of God. This then is the hope given to us. The Son of God, who is known by the Father as no creature ever did, or could, know Him (Matt. xi.), came to glorify God as man in the place of sin and for sin (John 13), and then in divine grace, when cleansed every whit by water and blood, to give its a place with

Himself in the Father's house. We are to be with the Son, according to divine counsel and His love, in the presence of the Father. Hence it is He speaks here at first exclusively of what is in heaven, and of the highest and nearest place there, for there is much in the heavenly places that is not the Father's house. Angels are never said to be in the Father's house, nor any created beings, save those who have the Son as their life, as well as accomplished redemption.

But as is our hope, so also is our life; and inasmuch as in us there is a counter-power, while Satan acts as by the world, an old nature that would drag us down into the defilements of the world and of the flesh, we need not only life; but power. Life is not power. Rom. 7 shows us clearly the difference. We have there a person undoubtedly possessed of life, but without power. The good that he wishes, he does not; the evil that he hates, that he does. Thus does a distressing struggle go on; but for all that it is a soul born of God, a new nature that loves God and hates evil, but powerless and wretched. If it had not been one born again, he would not know any such struggle. The first man loves what is evil, and hates what is good; but in Rom. 7 it is a real genuine desire after God and detestation of sin in the soul, yet withal no power. It is a converted soul that earnestly strives to avoid evil and do what is good, grasping after promises to lift it out of its state. This is the condition of many children of God at the present time. They are born of God, but there is no power, because there is no submission practically to take the place of death with Christ to sin. It is a believer, but taking the unbelieving way of striving to conquer sin, instead of death with Christ. Now we must be broken down, in order to give self absolutely up, we must be made willing to accept the truth of our state, to feel, not our sinfulness only, but our utter weakness, before the power of Christ can rest upon us.

And this is the secret why so many believers abide in bondage for a long while. They are striving to do right, and have not yet submitted to God's righteousness, to His sentence on the old man. They have been brought to own their guilt, but not their powerlessness, and it is one thing to feel that I am a guilty sinner, and another that I am lost, without power for God at all, and till I am broken down to be content only with Christ for everything, for power as well as for life and pardon, I shall always be in a see-saw state of sometimes happy, sometimes miserable, of sometimes hoping, and sometimes fearing or troubled. But this is not the proper condition of a Christian. I do not say that true believers may not be in that condition; but we must make a difference between the state in which a believer may be, and the true Christian state. A real child of God may for awhile, and even long, be in a state that is anything but Christian. The proper Christian knowledge is that I died with Christ, yet that I live in Him, and that not only life is in Christ, but power is of the Holy Spirit through Him. I own the good-for-nothingness of the first man when I am brought down as dead with Christ, to receive the Holy Ghost as alone power. If the Lord were to give no power, privately or otherwise, we should claim the merit of it to ourselves. If we were striving after what is good, and had power to accomplish it, would we not magnify ourselves? There is no soul of man but would be lifted up by it. But if I am broken down (for it is wrought experimentally though by faith) to own my complete ruin, and no way out of it but death with Christ, God's work by Him, no less than His free gift is the new life that He has given us in Him, then the Spirit of God can strengthen us, and make us more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Hence, in this chapter, after the full bright hope according to Christ, the next thing is the Holy Spirit given to the saints. What was Christ's condition here below? Was He ever in this miserable state? There have been saints blinded enough to say so. You will find this kind of doctrine among

theologians, but a Christian must be under the dead weight of much rubbish who could allow such thoughts of the Lord Jesus. For nothing can be plainer in the Gospels, nothing more consistent with His person, than that He never had one moment's interruption of perfect communion with His Father, till He went under the load of our sins on the cross: even then it was not that the Father did not find His perfect complacency in the Son. It is not too much to affirm that at this solemn moment He was more than ever the object of God the Father's delight, but there could not be, if He was really bearing sin and suffering for it from God, the interchange of communion then. That had always been before, but the bearing of our sins involved God's forsaking Him. If the sins He bore were real, God's judgment of them in the cross was no less real too; and it would have been mockery, if, when He was suffering the judgment of God on sin, the interchange of communion had gone on all the same. So far from the holiness of Christ making the cross to be less terrible, so far from His love making the judgment of sin light, all that He is made Christ's sufferings incomparably greater.

Again, so far was the glory of His person from detracting from His sufferings, that it deepened immeasurably what none other could have endured. There was in Him infinite capacity of feeling and of endurance, every element that could add to, none that could take from, His sufferings. And as this was the perfect suffering of the Lord Jesus for sin, and our sins, to God's glory, so perfect is the peace that results. The redemption is as everlasting as the life. If He is yours, you live before God in the life in which Christ lives Himself—not only the perfect life which He had as man in this world, but the life of One who was dead and lives for evermore, having already borne our sins. Hence the life in Him risen I now have is the witness that my sins are gone; and God gives me the Holy Ghost that I may enjoy and grow up into Him in all things by grace. Christ, when bearing the judgment of sin, did know, as none but He could, the sense of judgment, instead of the enjoyment of communion, but therefore are we called to perfect peace. Judgment was what He went through in order that we should never know it; not that the Lord would not have our consciences to judge ourselves thoroughly; but we are never able to judge evil rightly till we rest in peace on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

John does not so much take up redemption. It is life in Christ that is his characteristic subject. We find in Paul redemption as well as life, and in John it is not that redemption is absent, but nevertheless life is his chief point, and, along with that, the Holy Ghost. What is the blessed place of the Holy Ghost looked at here? Christ was going away; the Holy Ghost is given to abide in and with them forever as the Paraclete. It is not only power, or gift, it is the Holy Ghost Himself given as He never was, nor could be, before; it was an abiding of the Holy Ghost that could not be till Jesus was glorified, and had gone away. It was the Holy Ghost given to be enjoyed by believers on the earth as no man, nor even believers, had the Holy Ghost before. They had had the Holy Ghost in other ways, sweet and precious; but the Holy Ghost was to be given personally, and abide as He had only on the Son of man, whom God the Father had sealed. Why was this? Because the possession of the Holy Ghost was to be according to Christ, as the hope was. The Lord Jesus, when He was on earth, had the Spirit of God dwelling in Him as no one ever had before; He was the only one who could say that He was a temple of God. The truth is, God will never lower redemption to the thoughts of men, and therefore God gives special honor when redemption is an accomplished fact, but not before; and we are the objects of this wonderful grace, not we only, God forbid; but every real Christian person now, everyone that has submitted to the righteousness

of God, every believer united by the Holy Ghost to Christ, has that same blessed hope, and that same glorious and divine Person dwelling in them now. So that we can say that we are the temple of God; and if we do not know it, we are grieving the Holy Ghost by our unbelief.

All Christian walk depends really on our starting clear with this, that we have Christ as eternal life, and redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and that the same Spirit dwells in us that dwelt in the Lord Jesus. As Jesus did nothing save by the Holy Ghost, so we, who have a nature opposed to Christ, do preeminently need the action of the Spirit of God to keep us walking according to God.

And this is the third point brought out for us here. Not only have we the life of Christ and the power of Christ, but we are put in the same place of obedience as the Lord Jesus. There is, however, a distinction worthy to note in whit is said by the Lord Jesus here. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.” What blessedness! It was the place of Christ. It is no less open for the Christian; and more, if possible, for the simple reason, that, while the Lord Jesus could say He was not alone, for He had the Father with Him, still, there was, and could be, nobody else; but we have the Father and the Son. Think how the disciples left Him in His sorrow, when He most of all needed their sympathy; when He had chosen out three of the best of them to be His companions, they fell asleep, and the only one that remained, Peter, the boldest of them all, stayed with Him but to curse, and to swear, and to add fresh bitter pangs to His shame. And such is the first man even in the child of God! What a precious thing, then, to have Christ Himself as the only life we live before God. And as for the other nature, it is already a wholly judged thing, put away as an unclean rag, buried out of one's sight. But then comes this place of obedience.

There are two things to notice. First, we hear of commandments—an important word. “He that hath my commandments.” A person might say, this is a very hard thing, “He that hath my commandments.” Why does He make having them a part of loving Him? Men would have said, He that keeps the commandments that are given to him. But no, it is, “he that hath;” because love is sure to have them. If there is not love at work, you will not have them, you cannot see them, you do not know them, you are ever asking, Show me a text for this, and a passage for that. Why do people ask this? Because they have not got the loving eye that understands it already. When there is no love, or the will is at work, we do not see clearly, we find excuses and ply reasons; and it is not at all hard to find a good reason for a bad thing. Any person of some amount of cleverness or a strong will can do that; but what pleases Christ and what He says is this, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” What is it that gives us to have His commandments? The loving heart that treasures every wish He utters, that does not count His commandments grievous, but rather wholesome and good—such an one has His commandments always. There is no hurrying to get the right thing when the time for action comes. Love walks with the Lord, treasuring up every declaration of His will, and then, when the moment of trial comes, all is ready.

We see then that the Lord puts everything in its very best light, that is, in His own. As He gives us the same hope, His own place to be with Himself in the Father's house, the same life and the Holy Ghost as the power, so also He puts us in the same pathway of obedience as His own. Was not that true of Christ? If the devil came and tempted Him, He knew the right answer of God's word at

the right moment. He kept the Father's commandments, and abode in His love: a Borrower, yet His joy full. Others might fumble over the leaves of a Bible to find what was wanted; for the Lord, God's law was in His heart, and He knew His commandment to be life everlasting. I say not a word against searching the Bible. It is well conscientiously to search and read; but it is a better thing to be so fed and nourished in the truth that you have the thing when it is wanted.

But then suppose we have the commandments, this is not enough. There are words that give guidance to one, where another says nothing. When Paul and Barnabas were not listened to by the Jews, they think of the word of the Lord, and Paul says that he must “turn to the Gentiles, for so-hath the Lord commanded us.” I doubt that any other would have seen that but Paul, and the reason was just this: his heart was with the Lord; he thinks at once of Isaiah; but the prophet is speaking of the Lord. Jehovah says to Christ, “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.” But Paul and Barnabas say, Christ is our life, and if it is true of Christ, it is true of us; and if Christ, rejected by Israel, turn to the Gentiles, so should we. If one casts us out, let us take it meekly and turn to another. Where there is humble love, you turn from those that reject you, and you go where the door is open.

So the Lord goes farther still in verses 23, 24, and declares that if one love Him, he will keep His word and His Father will love Him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him; as on the other hand, he that loves Him not keeps not His words. It may not take the shape of command, but it is the expression of His mind and pleasure. This is enough for the heart that loves Christ.

The Lord give us to see the way of Christ in death to self, but the activity of His gracious power to the glory of our God and Savior.

Chapter 135

The Holy Ghost in Person

Each of the divine persons in the eternal Godhead has, in connection with Christianity, obtained a blessedly distinctive expression, which never previously had any place in the revelations made to faith. The Father has been Himself revealed; the Son, as man, risen from the dead, has been glorified in heaven; and the Holy Ghost has for eighteen centuries been a dweller in the house of God upon earth, and in each member of the body of Christ.

Yet it would be difficult to predicate which of these blessed facts—facts which constitute the essential character of Christianity—has been most ignored, not to say denied, by Christendom. How many are they who rank as Christians, but have no solid apprehension of the revelation which has been made of the Father, who have no divine perception of union with Christ in glory, and perhaps, least of all, have clear, conscious possession of the Holy Ghost in person.

These remarkable verities of Christianity which, impinging at every point upon our souls, are unfolded in all their wondrous bearings in Paul's epistles, constitute the framework—the very bone and sinew—of that special character of truth which sitting at the feet of Gamaliel gave no qualification for apprehending, but for which the “light above the brightness of the sun,” and the voice that spake with him, afforded preparation, and which was itself divinely supplied by the revelations made to him in the third heaven. But the Christianity which prevails around us, even where divine life really exists, is the crude, and alas! almost purely selfish, thing which is undisturbed by divine claims, and unimpressed by divine desires. Relief from the load, deliverance from the guilt, escape from the wrath, in a word, forgiveness of sins, and, at the most, some knowledge of justification, exhausts the ordinary conception of it as a present reality; finally, heaven after death!

Could anything more perfectly ignore every divine thought of God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus before the world began, which not only requires the meeting the exigencies of the sinner, but the satisfying in righteousness every claim His holiness preferred; and, above all, the fulfilling those cherished desires of His blessed heart which can find no adequate answer until His Christ is invested in all His glories, heavenly and earthly? Nothing could, perhaps, more strikingly indicate how imperfectly people enter into God's thoughts, than the comparative readiness with which they accept truth as to themselves, as to Israel, and as to the nations, without ever grasping the scope of divine purpose to which all these things are absolutely subservient, being really but the means to that preordained end. Man's unhappy egotism shuts God out, even where God must be everything, or He is nothing; for if, as to His eternal purpose, or as to His ways with us in time, we lay claim to be anything more than vessels of mercy, “afore prepared unto glory,” but meanwhile broken pitchers, for the light to shine out, we entrench upon what is due to the divine persons, and thus is the Head dishonored in His members, and the Spirit of God grieved. Practically, what more than anything else conduces to this deplorable failure in the appreciation of these things is a defective apprehension of the presence of the Holy Ghost in person, and what it carries with it to faith.

The great mass of souls have no personal knowledge of the Father, nor sense of union with Christ, the glorified Man on high, and this because they have not the Holy Ghost in person. They stand, as it were, between the two things of Eph. 1:13— “After that ye believed ye were sealed.” So far from believing, and sealing being synchronous, the word “after” clearly marks how positively it is otherwise in every case, although setting no limit, long or short, as to duration of the interval. In point of fact the Christians around us are just there; to speak broadly, they are all occupying that interval; they have made it their halting-place; they have not gone “on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1), and since the Holy Ghost is given of God “to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32), many remain unsealed, and consequently fall short of the knowledge of the Father, and of eternal life, which embraces it. (John 17:8.) To take another scripture (1 John 5:18), they believe on the name of the Son of God, but do not know that they have this eternal life; and, though God's children by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26), they are scarce, as to stature, up to the “little children” who have known the Father. (1 John 2:13.)

Where shall we find believers in the great Christian communities who have practically, to the joy of their souls, a real, precious, personal acquaintance with the Father and the Son? So blessed and so abiding a privilege is absolutely beyond the reach of souls, until the Holy Ghost is known in person as the indwelling divine Paraclete, by whom alone that holy, blessed, happy intimacy can be enjoyed!

If we turn to the Lord's words to “His own,” as given in the Gospel of John, we find how wonderfully He stamps a reprobate character on this scene, by the fact, with its issues, of the Holy Ghost being here in person. “I will send him to you, and, having come, he will bring demonstration to the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” (Chap. 17: 7, 8.) It is the fact of His presence in person which convicts the world of its sin in having made away with the blessed Son of God, and these are its present relations to God in blood-guiltiness, thus and thereby infinitely enhancing His grace in delivering eclectically the souls whom He brings out of the world to Himself. Then, farther, the Holy Ghost's presence demonstrates God's righteousness in His exaltation of the Son to the throne of the Father, consequent upon His finished work, and in attestation of the divine satisfaction in it and in Him. Again, His presence demonstrates that judgment is pronounced, for that the world and its prince are alike judged, is proved by the fact that He, who was refused of the world, and afterward met the power of Satan at the cross, has through death annulled him that had the power of death, has been received up as a Man into glory, and has Himself sent down the Holy Ghost in person as the promise of the Father.

But if His personal presence has this threefold aspect towards the world and its prince, so also has it a singularly blessed tripartite character in respect to Christ and His saints. In this same pathetic discourse of our beloved Master the same night in which He was betrayed, He unfolds the deep and precious significance of the Comforter, for whose advent it was even gain to them for Himself to go away, and connecting chapter 14:26 with chapter 16:13, we find how blessedly the past, the present, and the future are comprised in the wonderful scope of His current ministry to our souls.

“He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (Chap. 14:26.) What the Master Himself had done or had said, but which could not then be communicated in power to the heart, and precious, and beautiful, and full of divine import as it was, was often unheeded or forgotten, because its significance was wanting to their souls, should

all come back in mighty volume and enhanced blessedness, every word melodious, and every act fragrant with the virtue and the value of His atoning work and glorified person, now disclosed to faith, and ministered by the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter. For an instance of this character, compare chapter 7: 39 with chapter 12: 16.

“Whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” (Chap. 16: 13.) If we might reverently say so, He is the mighty, living, divine Telephone, by means of which celestial harmonies are convoyed to the soul, the mind of heaven conducted into our hearts, and all the present thoughts of Christ, not only as to the assembly, but also in respect to His interests of grace in the world, are brought home and unfolded in divine power and heavenly freshness to the members of His body here.

In same verse— “He will show you the things to come.” (Compare 1 Cor. 3:9, 10.) All of the church's portion, whether her path of sorrow and, alas I of defection here, or of glory beyond; all of the new creation, wherein is no sorrow and no defection, but “all things are of God,” to the glory of its exalted Head; all of the coming kingdom of the Father above, and of the Son of man below, when Israel shall be gathered, and the nations universally blessed, after the indignation and wrath have been poured out, as they must be; all of the new heaven and the new earth for eternity, so far as revelation of it has been vouchsafed; all this, and much more—yea, every precious thing of God and of Christ—does the Holy Ghost in person occupy Himself in ministering to those who, by His indwelling presence, are personally sealed for God, as of the many sons He is bringing to glory, and are corporately constituted the body of Christ.

But further; certain things are set forth in a very definite way. The word is “the sword of the Spirit.” (Eph. 6:17.) How clearly does this imply, not only that the Holy Ghost is here in person, but that He alone enables us to use the word rightly! Prayer, supplication, and intercession are very distinctly in connection with Him. (See Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Judo 20.) So that I may not trust myself either as to how to pray, or what to pray for; but He, divine person though He be, “joins his help to our weakness.” Do I mortify the deeds of the body? It is through the Spirit. (Rom. 8:13.) Do I want guidance, as a son of God away from home in this world? I am led by the Spirit of God. (Ver. 14.) Do I covet to be more like Christ in glory? This practical transformation is by the Lord the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:18.) Do I need a positive check in service, or the sounding of a warning note as to where I should labor? The Holy Ghost knows how to bring it to pass. (Acts 16:6; 20:28.) And in fine, all the personal path of the saint, if according to God, whether as to growth, devotedness, service, communion, worship, or whatever the spiritual exercise may be, as well as the whole administration of gifts in the assembly, and their exercise in subjection to Christ, must be in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost, or it is mere fleshly activity, and the workings of the human will. (1 Cor. 12:3-13.) And while speaking of the assembly, it may be added, that when the glorified Head of His body draws out the affections of His members, and inspires towards Himself the ardent longings of His bride for His coming, the Holy Ghost, in unison with the saints, takes the lead in this desire of heart also; “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” (Rev. 22:17.)

Once again; “All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he [the Spirit of truth] shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” (John 16:15.) Is there anything so dear to the Father as the person, the character, the ways, the work, the interests, the glories of Christ? In all this our fellowship is with the Father, which is only possible to us by possession of the Holy Ghost in person. Has God children on earth through faith in Christ Jesus? He gives them the Holy Ghost

to witness of this to their spirit, and that they may address Him, “Abba, Father” by that “Spirit of adoption,” who is “the Spirit of his Son.” (Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:6.) Do they, then, seek access to their Father? It is “by one Spirit.” (Eph. 2:18.) Are they strengthened of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with might in the inner man 2 It is “by his Spirit” (Eph. 3:16). “Fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2:1), and “love in the Spirit” (Col. 1:8), are alike theirs. So wing to the Spirit, they “shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:11); and, should they fall asleep, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken their mortal bodies by, or on account of, His Spirit that dwelleth in them. (Rom. 8:11.)

May we not fittingly ask ourselves (implicitly accepting, as we do, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost's presence) whether we anything like adequately apprehend all that is involved in it, either as to the world, or as to the saints of God? He whose presence here in person is the pledge of the world's impending doom, is “the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Eph. 1:14.) Meanwhile, in this interregnum, Christ, the glorified Head, has “One body” and “One Spirit” here below (Eph. 4:14), to whom His interests are confided. How little have we understood all that is implied in “the communion of the Holy Ghost.” (2 Cor. 13:14.) How little, for instance, is it practically recognized by saints, that not only every spiritual victory obtained, but every single thing done that is truly and purely spiritual, everything essentially pleasing to the Father, or glorifying to Christ, is due to our possessing the Holy Ghost in person! Every bit of divine love that descends into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), as well as every bit of true, divine apprehension of heavenly things and heavenly joys, is the result of our possession of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Ought we not, then, to be free to confess how much we need the touching appeal which He, the Holy Ghost, has addressed to us, and which is found in the midst of that divine unfolding of the very highest truth—the Epistle to the Ephesians? “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” R.

Chapter 136

“The Church of God,” and the “Two or Three Gathered Together in [-to] My Name.”

The idea of a church (or an assembly) of God is one foreign to scripture. We find in scripture “the assembly of God” in a particular locality, and also as applied in a corporate sense to the totality of the church in the world—to the system which is built upon the profession of Christ's name, admittance into which is by baptism unto His name. To these two ideas (facts as they were at first), and to nothing else, is the term “Church of God” applicable. No assembly of Christian people can now be designated as “the assembly of God” in a locality; this would be to ignore the real and received condition of the church, and would be an unjustifiable and untenable assumption. The remedy for those Christians who desire to quit what they know to be evil is in Matt. 18:20, the “two or three gathered together” in Christ's name, but proving the reality of it by subjection to Him. His name is owned in all orthodox denominations; the proof of the being gathered together in His name, and the reality of it, depends upon the principle of those so gathered, and upon practical obedience to His word. Otherwise it would be as easy to say, (and certainly more guilty) “I am of Christ,” as “I am of Apollos.” But when gathered in that name, and practically subject to His word, they have the assurance of His presence as the object of their affections, and the living source of authority, and they have likewise the teaching of God's word, both as to their individual privileges as Christians, and as to the doctrine of the church, whether as to its calling or as to its interior action and economy. It is our duty, as well as our privilege to be guided by the latter, as far as is possible under the circumstances, for God's rules as to His church remain, however long and generally they have been set at naught, and the Holy Spirit yet dwells in the church (not merely in a particular section of it), in spite of the church's utter disobedience and insubjection. Special blessing is, without doubt, with those who seek to be obedient; but there should be no assumption of what in the present divided state of the church, would not be true—of what would be true only of all believers together, and in common with ourselves.

Moreover, “the church of Christ” is a phrase never found in the New Testament as applied either to a single local assembly, or to the church collectively. In these senses it is always as we have seen, “the church of God.” We meet, it is true, with the expression, “the churches of Christ,” and that remarkably enough in the Epistle to the Romans (chap. 16:16), an expression as anti-Popish, and as anti-Roman Catholic as the apostle, under direct inspiration could have used.

Again, Christ is never spoken of as “Lord of,” or “Lord to,” the church. It is well to search scripture carefully, not for the sake of making distinctions, but with the object of (by God's grace) learning what God would teach us by distinctions He Himself has made. We need to search scripture in the present day—when in the department of scripture knowledge as in every other, men's minds are active, and a mistake, which might at first be unobserved, as though immaterial, may in due time be at the foundation of and vitiate a vast superstructure built upon it Godly vigilance and care were never more needed than at the present time.

But though Christ is never spoken of in scripture as Lord of, or to, the church, there is very much which is connected with His Lordship, and indeed everything pertaining to individual responsibility. Ministry, discipline, church government, even our individual faith (“stand fast in the Lord"), is connected with the Lordship of Christ. So also we read of “brethren in the Lord,” and of the church, till it grows “unto an holy temple in the Lord.” So likewise the table is the Lord's table. All responsibility is unto the Lord. But with this is closely connected the name of Christ; for “we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,” and, as the head of the woman is the man, so the head of the man is Christ. Headship certainly is involved in the name of Christ, though the term “Lord” may express His rights as such more specifically and more generally.

Now it is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that a few Christians (few at least comparatively), who desire to quit evil, are gathered together. They feel, although His name may be owned in the various ecclesiastical systems as part of their creed, that His authority is extensively and systematically set at naught in these systems, and that the Holy Ghost is, as to church action, almost entirely prevented from acting by human rules and organization. This necessarily is destructive of true unity. Such Christians see and feel that this is a very serious state of things. God has supplied a resource, rather than a remedy, in His word, for those who seek it and care for it; and in His love and mercy He shows us in what it consists. It consists in forsaking such systems and in coming together in Christ's name, believing in His promised and assured presence, and being really and practically subject to Him, that our meeting in His name should be a reality, and not a mere form (in which even less of His presence may be felt than He vouchsafes in the systems which we have left), whilst it might be saying, “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.”

But we can arrogate to ourselves nothing, of what belongs only to the saints as a whole. True, God teaches us by His word. He has taught us what “the church, of God” is—what it is in its true and responsible state—what, it is in His mind and purpose, whilst in the world—what it will be when its true state is over. All this it is our privilege to know, and to enter into the joy of. We learn that the church of God is the house of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and that even though this house is in sad confusion, so as to be comparable to a “great house,” containing vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor, yet till it pleases God to take away true Christians, and to give up what is left to demolition, His house, and no particular body of professing Christians within it, is the temple of the Holy Ghost. We learn also that the church (viewed spiritually) is the body of Christ, and we have to act, so far as in us lies, upon the principles laid down in God's word for His church. For instance, we should do nothing which would contravene the truth of the unity of the body—we should act upon the principle of the unity of the body as far as we can, yet not say that we are God's church or Christ's body, for we are but a fragment of the former, and as individuals are members of the latter. We have not a corporate existence of our own in God's eight, even though endeavoring to the utmost of our ability to keep the unity of the Spirit, and to observe the unity of the body. Water baptism admitted us into the house of God, but “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” Of the latter the one loaf is a figure, whilst it is a symbol also of Christ's body given for us. Our earnest desire should be to maintain the holiness of the Lord's table—that holiness which alone is consistent with His presence. If it be asked, “as those thus gathered around our Lord Jesus Christ, what are we?” Simply the few or remnant, gathered to His name and in subjection to Him. At all events, if the word church is used, it should be understood to be limited to mean, that we endeavor

to act as far as we can on church principles, without being strictly and formally a representative body, and owning that we are but a remnant strictly and formally.

J. B. P.

Chapter 137

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN Τ■κνον and Υι■ς AS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE word τ■κνον (from τ■κτω to bear) is used for “child,” irrespective of sex, as descended by birth from its natural parents. (See Matt. 2:18.) Whilst olds, “son,” is the word used to distinguish a male from a female child (see Matt. 10:37), it is also used in a general sense to denote descendants as representing the family or line of the particular person. (John 4:12.) When we look into scripture to find the use of these words, in reference to the relationship of a believer to God, we remark that the word υι■ς—son—is the word always used in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and τ■κνον does not occur in the book, whilst in the Gospels and Epistles of John τ■κνον (child) is used to express that relationship with only one exception, which will be referred to hereafter. The word υι■ς occurs frequently in John, as applying to Christ, or in the simple sense of male, child, or descendant, (and once in John 17:12, son of perdition), never (save in chap. 12: 36, the exception referred to), in allusion to a believer's relationship to God.

Our English version does not give the distinction, as both words are translated promiscuously, “child” and “son.” A Greek Testament, or the Englishman's Greek Concordance, will show the distinction, and at the end of this paper a list of the transposed renderings is given. When we consider the character of the Epistle to the Hebrews as contrasted with the writings of John, we shall find a key to the difference, and it is one which opens up many other portions of scripture where the words are used.

The Gospel and Epistles of John treat, as all admit, of life and nature, and they teach that the life which a believer has is the same that is in Christ, and the nature is derived from God and is thus divine. On the other hand the “Hebrews” takes up the position rather than the nature of a believer, and shows his heavenly calling and access to God, in contrast with the earthly calling and distance from God of the Israelites.

Hence we find, as we might expect, that John uses the word τ■κνον—child—expressive of a being deriving its life and nature from another, as children do from their parents, whilst in Hebrews we have υι■ς—son—expressive of the distinctive position and dignity which a son has in a household. The former word “τ■κνον,” carries with it more thought of internal intimacy, moral characteristics, community of life and nature, whilst the latter word “υι■ς” directs the mind to a position given or recognized and the dignities resulting from it. A “child” delights in the intimacy and affection of the family, a “son” may have to submit to parental authority (Heb. 12), but will be, displayed in manifested glory. (Heb. 2:10.) If we turn to Rom. 8:19, 21, we find this very distinction carefully brought out, as we read of the “liberty of the children of God,” on the one hand, and on the other the “manifestation of the sons of God.”

In further development of this, we, shall find a distinction made between that which morally characterizes a person, that is, his nature, and that which his ways externally proclaim him to be, and the two words under consideration are respectively applied to each. The distinction is more

subtle, and not quite so easily grasped in some cases, but it will be found that it always assists in understanding the subject to which the words apply. For example, in Eph. 2 we read in verse 8 of "children of wrath," where the apostle is speaking of the condition in which they were "by nature," but when he speaks of that which they had manifested themselves by their acts to be, he says in verse 2, "sons of disobedience." Again in Rom. 8:16, where the purely internal action of the Spirit (testifying to our spirit) is spoken of, the words τ■κωα θεο■, children of God, is used, but in verse 14, where the leading of the Spirit is in question, but may be displayed externally, we find υ■ο■ θεο■—sons of God, in Rom. 9:26. It is clear from the context that the question is of positional relationship owned by God, and so, as we should expect, it is "sons" and not "children" as in our version.

In John 12:36 (the exception referred to) we find the expression "sons of light," and on examination of the context, we find that the Lord urged on those whom He addressed to have faith in the light that they might become (that is, get into the position of) "sons of light." In Eph. 5:8 we find almost the converse of this, where the apostle exhorts them to display in walk the moral characteristics which were theirs already as "children of light."

By observing the distinction between the words we shall find a connection in passages, which does not appear to exist as they are now translated. For instance, in Gal. 3:26 the Greek is, "For ye are all SONS of God, through faith in Christ Jesus," and we see at once how beautifully chapter 4:6 is connected with it, "And because ye are sorts, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father."

It is scarcely necessary to add that the same person may be, and the believer of course is, both "child" and "son;" but the comparison of such passages, for instance as John 1:12, and Gal. 3:26, where the Greek gives "children" in the first, and "sons" in the second, enables us to appreciate the value of the precious distinction which the Holy Ghost has marked by the use of the different words, and surely it is a loss to us when we do not apprehend what He has pointed out. It is not necessary to trace out here all the passages where the words are used, but we shall find that, although in some cases the exact distinction may not be easily seen or of great importance, we shall always be helped in our understanding of scripture by noting where the difference exists. There is one use of the word τ■κνον (child) which may be noted in conclusion, because it bears on the person of the Lord. It is used, just as with us, in an affectionate way, "My child, go and do so-and-so," (see Matt. 9:2; 21:28,) and in this way the Lord is addressed by His mother (Luke 2:48), "Child (τ■κνον) why hast thou thus dealt" &c., but in no other passage is this word applied to Him. It may be that this word is not applied to the Lord, because as He was never less than "God over all," it would be inconsistent to use one implying life and nature derived from another, or it may also be because it might appear to weaken the thought of His deity on the one hand, or of His true humanity on the other, if He were called τ■κνον ■νθρ■που or τ■κνον θεο■. There is no such difficulty about υ■■ς, because this word does not, like τ■κνον, necessarily include by implication the time or manner of becoming υ■■ς referring simply to position. Hence we find ω■■ς ■νθρ■που and ω■■ς θεο■. The more we examine the word of God, the more do we discover the wonderful wisdom of Him who inspired it; and we find also that not a word can be altered without a positive loss to our souls. J. S. A.

τ■κνον (child) is translated “son” in the following passages—Matt. 9:2; 21:28; Mark 2:5; 13:12; Luke 2:48; 15:31; 16:25; John 1:12 Cor. 4:14, 17; Phil. 2:15, 22 Tim. 1:2, 18 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4; Philem. 1:10 John 3:12. It is also translated “daughters” in 1 Peter 3:6.

υ■■ς (son) is translated “child” in the following passages—Matt. 5:9, 45; 8:18; 9:15; 12:27; 13:38; 17:25, 26; 20:20; 23:15, 31; 27:9, 56; Mark 2:19; Luke 1:16; 5:34; 6:35; 16:8; 20:34, 36; John 4:12; 12:36; Acts 3:25; 5:21; 7:23, 37; 4:15; 10:36; 13:10, 26; Rom. 9:26, 27; 2 Cor. 3:7, 13; Gal. 3:7, 26; Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6 Thess. 5:5; Heb. 11:22; 12:5; Rev. 2:14; 7:4; 12:5; 21:12. It is also translated “foal” in Matt. 21:5.

Chapter 138

From Troas to Miletus

Let us remark in this brief narrative, which is not accidental, that when Paul had planted the gospel in a country, he did not abandon the converts, but returns with affectionate solicitude, instructs, exhorts, edifies, and watches over the seed planted by his instrumentality, in order that it may be preserved and grow in the knowledge of Christ. He does not neglect the Lord's garden, well knowing that tares may spring up where the good seed grows, and that the enemy can spoil the harvest, if it is not well guarded. It is more needful now than ever to do this, for we are in the perilous times of the last days. Though the enemy can never pluck the sheep out of the Good Shepherd's hand, yet he may disperse them; they may be subjected to the effect of every kind of evil doctrine, by which their growth is hindered, the Lord's glory trampled upon, testimony to Him destroyed, and the candlestick taken away. Let the Lord's servants take warning!

Paul then returns to Macedonia. It is not important, but in verse 4 we should read, “Gaius and Timotheus of Derbe.” From verse 5 we see that many attached themselves to Paul in the work: and others, besides those in verse 4, went before.

Luke accompanied the apostle in his journey towards Troas. The others tarried for him at Troas. It is not without interest to see this emotion of hearts moved by the gospel which Paul preached. All were free; some, such as Apollos, laboring apart; the others, the companions of the great central figure—great for his faith in Christ, and as sent directly from Him by the voice of the Holy Ghost—occupied and sent by him to carry on and accomplish the work in places he would himself have visited, had he not been obliged to go elsewhere, when the opportunity presented itself for them to be thus sent.

Leaving Philippi in five days, they come to Troas, and there remain seven days. Everywhere assemblies had been formed. Here a door had been opened to Paul in coming from Ephesus, but he had not been able to remain long, being uneasy about the Corinthians, since he did not find Titus there, whom he had sent to them. It was at Troas that Luke, who wrote the Acts, had attached himself to Paul, to accompany him the first time he visited Macedonia. We do not know how the gathering at Troas was formed; but there was one, and we are given to see into it a little, not its discipline or gifts, as in Corinthians, but its ordinary walk.

The first day of the week the disciples met together to break bread. This was evidently their custom. It was the first day of the week, and the disciples gathered themselves together, according to their habit, to break bread. It was the first object of their meeting, the center of their worship. Other things were done; they spoke or taught, as Paul did, they sung; but they met together to break bread. This is confirmed by 1 Cor. 11:20, where the apostle says that the Corinthians did not really assemble for the Lord's supper, since each ate his own supper, not thinking of the others, but eating and drinking for his own pleasure. Now this shows clearly that the object of the assembly was the Lord's supper. At the beginning they broke bread every day. (Acts 2:42, 46.) When gatherings were formed everywhere, and zeal had been enfeebled, they met only on the first day of the week, the day of the Lord's resurrection. This was not a rule, but Luke speaks of it

as a usage well known everywhere among the Christians. It seems that Paul had awaited this day to speak to the disciples, simply because it was the day of their meeting together; nevertheless, that is not certain. However it may be, he profits by the occasion to preach to them before setting out, and he speaks till midnight. They met, it seems in the evening.

The discourse was long, and they had not yet broken bread; the weather was hot, and there were many lights. Such is human weakness, that all this so affected a certain Eutychus, that he was overcome with sleep, as Paul was long preaching, and fell down from the third floor, where he was sitting by the window.

He was taken up by the men dead. Paul naturally interrupts his discourse, goes down and throws himself on him, declaring that life is still in him. The separation had not yet taken place; he was stunned by the fall, and, if the power of God had not interposed, he would have been caught in the clutches of death. Life, however, had not yet gone out of the body; and by the Spirit Paul so works on it, that the functions of life are restored. The bonds between soul and body are reestablished. In the case of the child restored to life by Elijah (1 Kings 17:21, 22) the soul had already left the body, and must return to it. From these cases, as always elsewhere, we see that the soul is entirely distinct from the body; and though in our present state it works by means of the body, yet it is in its habitation; that life in this world is the activity of the soul by means of the functions of the body, the activity of which is restored by sleep, because we are feeble; that when the soul leaves the body, the man is definitely dead, but that the activity of the soul by the functions of the body may be interrupted, as is partly the case in sleep; and this action is re-established, the soul not having left the body, if God does so or permits it.

In its highest part—the spirit, the soul in relation to God is alas! at enmity against Him; it will not and does not submit to Him. With its inferior part it works in the body: marvelous creation! in relations with God above, and with nature before. It is a mixture of thoughts which seek to rise to God, but cannot, and of creature thoughts. It is responsible to God according to the nature it has originally received from Him. When born of God, it receives a totally new life, in which it is in relation with God, according to grace and redemption, a life animated by the Spirit which it receives from above, and which makes of the body an instrument for the service of God. Possessing this life, we know that, “if our earthly house of the tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” I have said this in reference to Eutychus, because in these days the simplicity of the truth regarding the soul is lost sight of by many.

Paul then goes up again, and, having broken bread, talks still even till day-break, comforting much the smile he saw perhaps for the last time. He then departs leaving Eutychus alive to the joy of the brethren. Paul sends on his companions by ship, and goes himself on foot, desiring to be alone. For us this is often a wise thing; to be alone, apart from men, but alone too with God, where we can think of Him, of ourselves before Him, of the work, as He sees it and where in His presence responsibility is felt, instead of activity before men. No doubt this activity ought to appear in His presence, because it is holy; but at all events the activity of man is another thing than to place oneself before God, such as He is for us. It is not less true that this communion with Him, as His servants, gives and sustains a blessed confidence in Him, an intimacy of soul with Him, full of goodness and of grace.

Paul had instructed his companions to take him in at Asses, which they do: from thence they proceed to Mitylene, to Chios, and finally to Miletus, half a day from Ephesus. Paul had determined not to stop there, desiring if possible to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. If he had stopped at Ephesus, he must have remained some time, as he had labored there for a long period, and with great blessing. He passes on therefore, sending from Miletus for the elders of the assembly at Ephesus, the center of the work in that region. It is evident that the apostle was pre-occupied with the circumstances in which he was placed—with the apparent end of his career. This thought, it is probable, exercised an influence over him, when he went alone on foot to Asses. And also it was the cause of his long speech at Troas.

It is not mere imagination which suggests this idea. The apostle expresses (at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, written when he was about to leave Corinth, Rom. 15:31) his fear that he might be an object of hatred to the rebels in Judaea; and he desires the Romans to pray that he may be delivered out of their hands, hoping thus to be able to see their face with joy, and from Rome to continue his work in Spain. We know that in Palestine he was taken, and after two years' confinement at Caesarea, went a prisoner to Rome; that he remained there as such two years more; and that there, as far as the word is concerned, his history terminated. It is possible that he may have been liberated; I believe so, from what we find in the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon. (Phil. 1:25, 26; Philem. 1:22)

From 2 Timothy, too, it seems that he was set free, and that he returned to Asia. But as to the Biblical record of his labors, all is finished at the end of the Acts, which leaves him a prisoner at Rome. According to God's thoughts, such as they are communicated to us in the scriptures, that was the end of the apostle's work. And he felt that such was the case; and it is no more a question of going to Spain, or traveling anywhere beyond Rome. The Holy Ghost spoke of bonds and tribulations; and Paul's thoughts now turned towards his departure from this world.

The elders being come from Ephesus and assembled before him, Paul speaks of his ministry as of a thing accomplished. A little before he had told the Romans that he had no longer any place in those parts, his Career there being over. (Rom. 15:23.) Revisiting the scenes of his work in Asia, and the regions of Asia Minor, he shows us the character of this work, and the effect of his departure; and this renders his discourse very important. He had served the Lord with much humility, in trials and in tears, caused by the snares of the Jews, whose opposition was continual and without conscience. In spite of it, however, he never failed both in public and in private to preach and teach all that was necessary for them, repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, as the true state of a soul brought to God. Nothing is said as to the order of these two things in the heart, although in such order there is something practical, but of the true character of repentance and faith. Repentance was to be preached in the name of the Lord Jesus (Luke 24:47); so that His name might be owned and that sinners might repent. It was founded on the ground of the grace and truth that came by Him; but true repentance takes place in the presence of God, and goes beyond sorrow for having done wrong, or shame, or the mere work of the natural conscience.

The soul revealed to itself through grace comes with open eyes into God's presence. All is judged according to Him whose presence is manifested to the soul; everything is judged as it appears in His eyes. The word of God is His eye in the conscience, and makes us feel that He has seen all,

and then things appear to us as they do to Him. We no longer excuse ourselves nor do we desire to do so. The result is confession to God by a conscience which feels itself in His presence (Heb. 4:12, 13); while the heart restored desires holiness, and the soul feels its responsibility for all that we have done. We justify God in our condemnation (Luke 7:29); though in such a case there is always some confidence in His grace, not peace but confidence: for He who has become light to the soul is also love, Himself being both these things. When He reveals Himself as light in order to show us our sins, it is in love He does so in Jesus; and He is love. He cannot reveal Himself to the soul without being the two things, for in His nature He is both.

Take the case of the woman in Luke 7. The light and the love of God had penetrated into her soul; she did not yet know what it was to be pardoned, but her heart had confidence in Jesus; and at the same time her conscience was deeply convinced of sin.

Take again the case of Peter (Luke 5:8); of the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19); and of the thief on the cross: (Luke 24:47). Repentance thus is the effect of the revelation of God to the soul, which then shows itself; and up to a certain point it knows God as light which manifests everything. “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did.” But as love to the soul, the Lord inspires confidence, though the remission of sins be not known. This is discovered by the soul by faith in Christ Jesus—not only that Jesus is the Christ, but that by Him its sins are pardoned, for He suffered for our sins: and if we receive the word of God, we believing in Him know that He has taken all our sins on Himself on His own body on the tree. When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; because by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified by that sacrifice.

Although faith in the work of Christ is necessary in order to possess peace, yet His person ever remains as the object of the heart—the Christ who has loved us, and given Himself for us, who now is glorified at the right hand of God, after having borne our sins, and submitted to death and the curse for us, but ever living for us now; who Himself will return to seek us, and make us perfectly like Himself in glory. We believe in Him, not only in the efficacy of His death. He is our righteousness before God, made such by God Himself; and we are accepted in the Beloved. John 17 tells us that we are loved with the same love wherewith the Father loves the Son. If true repentance is made in the presence of God, and in respect of Him, confidence and peace come by means of the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has made peace by His own blood.

Such was the testimony of Paul, the truth of the conscience, peace, and the knowledge of God by His Son Jesus come down here in love, ascended into heaven as man, having accomplished the work which His Father had given Him to do. So great were the truths and the revelation, and so like the apostle in the execution of his ministry! But this ministry was drawing to its close, without knowing that such was the case. The Spirit testified in every place that bonds and tribulations awaited him; and he foresees that they would see his face no more. This furnishes the opportunity to speak of the effect of His departure. The sheep of Jesus are safe in His hands; as to the life He has imparted to them, they can never perish—none can pluck them out of His hand. But a temple had been established, a house on the earth, of which the apostle was by grace the founder according to the will of God, the wise master-builder. (1 Cor. 3:10.) According to another figure, He has placed a candlestick on the earth to shine round about Himself, and this He can take away. There will always be a house of God built with His hand, and by His power which will never grow

less—Christ the foundation, the stones living, by grace placed on this chief corner stone, and growing to an holy temple for the Lord. (Matt. 16:18; 1 Peter 2:4, Eph. 2:11.)

Against this work of the Lord—a work carried on by grace in the heart—the gates of hell cannot prevail; for it is the fruit of the power of the Lord Jesus, working in grace. Moreover, this temple is not yet entirely built—it is growing. At least we may expect that by grace every soul can be introduced into it. God alone knows the moment when the work of grace which forms the assembly, the body of Christ, shall be accomplished. (See 2 Peter 3:9.) But God's will has been to form an assembly on the earth. The work of Jesus, of which we have spoken, is done here below; but beyond this, as we have seen, God formed an assembly by the ministry of Paul, a temple on the earth, confiding the building of this temple into the hands of men, and under their responsibility. It is now the habitation of God through the Spirit, Jews and Gentiles being built up together, founded according to the will of God, but left to the responsibility of man. “But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.” “Now if any man build upon this foundation [Jesus Christ] gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall he revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.”

There are three kinds of workmen: a good Christian and a good workman, such as Paul; a good Christian and a bad workman, himself saved, but his work to be consumed; then he who seeks to corrupt and destroy the temple of God, whose work, as well as himself, shall perish. Such were the heresiarchs, who, moved by the enemy, sought to corrupt the faith. Three sects of them existed during Paul's own time; but as long as he remained in the world, his spiritual energy resisted and overcame evil; such as immorality among the Corinthians, and the loss of the doctrine of grace among the Galatians. But with his departure this energy disappeared. He had already said (Phil. 2:21), that all sought their own, not the things which were Jesus Christ's. No soul was to be found like that of Timothy to care for the state of the Christians.

Paul tells the elders then that, after his departure, grievous wolves should enter in among them, and that even of their own selves perverse men should arise, and draw the disciples away. Till Satan be bound, and the Lord come to do it, there will ever be conflicts. Since the beginning of the world, whenever God has established anything good, man's first act has been to destroy it. First, there was man himself. Then, in the world after the flood, Noah got tipsy, and his authority was lost. Israel made the golden calf before ever Moses came down from the mountain. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire the first day after their consecration, for which cause Aaron could no more enter into the inner sanctuary with his priestly garments of glory. Solomon having loved strange women, his kingdom was divided. So in the assembly established on the earth, soon after the apostle's departure, evil presents itself; and it is of this that the elders are forewarned.

Where were the other apostles? At Jerusalem. Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, leaves the gathering scattered by the destruction of Jerusalem. The chief of the apostles abandons to Paul the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, to which work the Lord Himself had called him at the first, and then again expressly by the Holy Ghost at Antioch. To the other apostles, therefore, he does not entrust his ministry. Still less does Paul imagine that there can be successors in his office. He knows nothing of successors; but he exhorts the existing elders to faithfulness and watchfulness, commending them to God, and to the word of His grace, “which,” he says, “is able to

build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Christ, ascended up on high, can still give evangelists, pastors, and teachers; and He does give them; but the office of personal apostolic care has disappeared. "After my departure," says the apostle. This is a departure without succession. It is sad, surely, yet true; and we have seen it in all that God has established among men. His grace continues, the faithful care of Christ can never fail. The Spirit has given His instructions for this time, as at the beginning, and the Lord is enough for the present condition, as He was faithful in the past. But such a thing as a succession to his apostleship is unknown to Paul when he speaks of his absence. God, and the word of His grace, are for him the refuge of God's people. They can meet together, and Christ will be in their midst; they can profit by the gifts He has granted according to His promise. The rules for our walk are contained in the word; but the apostleship, as a personal energy watching over the organization of the assembly, has disappeared, leaving no succession behind it.

This is a solemn truth, which should be well borne in mind. But we must never forget that Christ is always enough for the assembly; that He is faithful in His care of it; and that He can never fail in strength, in love, or in faithfulness. What we have to do is to count on Him, and that with purpose of heart. Divine power is manifested more in Elijah and Elisha than in all the prophets of Jerusalem from the time of Moses himself. The Lord gives what is needful to His people. The word of God confirms sadly, but abundantly, what Paul says here. His testimony is that not only should evil appear in the exterior constitution of the church, but that it should continue till the Lord come in judgment. Let us consider what the word of God says.

Jude declares that it was already needful to write to them, to exhort them to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, because certain men had crept in unawares who turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness. They were corrupting the assembly from within; and, what is very remarkable, he declares that these are they (that is, the class of persons) who will be among the objects of the Lord's judgment, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints. The corruption, begun during the time of the apostles, will continue till the coming of the Lord. So much for internal corruption.

But this is not all. Evil unfolds itself from the other side, as we find in the Epistle of John. Some had abandoned Christianity openly. (1 John 2:18.) "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us." Thus we see that though this apostle survived Paul for many years, and certainly watched over the assemblies in Asia Minor at least, dwelling, as it is said, at Ephesus, it was only in order to record the fact that the last time was already come, which was shown by the presence of these antichrists, and by the apostasy of many.

If it be asked why God waits so long before executing judgment, the answer is to be found in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." To Him a thousand years are as one day. In the time of the Jews, judgment was pronounced (Isa. 6) eight hundred years before it was executed, that is, when they had finally rejected the humbled but also glorified Son of God.

The epoch of this ruin of the assembly on the earth is determined, namely, on the death of Paul—“After my departure.” Doubtless, corruption had been rapidly growing. The mystery of iniquity was already working during the apostle's life; but his spiritual energy knew how to resist it. He being gone, however, it went on increasing without hindrance, except from the grace of God in individuals, and the chastisement by which God arrested the decline into ruin and corruption. The testimony of God, although hid under a bushel, has never yet been extinguished; and God has from time to time raised up witnesses in the midst of darkness, feeble perhaps but true: and, at the time of the Reformation, delivered whole countries from open corruption. But we have seen that the evil, introduced in the time of Jude, was to continue till the judgment.

This solemn and humiliating truth is confirmed. by other passages. The assembly has never been restored. Not only does John say that the last time has come, but that this is marked by the presence of antichrists. Now Antichrist shall be destroyed by the coming of the Lord. Paul reveals to us that the apostasy that began to show itself in John's time will be fully unfolded at the last time; when the lawless one himself shall be manifested, whose coming shall he after the working of Satan, and whom the Lord shall destroy when He comes in glory. The mystery of iniquity was already working, even during the apostle's life, and the progress of evil was to continue from his days till the Lord should come. Thus too the Lord says that the tares are to grow till the harvest.

It seems to us, then, that the death of Paul is the moment from which we must count the prevalence of evil. We say “prevalence,” because evil was already working, though Paul resisted it by the power of the Spirit; and because this evil was to go on increasing till Christ should come; because in the last days perilous times should come, and the form of godliness without the power of it. Then in 2 Tim. 3 we also get the word of God set forth as that which is necessary, and sufficient to render the man of God perfect and furnished unto all good works. All this truth is powerfully confirmed by what is said in Rev. 2, where the Christian who has ears to hear is called upon to hearken, not to the church, but to what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Hence in His words we find judgment pronounced by Jesus Christ on the state of the church.

We would add that it is one thing to submit to the discipline, or practical judgment of an assembly regarding evil, and quite another thing to suppose, when we are called upon to judge of the slate of the church by the words of Christ and of the Spirit, that the authority of the assembly is the perpetual safeguard of the faith. The universal assembly, Christianity, is corrupted and divided, and cannot, even as an instrument in the hands of God, secure the maintenance of the truth. It is submission to the word of God alone that can do it.

In order to show how far the primitive church wandered from the truth, we shall quote from a book read in the assembly, one hundred and fifty years after the death of John, cited by one of the best fathers of the primitive churches as part of the inspired scriptures, and esteemed as such by another who was less orthodox, it is true.

The author, pretending to have received a revelation says, “A man possessed a vineyard, and commanded his servant to gather the fruits. The servant, being very faithful, did what was entrusted to him, and besides, out of devotedness to his master, rooted all the weeds out of the vineyard. The master was so much pleased with the servant that he consulted his son and his friends as to what should be done for the faithful servant, and it was decided to make him heir with the son. Now the master is God, the son is the Holy Ghost, the friends are the angels, and the

servant is Christ. God had sent Him to establish the clergy for the support of the faithful, but He had done much more than this, and what God had not told him to do—He had taken away sins. Thus it is, according to the consultation of God with the Holy Ghost, and the angels, co-heirs with the Holy Ghost, who is Son and Heir of God." Such is what was read in the churches, written by the brother of Pope Pius, and pretended to have been inspired by God! and this a hundred and fifty years after the birth of Christ. What is in the same book recounted of holiness is no better. What is there related as holy in the visions of Hermas, it is impossible to transcribe on these pages!

Such then, is the testimony of the apostle; after his departure evil would prevail, active both within and without. He tells them nothing of the nomination of successors to the elders, any more than he does of a successor to himself. He insists on the faithfulness of those who were there, whom the Holy Ghost had made bishops (for bishops and elders were one and only one office); and commends them to God and to the word of His grace, which was able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among them that were sanctified. In fact, no means is established in the word for the continuance of the organization of the assembly. People are mistaken on this point. The disciples were waiting for the coming of the Lord, the Lord Himself. (See the parables of the servant, Matt. 24, of the virgins, and of the talents.) But the apostle shows that this coming might be delayed till long after the life of those then on the earth. The sleeping virgins are the very same that are revealed; the servants who received the talents, those found afterward at the coming of the Lord. Paul says, "We which are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord." They did not know when He would come, but still they waited for Him. (Luke 12:36, &c.) What has produced the moral ruin of the assembly is, that, having ceased to look for the Lord, she has said, "The Lord delayeth his coming." (Matt. 24:49.) She has taken and beaten her fellow-servants, has eaten and drunk with the drunken. The hierarchy has been established; worldliness has invaded the assembly; and thus alliance has been made with the world.

The apostle recalls his own faithfulness, how he had been an example to the elders, laboring with his own hands, since it is more blessed to give than to receive. Then, kneeling down, he prays with them all. And they, weeping, embrace him sorrowfully, chiefly for the word that he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship. Solemn departure, the end of the apostle's public work! He speaks of it as of a finished work, announcing that henceforward, in consequence of his absence, evil would prevail in the outward assembly of God on the earth, but assuring the faithful that God and the word of His grace would be enough to build them up, and give them an inheritance among those that were sanctified. This remains certain. The power of Christ secures it; but the exterior system, Christianity, would be corrupted, having given up the expectation of the Lord's return.

Paul teaches the same truth in 2 Tim. 3. John tells us that the last time has already arrived.

The patience of God continues to accomplish the work of grace; and Christ to supply the gifts necessary to the perfecting of the saints, and the building up of the assembly, although our coldness greatly hinders the Spirit. And this will be the case till the end of the gathering of saints. Christianity has ripened in the midst of evil, as foretold by the apostles. It is evil which began in apostolic times, and which was already sufficiently mature in John's time, the last of the apostles; for he says that the last time had already come. We trust that the cry, "Behold the bridegroom

cometh, go ye out to meet him," has already begun to go forth, and that many hearts will respond, and kindle their lamps. May the Lord add daily to their number!

Chapter 139

“The Book of Joshua,” and “The Epistle to the Hebrews.” 1

The leadership of the people of Israel by “the ark of the covenant and the priesthood,” under Joshua, when the time was come for them to cross over Jordan into Canaan, form the magnificent fore-front of this book. Besides this, their history reveals the coming forth of “the captain of the Lord's host with the drawn sword in his hand,” followed by their victories, and overthrow of all their enemies. Nor is this all; for it is not till after this clearance is made, that “the tabernacle of the congregation was set up at Shiloh,” under Eleazar the high priest, in order that the covenant relations of Jehovah with the twelve tribes might be seen to stand upon election and grace, and be maintained inviolate amongst them, on what God was in Himself. Moreover, “the tabernacle at Shiloh in the land of Canaan” was as necessary a part in the book of Joshua, as opening the way of approach to God for Israel as worshippers; as was Gilgal, and their recurrence to it, indispensable in the history of their conflicts, for their renewal of strength in the day of battle.

If we look into these subjects we must take a larger view than this circle embraces, and think of the nation of Israel in their primary relations to Jehovah. For this we must obviously refer to the books of Numbers and Exodus, that we may not lose sight of the original ways of God and His purposes, as declared to them by Moses, when he was their commander and mediator, and Aaron their great high priest. Indeed this link is manifestly kept up in the early chapters of the book of Joshua, and applied in a most encouraging way to him by the Lord, who said, “As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.” Besides this assurance to Joshua personally, as the appointed successor of Moses, there was the necessary continuation. of the high priest, and the Levitical priesthood in their midst for services connected with the ark of the covenant and the order of the tabernacle at Shiloh, which neither Joshua nor his armed men dare touch. Each of these great functionaries held their respective appointments directly from the Lord; and the two in their combined action, whether in the sanctuary of God, or in the camp of Israel, carried out the mind of Jehovah concerning His own holiness and majesty, or His people's glory.

Indeed, the priesthood and the tabernacle were indispensable as the way of approach for them as worshippers; whilst outwardly the relations of God with Israel by the ark of the covenant were manifested in the sight of all their enemies. This was true during the ministration of Aaron in the wilderness, or the Levites with Joshua when Jordan fled; or when marching round the city Jericho, and the walls fell down flat. Moses and Aaron were inseparable in their varied ministries at their exodus from Egypt, as were the priest and the captain at the door of the tabernacle in Shiloh for the settlement of the twelve tribes in the promised land. Indeed, these orders and services were not only established by God at the first, but when Aaron died on Mount Hor (as recorded in Num. 20) “Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son,” as the Lord commanded him. So likewise when Moses was to die on Mount Abarim, and he prayed the Lord “to set a man over the congregation,” he was directed to take Joshua and put him before Eleazar the high priest, and give him a charge in the sight of all the people. The connection, and yet the contrast between these two, are also marked in Num. 27, “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord, at his word shall

they go out; and at his word shall they come in; both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."

It is necessary to gather up this divine order given to Moses respecting the man who was to succeed him for a commander—as had been previously done on Mount Hor concerning the successor of Aaron as a priest. "And Moses did as the Lord commanded him; and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation. And he laid his hands upon him and gave him a charge."

The book of Numbers (and especially chapters 20 and 27.) introduces to us Eleazar and Joshua, and the latter is seen to be under the guidance of the former, who was to ask counsel of God by the mysterious Urim. This order, and these enactments and appointments (one need scarcely say) are the basis for the onward history of Israel under. Joshua, and the anointed priesthood with "the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God;" and also "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth," which they bore along. This ark was not only the witness of Jehovah's presence, but the symbol of His relations with His people; and embodied typically to their faith by the costliness of its construction and its marvelous contents, together with its staves and rings, the coming forth from God of the Word made flesh. In due time Christ would begin His mysterious journey in this wilderness world, or else, like the tabernacle at Shiloh, dwell among them, or later still in Jerusalem, fill the temple itself. In result He would finish that work which the Father had given Him to do for His own glory, and our eternal redemption, to which the ark and all the vessels of the sanctuary pointed.

It is of the greatest moment for us who are Christ's, and who are now sealed by the Holy Ghost, to gather up this precious fact, that God always takes care of His own glory; and of the full and final blessing of His people according to His purpose; yea, that He never lets them be separated, or pass out of His own hands, but works them out together, because (wonderful to say) He has made His people and their blessedness a constituent part of His glory. How suited, therefore, was this ark of the covenant to be in advance of the twelve tribes on their way to rest in the habitation of God, upon the mountain of His holiness, that Mount Zion which He had chosen for the full display of Himself in the midst of His people, in the still future day of their millennial joy. Such was the ark at Gilgal.

On our part, we may charge ourselves that we neither separate our present communion with God from the pathway of His own glory in the life we live on earth; nor accept any other object for eye or heart, than Christ Himself, in whom and through whom the glory of God and His people's present and eternal blessedness meet, and are counseled and established.

Every eye was upon "the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God" who had gone forth before them to find a resting-place worthy of Himself, and in which to keep His appointed feasts, and to share his delights with Israel, whom He had chosen. Their journey out of the wilderness had begun, for "it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host, and commanded, saying, When ye see the ark, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it." Besides the hidden but glorious contents of the ark, as typifying the Christ of God, since manifested in His life, and death, and resurrection, and besides being the external and abiding symbol of God's presence in sovereign goodness, the ark was a witness from Himself of the manner in which He was to be known by them, and approached.

This was two-fold in its declaration. First, Israel was to learn by it that God, as Jehovah, had put Himself into covenant relationship with them, “it was the ark of the Lord your God” by means of which (or rather what it foreshadowed) not a jot or a tittle of all He had ever promised should fail. Secondly, they were to learn by it that God, as creator of the heavens and the earth, would pass before them in His majesty and power, to make a way for them and drive out all their enemies. Therefore it was “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth,” for He weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing. These are some of the characteristics, both of the hidden and manifested glories of the ark that preceded them, and which charged itself with the entire weight and burden of the people, and the dangers and difficulties of the way. They and the ark were to inaugurate a new history, for God had come out of the heavens to walk with His people on the, earth, and lead them into His rest.

In the next place, who are the persons which demand our attention in this movement out of Shittim? This company is “the priests the Levites,” who are appointed to bear the ark, which, when Israel saw to be in motion, was their signal for advance, “then ye shall remove from your place and go after it.” This the congregation do, and the first act they behold is the way in which God gets glory to Himself, or puts a seal upon His own title, as “the Lord of the whole earth,” by the power through which Jordan, when it intercepted their path, was driven back, and stood up as in a heap. Nor was this merely an act or seal to the title and rights of God as “the Lord of all the earth,” (for how could He be this if Jordan were allowed to bar the way?) but Jehovah loves to give the seal to His own people, at the same time and by the same act, that He is the “Lord your God,” for it was when the priests feet that bare the ark touched the brine of the waters, that Jordan rolled itself back. The priests and priesthood thus gain a distinguished place in the book of Joshua, and are in the foreground because of their consecration and appointment to the services of the sanctuary. “And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people,” &c. The prominence of the priests, as bearing the ark, does not interfere with the place of Joshua (in this chap. 3.) as the leader, for he “spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant;” nor indeed, throughout the book, when Eleazar comes out more distinctly into the forefront, to divide their inheritances.

Indeed, the value of these records is, in the concurrent action of Eleazar and Joshua, where they can be combined, as in chapters 14, 17, 19, 21, which we need not anticipate just now.

Chapter 140

“The Book of Joshua” and “The Epistle to the Hebrews” 2

(Continued from page 175.)

We shall thus find as we proceed with this chapter 4, and chapter 6, that the priests with the ark of the covenant, have a much larger footing as well as Eleazar and the tabernacle at Shiloh in this book, than we are accustomed, or perhaps know how, to make room for or give to the fact, especially when we come to apply it to ourselves and Christianity, and still more so when we attempt to run a parallel between the book of Joshua and the writings of Paul. Leaving this too for the moment, the priests, with the ark, whether in Jordan or when over it, and confronted by a great city instead of a river, are not only in prominence, but take the lead of the whole congregation and the armed men as at Jericho, or else stay in the danger, till all beside are gone clean over, as in Jordan.

In chapter 4, “twelve men” out of every tribe, were to take up twelve stones out of the river, “where the priests' feet stood firm,” and carry them over, and leave them in the place where they would lodge that night. Besides this, “Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests stood which bare the ark of the covenant,” as a memorial that the twelve tribes who had risen up, out of the power of death at Gilgal, were the same people who had been there.

In this typical history of the children of Israel we may observe, that at the Red Sea they neither left twelve stones in its bed, nor took twelve out with them upon the other-side. On the contrary, Pharaoh and his captains, with their chariots and horses, lay dead at the bottom, as a witness that the mighty power of the enemy which held them captive in Egypt had been overthrown, and that the depths covered them. “But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left.” Thus the Lord saved them that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, whom they saw dead upon the shore, whilst He put the song of redemption into their mouths, saying, “The Lord hath triumphed gloriously.” The Red Sea was a memorial between Jehovah and His people, that the antagonistic power which held them captive and refused to let them go, had been all broken in pieces; but Jordan was to be the overthrow of an opposing power of the enemy that refused to let the people enter into their inheritance. It is in these two ways, we have still to watch against the devil. God brought them to Himself at the Red Sea, having on the way sheltered them by “the blood of the Lamb as roast with fire,” and then taught them redemption by power when they sang unto the Lord, “Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.” Beyond this difference in the ways of God with them or with us in our redemption out of Egypt by blood and by power (as confirmed to us now by the sacrifice and vicarious death of Christ) all that generation was cut off in the wilderness. They had crossed the Red Sea, but in their journey onward, they proved how incapable flesh and blood were, to walk with God, much less to keep company with Him.

A further lesson was taught by Jordan, beyond redemption by blood and by power as known at the cross and foreshadowed by the Red Sea, namely that the people thus brought to God must pass

through their own death and resurrection by figure of the twelve stones in Jordan, and the twelve stones out. They were to begin another history with the ark of the covenant, and their new circumcision at Gilgal, with Joshua and the passover and the captain of the Lord's host, with the drawn sword. The priests bearing the ark were not to be seen in the bottom of the Red Sea, but the enemies lay there, who had been consumed as stubble by the wrath of the Lord. On the other hand, no Canaanites were in Jordan nor was a single foe overthrown there; but it was sanctified to the Lord and to Israel, by the priests and the ark of the covenant for glory and victory; as much as were the waters of the Red Sea “when they returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh in terrible judgment.”

It is to our purpose here, as believers in Christ, to notice that at this juncture the epistles of Paul take up these types from Exodus and Joshua, and carry them out unto their fulfillments, in Christ, where He now sits “at the right hand of God.” The one to the Romans, which is founded on deliverance and redemption, accomplished typically at the Red Sea, is generally admitted. So also Jordan finds its spiritual application in the Colossians, by our own death and resurrection, as united to Christ who is our life and Head.

May we not, or rather must we not, on the same principle say, that the tabernacle at Shiloh, in the land of Canaan with Eleazar, find likewise their similitudes and accomplishments throughout Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, in our great high priest, “passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” as maintaining the relations of God with His people here below on the ground of His own sovereign purpose and grace? How necessary were Shiloh and the tabernacle as the witness of this to the Israelites in Joshua's day. And how indispensable for the Hebrews, and to ourselves, for whom Paul wrote his epistle, leading them on into “the heavenly calling [by faith] under the apostle and high priest of our profession!”

Further yet, the agreement of the battles in Canaan with the epistle to the Ephesians, and our spiritual conflict with principalities and powers in the heavenly places, is admitted on the same principles of exposition. Nor do I judge that this group of epistles by Paul cannot be separated one from another (however profitable and necessary it be to distinguish them) without loss to the typical book of Joshua, and far greater to the completeness of Christianity, and our own relations to the heavens and the earth, of which they treat. “And it came to pass when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all the banks, as they did before.” It was on such a day as this that “the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him as they feared Moses all the days of his life.”

It was on the selfsame day, too, that the Lord put honor on priesthood, and even upon the soles of the priests' feet, when they touched the brim, or stood firm in the midst of that Jordan till all the people had passed over. It was when they reached the dry land for themselves that the waters returned to their banks, and all because of “the ark of the God of the whole earth,” which they bore. Moreover, “those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal, and there they encamped. And he spake unto them, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know that Israel came over Jordan on dry land.” Gilgal and the twelve stones, were a witness yet further “that all

the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God forever." Beyond all these memorials of rivers and their stones to the twelve tribes, was the witness they carried everywhere to God, that He was "the Lord their God" by relationship with them through the ark, for they had followed it in triumph to the other side; and likewise that He was "the God of the whole earth," for Jordan had fled away and stood up as an heap before Him. It is in this double title and character that the Lord now appears before them and "all the people of the earth" at Gilgal, as a God that doeth wonders.

But there was another lesson at Gilgal, for "at that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time," for a people in the flesh had been cut off, even all the previous generation, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. This new or second generation of the children of Israel, had in Jordan accepted their own death and resurrection before God, by "the ark of the covenant," which they followed, and were to learn their further separation to the Lord by circumcision at Gilgal, as suiting for the land into which they had now entered. The Colossian epistle in particular, takes these great typical facts out of the book of Joshua and connects them with our history as new creatures in Christ, and applies them to us as on our way with the second Adam into the new creation of God, as "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit" (beyond Romans). We pass on, and are circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, made without hands, in "putting off the body of the flesh." Moreover, as dead and risen with Christ, "our life is hid with Christ in God;" and as in the power of the Holy Ghost (Gilgal) we "set our mind on things above," not on things upon the earth. As spiritual men, we are over Jordan with "the ark of the covenant" which precedes us, and subsequently "with the tabernacle and Eleazar at Shiloh," which maintained the relations of God with them through priesthood, in the times of the judges, and Eli and Samuel; and in which He has planted us (see Heb. 8) in the sanctuary which the Lord pitched. To this we belong, as a heavenly people, though actually upon the earth, and in the time of need; yet in respect of the heavenly calling we are the heirs who are "entering into rest" with Joshua and David's Son and Lord, for "there remaineth a rest" for the people of God. (Heb. 4)

We may remark here that the walls of Jericho fell not by strategy, nor by the strength of the armed men, but "before the ark of the covenant, and the priests who bore it," and even then not by sword or spear, but when the priests blew the rams' horns. Indeed, it is as a victorious and a worshipping people who follow the ark with the priests, through the water floods, or walking up straight into the city of Jericho upon its prostrate walls, that the Israel of God first shine forth in the greatness of the Almighty, who refuses every obstacle, and makes a way for Himself and for them. Perhaps before going out with the captain of the Lord's host, and much more in using the sword in our holy war, it is of more moment than we conceive to listen to the voice of the Prince, who bids us "loose the shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Some oversight as to this, and the right of the ark to the forefront, and the pre-eminence in Israel, may have occasioned the sad reverses of Joshua through the boasted sufficiency of the two or three thousand armed men who went up against Ai and were driven back, so that the hearts of the people melted, and became as water. Possibly the same neglect may have occurred as regards the sin of Achan and his concealment of the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold, because of which trespass the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. Where was "the Urim" of Num. 28?

Be this as it may, "the ark of the Lord, and the priests," were in the midst of the host, not merely as a token of the covenanted blessings to them outwardly in the land, but also as a means of

approach as worshippers on their own part, and of consultation, too, by Him, when needed, through Eleazar their great high priest. Joshua, as the leader and commander of the people, failed to take counsel, either directly by the ark, or immediately by Eleazar, “at whose word they were to go out and come in, even he [Joshua] and all the congregation.” Under this double failure of Achan and Ai, “Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face, [and mark] before the ark of the Lord,” until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.” And alas! in this breakdown, by which Joshua had separated himself and Israel in its unity from the guidance of the ark, by accepting the counsel of the men who went to spy out Ai, he is further betrayed by his own mouth and the hard thoughts of his heart against God. “And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of Jordan.”

So it is with us of to-day individually or collectively. We must either maintain ourselves in the right, by going when and where the ark goes, and by taking counsel of the Lord, and getting the victory in His sufficiency, or else be brought back in humiliation and confession before the Lord from whom we have departed, and, like Joshua, fall down before the ark, and wait for God.

In the midst of declension and departure like this (if indeed it be such) how good of the Lord to recover His servant by grace, and to the true thought and care for God's glory! “O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies"; for the Canaanites shall hear of it, and “what wilt thou do unto thy great name?” God who waited upon them, by the mystery of the Urim, and Eleazar the high priest, in His own excellency and sovereign power as at Jordan and Jericho, now condescends to the prayer and contrition of Joshua and meets him upon the ground “of a broken and a contrite spirit.” The unity of the twelve tribes had likewise been violated, by this detachment of two or three thousand men; and these breaches and offenses are taken in hand by the Lord, in rebuke and chastisement, in the matter both of Achan's trespass and of Joshua's oversight. The unity of the tribes is righteously insisted on by God, who says “Israel hath sinned,” and He will have them all to share the shame and blame of Achan: so likewise in chapter 8, “the Lord said to Joshua, Take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see I have given the king and all into thine hand.”

A foreshadowing of “Ichabod” casts its dimness on the book of Joshua at this point where the ark is offended by the negligence of the leader, for certain it is, that from 7:6, when “he and all the elders of Israel fall upon their faces before it till eventide, and put dust upon their heads", the ark of the covenant of the Lord retires. It only comes out again in chapter viii. to sanction “the altar in Mount Ebal, unto the Lord God of Israel, which Joshua built, an altar of whole stones, upon which they offered burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace-offerings.” And afterward Joshua read all the words of the law, the blessings and comings, according to all that Moses commanded, before all the congregation of Israel. After this retirement of the ark we necessarily find ourselves upon lower ground, where human thoughts get into place, and also natural expediency. We read of strategy and ambushments on the one hand, where Joshua is successful; but on the other, we see him and the princes over-matched and outwitted by the craft of the Gibeonites. Still God abideth faithful, for He cannot deny Himself; but we sadly miss “the ark of the covenant,” and the soles of the priests' feet, and the blowing of the rams' horns, and the victories which were won simply “by faith,” as the Spirit tells us in Heb. 11

Though the order of battle be thus changed, and the fighting more like" wrestling with flesh and blood," yet the conquest is sure, and the kings of the countries are killed, and the confederated nations broken in pieces at Jerusalem, with its willful king, Adonizedec, as a type of the latter-day overthrow, in the greater confederation of Rev. 19 under the beast and the false prophet.

Grand it is to see the eternal God come forth to their help upon the heavens, and in His excellency in the sky— "yea, to cast down great hailstones upon the enemies of his people, so that they were more who were slain after this manner than those whom the children of Israel slew." As "the possessor of the heavens and the earth," and as the Creator of all they contain, He puts honor again upon Joshua, by commanding the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, at the bidding of His servant.

After all these conflicts, by the ark and its priests, and the shout of the people, at the first, or by the Prince of the Lord's host with a drawn sword, or by the flesh and blood wrestlings under Joshua and his spear at the close, the thirty and one kings are slain, and the land rested from war. Israel is in quiet possession,, and the time is come for them to inherit the land according to their tribes, as the heirs of the Lord's inheritance.

It is at this new point of their history that Eleazar personally takes his place, in conjunction with Joshua, for the distribution of the land at the door of the tabernacle. "Caleb" also takes a distinguished place, as "an heir of promise," and claims the mountain of which the Lord spake to Moses." As to the common allotment "of the children of Israel, Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun," distributed their inheritances to them in Shiloh. When difficulties arose, as in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad, they came near before Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, for their settlement. The tabernacle, in chapter 18, also takes its permanent place at Shiloh, where the whole congregation of Israel were assembled together. So that, what Gilgal was to Joshua and the armed hosts for power in their days of conflict, Shiloh and the tabernacle were to Eleazar and the priesthood, for maintaining the precious relations of Israel with Jehovah, as a worshipping people, in the time of peace and rest. Concerning the tribe of Levi and the Levites, they had no part among the people, "for the priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance."

The tabernacle and Shiloh take their place as a new center, in chapter 18, from whence Joshua sent out the three men from each tribe to pass through the land, and describe it by cities, into seven parts, in a book. On their return to Joshua, "he cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord; and there he divided the land unto the children of Israel." Their traveling days, by the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, were over and gone, and their migratory character as a people was to give place to citizenship in due season; but at present, under Joshua, they are only as dwellers in the land. "These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers," divided by lot in Shiloh before the Lord, at "the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." So they made an end of dividing the country. As a yet farther proof of the important and necessary place which the priest holds throughout these chapters, we may notice, in chapter 21, that "the heads of the fathers of the Levites came unto Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and spake unto them in Shiloh, in the land of Canaan, respecting the cities and suburbs which Moses commanded should be given to them to dwell in." Finally, upon this point, in chapter 22, touching "the great altar, Ed," which had been set up on the other side of Jordan, it was the priest, Phinehas, son of Eleazar, who was sent with ten princes to investigate this grave matter.

On their return, “the children of Israel blessed God,” and gave up their intention of going to war against Reuben and Gad.

These quotations and references to the Book of Joshua have shown us “the ark of the covenant of the Lord” as going before the congregation, and borne along by the priesthood. A space of two thousand cubits was to be left between the ark and the people, “that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.” Need we say that, in Christianity, the Holy Ghost, as the glorifier of Jesus, gives this place and precedence to our blessed Lord, as having superseded the splendor of the typical ark in the full and eternal glory of His person?, This will be readily admitted when we follow the synoptical Gospels, and view Jesus as the Messiah, with the repentant nucleus of Israel, and baptized with them in Jordan, as the antitype of this ark of the covenant. The heavens opened over this scene as He begins their history over again, and the voice of the Father, and the descent of the Holy Ghost as a dove, do more than accredit these associations between “the ark” and another generation of the people. The Messiah, who goes before them, to lead them, by a way—they had not heretofore gone, into the kingdom of heaven, is also their true Joshua, to clear the way of every obstacle. If they had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, “they might say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should obey them.” As the Son called out of Egypt, He had come into the wilderness, and met His forerunner, at the end of the law and the prophets, who prophesied till John. There the Messiah stood, with the Baptist in Jordan, as the veritable Ark, between Jehovah and Israel, to begin a new history as the “fulfiller of all righteousness,” and in grace to identify Himself with them, as come in the flesh, and to carry all their sorrows and griefs, as a disgraced people. God had driven them out of the inheritances in Canaan, into which the typical ark, under Joshua and Eleazar, had formerly brought them and planted them.

Chapter 141

“The Book of Joshua” and “The Epistle to the Hebrews” 3

Continued from page 190

As their Messiah, He had not only been accredited from the opened heavens by the voice and the dove, in these new relations with a repentant people, accepting a baptism of John in the waters of Jordan, but Jesus had also been “led of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil.” The wilderness and the solitary place are made glad by reason of Him who, by His obedience to God, made the desert to rejoice, and blossom as the rose. As the Son of Abraham, and Son of David, according to the flesh, though Son of man, and Son of God (like the pure gold of the ark), He overcame the tempter morally first, and by means of the temptations to which He submitted. Unswerving in His obedience anti devoted allegiance to the Majesty of God, He overcame the devil, and said, Get thee behind me, Satan. He has entered into the strong man's house in righteous title, and proved Himself, as the tempted Man, stronger than he. He then goes forth upon His mission as the Deliverer, with His disciples, to proclaim “the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven,” to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and to cast out devils from the men into whom they had entered. Such was “the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God,” when originally given out in pattern to Moses, and when borne along upon the shoulders of the priests under Joshua and Eleazar, in “the form of shittim wood, and the pure gold,” in the fore-front of the great congregation of Israel. Such, too, was “the ark of the covenant,” when “come in flesh and blood” into the midst of this same people, disgraced by their disobedience, and driven out of the land into which Joshua had led them aforetime. What a moment was this!

Will they welcome this Joshua-Jesus, come to begin a new history with them morally, by repentance and confession of sins to the Jehovah they had offended when in Canaan by their idolatry? He began this wonderful ministry in their synagogues, when He opened the book where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” But such beauty and glory as this, which dwelt in Him morally, and come so close to them bodily in grace, as to be in real flesh and blood in their midst, required other eyes and hearts to appreciate and worship; “And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?” They have lost the sense of what “the shittim wood and the fine gold” of the typical ark represented to their fathers, nor can they see “the form and comeliness” in the mystery of the Word made flesh; and fail more deeply by refusing Him thus in the glory of His humiliation. They will not follow this “ark of the covenant of the Lord” in their midst, but rise up, and thrust Him out of the city, and lead Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, “that they might cast him down headlong.” They refuse “the acceptable year of the Lord,” and have rejected their Messiah, the true Ark of the covenant between God and Israel, till another day, when His people shall be willing in the day of His power.

We may now turn from the synoptical Gospels to the Holy Ghost's subsequent testimony to Jesus in resurrection, as by Paul to the Hebrews, and see how “the ark of the covenant” is again brought

out, and presented to another generation of Israel. The ark in this epistle, however, is no longer known after the flesh, nor as in the world, but as gone on before, and passed through the heavens for faith. Jesus sits there on the right hand of the throne of God, as the veritable “Ark of the covenant of the Lord,” once given out in pattern to Moses, and constructed by Bazaleel, and carried by the Levitical priesthood over Jordan to Shiloh, and by David to Mount Zion. Surely the Holy Ghost, as the Glorifier of Jesus, is bringing back to the Hebrews by Paul the essential glory of the Person of the Son, who, by His accomplished work on the cross (as foreshadowed in their tabernacle and its services), has substantiated all the promises of God to their fathers, and made them yea and amen to “the children of faithful Abraham.” What is the ministry of Paul, in chapter 1, but the embodiment “of the ark of the covenant” in the Book of Joshua; and beyond all that, the indestructible and incorruptible shittim wood, or the finest and purest gold, could prefigure of Him that was to come? What is Paul's testimony to the Hebrews of his day, if it be not another presentation of Christ to their faith and hope, according to “the glory, above the brightness of the sun,” which had arrested the man who did so many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth? A pattern to them, and an example!

We may ask again, what is Paul doing with the Hebrews (as a new generation), if it be not acquainting them with the personal glory of the Messiah, like “the light which had appeared to him” before he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and “there fell from his eyes as it had been scales?” Under this anointing it is that Paul writes to his kinsmen, “God having spoken in many parts, and in many ways, formerly to the fathers in the prophets; at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son, whom he has established heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” Indeed these glories far exceed all types, for this Son is not only the Creator of all worlds, but “the possessor of the heavens and the earth,” although He humbled Himself to pass along before His people, in “shittim wood and fine gold,” veiled under “the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God,” and in the hidden character of “the Lord of all the earth.” But again, as to the brightness of its light, Paul says, “Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the exact expression of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, having made by himself the purification of our sins, set himself down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” Nor is this marvelous glory only that which the Son (as the true Ark) is essentially in His Person; but relatively He has in grace purged our sins, and officially as the Priest sprinkled the blood before the mercy-seat, where God in His holiness dwells, and where Christ has sat down.

What is all this but the antitype of “the ark of the covenant,” and of “the true tabernacle,” which goes before the people of God, and which, in this precious chapter, this remnant of Israel is exhorted to follow? Moreover, the kinsmen of Paul after the flesh had, like himself, refused Jesus in humiliation, as the Child born of the virgin, in Isa. 7; so that he can present Him now in the magnificence of His exaltation, as indeed He had appeared to Paul “above the brightness of the sun.” Taking a place, he says, by so much “better than the angels, as he inherits a name more excellent than they.” For to which of the angels said He ever, “Thou art my Son, I have begotten thee"? And again, “I will be to him for father, and he shall be to me for son?” And again, “When he bringeth in the first-born into the world, he saith, And let all God's angels worship him.” Besides this presentation of the personal glories of the Son, as the only “Ark of the covenant between the Lord and his people,” whether with John the Baptist, in Jordan, on earth; or much more by His death and resurrection to the right hand of the throne of the

Majesty in the heavens; He concentrates likewise in Himself all relative and official glories, as King and Priest. He passes along before us, too, as “the appointed heir” of the inheritance, yea, and of all things. Moreover, the blessed promises and prophecies in this chapter touching “the throne, and the scepter, and the kingdom,” are all to be fulfilled in the city of Jerusalem, in the coming day of their millennial rest and prosperity, by redemption through His blood.

It is to be observed that Heb. 1 is more in character with Isa. 9 and His exaltation, than with Isa. 7 and His humiliation. In this, “the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful,” &c., “and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and forever.” And are not these relative and official glories made sure to David and his son, by an everlasting covenant? What does it mean, “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this,” in Jerusalem and Mount Zion, if it does not find its place, and form part of the glory of “the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God?” Doubtless, “these mercies of David” and of Israel are made sure to him and to them by the actual death and resurrection of Christ; but does this fulfillment in the heavenly places first, disconnect them from the typical ark and the priests, when they bore it along, in wood and in gold, into the land of Immanuel? It is significant that Paul propounds the same enigma (from Psa. 110.) as the Messiah did, “Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet,” only with this difference, that Paul quotes it to account for the absence of the Messiah from the earth, as rejected by His enemies; and Jesus, that He might oblige the Pharisees to confess that David's Son must be David's Lord at the right hand.

These were the ways of “the ark of the covenant” (in which they had not heretofore trodden, and for which, typically, they were to leave a epees of two thousand cubits), in order for them “to come to Mount Zion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,” &c., when “the Lord of all the earth” will come forth, and reign before His ancients gloriously. Nor were the throne, and the scepter, and the government, and the kingdom in Mount Zion, the only mercies promised to “the appointed heir,” and spoken of by the Messiah when upon the earth, or by Paul, in his Epistle to these Hebrews, when he bade them go after the Ark, which had really taken the way of Jordan, to reach its place of rest in glory. Either they took part with the enemies of the ark, when “in wood and gold,” or when it passed along “in flesh and blood,” or when it took the way “of death and resurrection to the right hand,” and would “be made a footstool for his feet” another day; or else they formed part of the new generation of Gilgal and Shiloh who believed, and were entering into rest, in the city for which Abraham looked. They had come out originally (Paul tells them in his epistle) by “the way of Mount Sinai, and the voice of words,” and the former covenant of works; but the ark of “the covenant of the Lord your God” refused to travel by “the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire.” It takes its path through “the tabernacle” of Moses in the wilderness, and then upon the shoulders of the priesthood across Jordan, in the days of Joshua, onward to Shiloh, by Eleazar, and finally is carried up by David, under other patterns, and another ministry, to Mount Zion, and then put into the temple of rest and peace, in the reign of Solomon, where the staves are drawn out. May be, these stages of the mysterious journeyings of the ark, and its spaces, are the ground-work of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, and, if so, would illuminate and illustrate the Book of Joshua, whether for Jews, or for Gentiles, or Christians with their heavenly calling.

Certainly he bids “the children of Abraham” come forth, and follow the “true ark,” in the first chapters, as “anointed with the oil of gladness,” to conduct them into “the great salvation” of the second, where the ark (in flesh and blood, and by the passage of Jordan) goes down with the priests to the bottom, and stands firm till all the people are passed over. They were baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the Red Sea; but they came up out of Jordan under “the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God,” to possess the land. In “flesh and blood,” too, Christ takes the place of Joshua as “the Captain of our salvation,” made perfect through sufferings.” He took part of the same “with these children, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.” What is this action, if it be not in type, meeting the whole strength and power of Jordan, at the time when its waters overflowed the banks too? They left twelve stones in the bed of the river, and they carried twelve stones out, as the abiding proof to their children that the tribes of Israel had followed the ark and the priests by the path they had not heretofore traveled; of death and resurrection, to Gilgal and Shiloh. Besides this, He, “the ark,” in flesh and blood, and as “Son of man,” in this chapter 2, takes His place as “the appointed heir of all things,” according to the scope and power of David's Psa. 8, “in the world to come,” and all things put under His feet, according to “the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.”

The ark of the covenant, or “the brightness of the glory,” which came forth in the beginning of this epistle as the express image, and in the effulgence of the eternal Son, whom all the angels of God worship, enters by another way in chapter 2. “The ark” reveals itself here under the coverings and curtains, in the glory of His humiliation, and seen in the likeness of man, “for verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” Moreover, “in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” As the “Captain of our salvation, he was made perfect through sufferings,” and now, for loving sympathies as the High Priest, he has qualified Himself, being tempted, “to succor them that are tempted.” He has identified Himself as the ark with the congregation in the Book of Joshua, by “flesh and blood,” with the nucleus of a new generation in Jordan, by the baptism of John; and now, as on the other side of its waters, with “the children” and “the brethren” in the true tabernacle, and in the midst of the great congregation, by a real death and resurrection with Him. “He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one,” becomes the new principle and manner of “the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God,” when revealing itself in its other relations to us, in the tabernacle of Shiloh, on the way, or in the sanctuary of its permanent rest in heaven, and “made without hands.” (As in chapter 7.)

How graciously Paul seeks, in other parts of this epistle, to win these believing Hebrews away from the shittim wood and the pure gold; yea, and from the mere “likeness of flesh and blood,” and their associations with an earthly Messiah, as well as from their typical history under Moses and Joshua, by giving out the summary of all these, from “the ark of the covenant” passed on before them. “Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum; we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Indeed we must own, that the Hebrews is the only epistle which teaches us what Christian priesthood is, and which introduces to us “our great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, passed through the heavens.” Its connection, therefore, with

the Book of Joshua, in which “the ark of the covenant” borne by the priesthood, and taking the way of Jordan into the promised rest, is of real importance, and is analogous in many respects to “the rest which yet remaineth for the people of God” (in chap. iv.), and into which “we who believe are entering,” though the space may be yet between the ark and ourselves.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 142

“The Book of Joshua” and “The Epistle to the Hebrews” 4

(Continued from page 202.)

The temple, it is true, is not named in the Hebrews, for how could it be, seeing that its patterns were not even given out till Solomon was in view, and after David had brought up the ark “from the fields of the wood at Ephratah?” We may turn for a moment from the ark, and its connection with Joshua and the drawn sword, to notice Eleazar and “the tabernacle which was pitched in Shiloh” for the worship of Jehovah, as this forms another center. Indeed we may ask, What would all the fighting in Canaan be worth, or the conquests, if the relationships of God “by the ark of the covenant” were not maintained with His people in their midst; and if Eleazar and the tabernacle were not at Shiloh, as the way and means of their approach to Him as worshippers? Again, we may inquire, Are not these three typical things, which are the prominent characteristics of the Book of Joshua, namely, the ark of the covenant, the Captain of salvation, and the priest in the tabernacle at Shiloh, the groundwork of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews? To be sure, the book is typical and earthly; whereas the epistle is matter of fact, and heavenly; but such differences as these are familiar to us, and natural to the Christian standing, with the ark at the right hand of the throne, in its proper place of rest, and the journey, with its combats, over and ended. It is as out of Jordan, by Him who destroyed the whole power of death, and as one with the Priest who has made propitiation for our sine, and as one with Him who sanctifieth, that the “holy brethren” are addressed as “partakers of the heavenly calling,” and exhorted to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

“Holy brethren” come into place in connection with the ark and the priest in the sanctuary, so that, perhaps, this part of the epistle has more to do with worship, from chapter 5 to 10, than with the ark of the covenant, and our following it through death and resurrection, at the time when Jordan overflowed its banks, as in chapters 1, 2. No doubt the tabernacle in the wilderness was taken over Jordan, and became the tabernacle in Canaan, for “the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there.” Thus we find, in chapter 4, the wilderness, and the journeying, and the grace for “the time of need,” side by side with the rest of creation, and the rest of Canaan, and the rest that remaineth for God and His people. In short, there is no temple in the Book of Joshua, nor any temple in the Hebrews, but there is a tabernacle instead, with Eleazar, and pitched at Shiloh; and, correspondingly, we have the true one in chapter 8, “which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Indeed, it is because Shiloh, and the tabernacle, and Eleazar the priest are in such prominence in their own circle in the Book of Joshua, that the correspondence becomes so important in Paul's epistle as the antitype.

Moreover, “the heirs of promise” are looked at by God, and encouraged on their way, in chapter 6, to lay hold upon the hope set before them, by the immutability of His counsel, as Joshua had done, in chapter 18, to the children of Israel: “How long are ye slack to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?” There is this difference, however, and a most important one, that Paul says to his Hebrews, “whither the forerunner is for us entered it, even

Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." Paul had not to fight that he might get possession, but Joshua had. The Forerunner Himself, "the appointed, heir" of all the inheritance, had already entered in, and appeared to Paul when on his way to Damascus. There is yet a difference to be noticed in the Book of Joshua, and one that brings Caleb forward as a claimant, in chapter 14, and which gives him priority and prominence as a true heir, amongst his co-heirs. Indeed, he takes the center of this circle, on account of his faith, and is remarkable for endurance and patience, whilst following the ark on its return journey into the desert, as he was famous in energy for conflict with the Anakims at Mount Hebron, when on the other side of Jordan.

We may pass on now from the "holy brethren" with their heavenly calling, and the pilgrims and strangers in "time of need" —yes, and from "the heirs of promise," with the hope of citizenship in the land, to their final rest on Mount Zion, as in chapter 22, with the ark of the covenant, to look at a further glory of the Son, which Paul connects with "their father Abraham." "For this Melchisedek," he says, "who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, is king of Salem, and priest of the most high God" —to whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all; who is first, being by interpretation, "king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace." It appears to me that this slaughter of the confederated kings in the time of Abraham, like the overthrow of the Adoni-zedek, and the Jabin confederation, in the days of Joshua, has very much in common with the yet coming confederacy and slaughter "of kings, and captains, and mighty men," in the Apocalypse, and particularly in Rev. 19. In a certain sense the Book of Joshua is more like a clearing of the inheritance for the heirs, and putting them into possession of the promised land, with Eleazar and the tabernacle at Shiloh, as the connecting link of relationship with Jehovah, than as reaching further into their history. After Gilgal and Shiloh came Bochim, and after Joshua and Eleazar came the Judges; nor does Israel come out again in luster till the time of Ichabod had passed by, and "the Lord's anointed King" was crowned, and Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord, instead of David his father, and the temple was filled with the glory of God. "Ye are come to Mount Zion," &c.

Melchisedek is I submit, outside the Book of Joshua, and far beyond it, though I do not doubt it rightly comes in on the way with Paul's Hebrews, as he leads them forward to "the heavenly Jerusalem, and city of the living God," and will get its actual fulfillment in the grand millennial times of the true Solomon's reign. Wonderful as the Book of Joshua is typically, yet, in some respects, it is short of the Hebrews; of course, I mean as regards Melchisedek and the ark of covenant, in its connection with Mount Zion, under "the king of righteousness and king of peace," in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is, after all, their line of march and of inheritance, only under Paul's leadership. As regards ourselves, as believers in Christ, and as true worshippers, "who worship God in spirit and in truth," in the holiest, where He dwells, and where the ark of the covenant rests, and where Christ is sat down, we all know increasingly how precious this epistle is to us, as our new and completed Book of Leviticus. It may, and does, come short of the Colossians, and Ephesians, and some others, but it contains what neither of those does; and, above all, makes known to us the anointed "High Priest of our profession," and this, too, in the essential glory of His person as Son, as well as in His twofold relations of the only-begotten Son of God, and the exalted Son of man, set over all the works of the Creator's bands. The Book of Joshua does not lose by it.

Besides these, we have His glorious offices, as High Priest "passed through the heavens," as Intercessor, living in the presence of God for us, and as Mediator of the new covenant to the

house of Israel, when “the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” The Great High Priest “passed through the heavens,” even Jesus, the Son of God, is essential to Christianity, and for Christian worship and intercession. Such an High Priest became us, and Paul's Hebrews (who followed the ark, up to the right hand of God, by faith), who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens. The priesthood and the priest must be equal to the position of the people, whether earthly or heavenly, and he made higher than their calling, and these give their character to the holiest, where God is, and to the worshippers and their worship, as in chapters 9, 10. The practice of elucidating Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians, by the various chapters in the Book of Joshua, and their distinguishing records, is quite right (and vice versa), but neither of those epistles, be it remembered, takes up priesthood or worship.

The relations of God, therefore, which were maintained by the tabernacle of witness, and Eleazar the priest, at Shiloh, in the time of Joshua, must be passed over in any real exposition of this book; or an epistle is wanted which recognizes these relations, and applies them to ourselves and priesthood as over Jordan, and why not this Epistle to the Hebrews? If the answer he, that it is an epistle for the wilderness, this is freely admitted, but not for “the time of need” only—for the tabernacle was in the land of Canaan, as we have been examining. The classification of the Hebrews for priesthood, and its introduction, with Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians, under their characteristic differences, would make the group complete, and enable us to take up and elucidate all the parts in the Book of Joshua, under these four epistles of Paul. In this way the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests bearing it, as well as Eleazar and Shiloh, with the tabernacle for worship, would be no longer in the background, or omitted as they generally are. But enough has been said to call attention to the fact, and to help in the consideration of the real character of the Hebrew epistle as a complete reference to the Book of Joshua, and this is the main object in these remarks.

In conclusion, and as a summary, I judge that the ark of pure gold is beautifully embodied by “the express image and glory” of the Son, as in Heb. 1:2, 3, and that the Shittim wood of the ark is as perfectly represented by His manhood as the only-begotten Son, in verses 5, 6. Moreover, “the body prepared for him,” and in which He came to do the will of God, was the embodiment of the two tables of the covenant which the ark contained, but which were, in like manner, taken out, and magnified in Himself, who said, “Yea, thy law is within my heart.” What, too, are the central chapters of Hebrews, touching the Priest in heaven, but the transfer of “Aaron's rod that budded,” and “the golden censer,” out of the typical ark, into their own proper place in the presence of God for us? Again, what is “the golden pot that had manna,” but the person, and words, and works, and ways of Jesus below, and of which this precious epistle is the exposition? So, likewise, as to the tabernacle itself (with Eleazar and Shiloh), wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread, what is Paul uncovering to his Hebrews in our epistle but the things themselves, in their great Antitype, who is passing before them in the glory of His person? But enough for inquiry and suggestion, though “Jesus the author and finisher of our faith,” and “so great a cloud of witnesses” form a marvelous company—of whom the world was not worthy! J. E. B.

Chapter 143

Judas, Not Iscariot

It is an interesting characteristic of John that he enshrines in divine revelation the questions and observations of the less notable of the Lord's apostles. Thus what dropped from Andrew, Thomas, Philip, and Judas brother of James, is found recorded by him and by none of the other evangelists.

Of the last of these, but one saying is preserved, his memorable inquiry of our Lord how He would manifest Himself to His disciples, and not unto the world (John 14:22), and it is he who has given us by the Holy Ghost that short but remarkable letter known as the Epistle of Jude.

Comparing Mark 6:7, where we read that the Lord sent out the twelve by two and two, with Luke 6:14-16, where the apostles are enumerated in pairs, we gather the significant fact that Judas Iscariot, the first apostate from Christ, was accompanied when they went forth on their mission, by Jude who was characteristically that prophet whose burden would be the Christian apostasy. And this is the more remarkable as while Simon is coupled with his brother Andrew, and James with his brother John, Jude is separated from his brother, James the less, with whom his name is always previously connected, to be associated with the Iscariot.

He calls himself “bondsman of Jesus Christ,” and addresses “the called ones beloved in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ,” praying that mercy, peace, and love may be multiplied unto them. The words, “Beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ,” in this exordium, form the nearest approach we have in the Epistles to the introductory words of Paul to those to the church at Thessalonica which is addressed in each case as in God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ. Jude's Epistle is general in so far as it contemplates no particular assembly, and the word “mercy” implies that it is more individual than ecclesiastical. But it possesses distinct internal evidence that what obtained incipiently then in the house of God upon earth, and which in our day would characterize it, was looming prophetically before his soul, and he was inspired of the Spirit of God to portray it in the incomparably striking form in which it is presented to us in ten verses of the five and twenty that compose the Epistle. (Ver. 4, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19.) Probably nothing can be found in the compass of the whole word of God more profoundly solemn than the picture which the Holy Ghost gives in that half-score of verses, of persons figuring in the house of God and bearing the name of Christ. And that which imparts so terrible a character to such scriptures is the fact that they betoken the culmination of all iniquity beneath the eye of God; and the climax of every evil the world has witnessed, under the cloak of what professedly honors Christ our Lord. As we well know, the corruption of that which is best is the worst corruption of all, so we can readily understand that nothing could possibly be more obnoxious to the heart of our divine Master than that which the penetrating eye of Judas, not Iscariot, observed to have entered upon its development when he penned the impassioned strains which bear his name.

Were it a description of things in the outside world, whether civilized or barbarian, it would stir our souls in a far more measured way, but the definite language of the Epistle— “crept in unawares” precludes any widening of the sphere, marking off with precision that the scene is the house of God, and that the persons contemplated and depicted are professors of Christ. Seeing this, shall

we wonder that God's “Faithful and true Witness” (Rev. 3:14), will presently spue out of His mouth the unfaithful and untrue witness, which as a professing body is figured in guilty Laodicea? Shall we wonder that judgment must begin of all places at the house of God? (1 Peter 4:17.)

The apostle had thought to write in a more general way of the common salvation, but as a divine watchman impressed with what he had discerned within, he is constrained to employ his pen upon the advancing apostasy and its issues, with the exhortations and encouragements which are divinely adapted for the saints in view of this awful corruption and desertion of what is due to the holy name of Christ.

The guilty agents in this apostasy—not “ordained” but “marked out beforehand,” (compare Rom. 15:4; Eph. 3:3, &a.), are sketched from manifold points of view, and with unerring fidelity. With a few strokes of his pen does the apostle depict in verse 4, a rough outline of their grosser features—these dissolute deniers of the only sovereign Master, Jesus Christ! After which he rapidly introduces three salient but vastly different instances of earlier-committed apostasies, and the countervailing award of God in each case. First Israel, a people saved out of the land of Egypt, to be established for God in Canaan, according to His avowed purpose (Ex. 3:8), an unbelieving generation of whom apostatized from His word, and their carcases fell in the wilderness. Second, angelic apostasy, angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word, kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and they are reserved under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Lastly, heathen licentiousness in Sodom and Gomorrah, the going after strange flesh, contrary to what God has ordained, and what nature herself taught, equally apostasy in principle; they suffered the vengeance of eternal fire.

“Likewise also these dreamers,” following which are a few more touches in the Holy Ghost's solemn pictures of the apostates— “They defile the flesh, they despise dominion, they speak evil of dignities.” Yet the very highest created intelligence—the archangel Michael—dared not bring a railing judgment against Satan, when brought into conflict with him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. We gather from what the Holy Ghost reveals to us here and only here, that the signal honor which for wise reasons God paid to Moses in burying his body (Deut. 34:6), stirred up the enmity of the devil, and gave occasion for collision between him and Michael, who may have been engaged in this service to Moses. Dominion and dignity had been vested in Israel's leader and law-giver, Satan despised it as now do they who are his agents; yet sharp as the contention was, the enemy failed to provoke the archangel into what would have been unbecoming the subjection which was coupled with dominion and dignity in his person. Unlike Satan he abode in the truth, and kept his estate. (Compare John 8:44.) This then is in marked contrast to apostasy, thus we have three instances of a compared, and one of a contrasted character.

Again he portrays the apostates, they speak evil in their ignorance, and corrupt themselves in what by mere nature they understand. “Woe unto them” —and now in the little space of one verse he accumulates three more representative cases of kindred character in which the divine displeasure had been incurred, and vengeance called for: (1) the fleshly opposition of the murderer Cain, or unrestrained natural evil; (2) error taught for reward to which the unhappy Balsam prostituted himself, or ecclesiastical evil; and (3) the denial of God's authority vested in Christ His Prophet, Priest and King, typically set forth in Korah's rebellion against Moses! There follow further expressive touches from the hand of the Spirit of God; these apostates were sunken rocks of

terrible danger at the feasts of love or fellowship-meetings of the saints. Such holy scenes were violated by the presence of these remorseless sensualists who were there only to satiate their carnal appetites. The description then becomes crowded with striking imagery—they were as trees without fruit, or whose fruit was withered or blasted, rootless and fruitless, morally and. spiritually dead; they were as clouds which carry and convey no refreshing rain, but are idly driven of wayward winds; they were as waves of the sea, lashed, as it were, by their passions and foaming out their own shame; yea, they were as wandering stars reserved to the gloom of darkness for eternity! What a picture!

And, solemn thought, their doom was impressively foretold many centuries before, for we now learn that, if left behind when the church is taken, this residuum of nominal Christianity, to be overwhelmed with unsparing judgment when the Lord returns personally to the earth. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, in the first recorded prophecy from the lips of man, had prophesied of the doom of these Christian apostates when the Lord should be manifested, accompanied by the myriads of His redeemed saints! Thus, while the coming of the Lord as the Seed of the woman into this world had been first announced of God Himself in Eden in connection with His purposes of grace, we learn that the Lord's second coming had been the burden of the testimony of His first prophet in connection with the judgment of those who, in face of its fullest display, should most flagrantly abuse that grace.

The apostle finishes his sketch, “these are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts; and their mouth speaks swelling words, admiring persons for the sake of profit,” adding these final touches, “mockers, walking after their own lusts of ungodlinesses. These are they who set themselves apart [compare Isa. 66:17, for sanctification to evil], natural men, not having the Spirit.” The apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ (Paul, Peter, John) had spoken of them as such, and thus the prophecy of Enoch and the testimony of the apostles of three and thirty centuries later conveyed to the same focus, the Spirit of God with divine prescience having had these very persons who should be the corrupters and betrayers of Christianity before Him since the seventh generation of men, as we read in verse 4, “They who of old were marked out beforehand to this sentence;” that is, not as then condemned, but as those who should bring themselves into this judgment.

Is it not well that we should admiringly and adoringly recognize how perfectly the Holy Ghost has herein portrayed that state of things through which the assembly of God is passing? If anything is calculated to sustain the hearts of saints at such a time it is the reflection that we have to do with the living God who has foreseen every bit of trial and trouble in the church's history, and who has from its earliest days depicted with divine accuracy its persistent declension and final apostasy. In a day in which those masterpieces of licentiousness and apostasy, Mormonism and Christadelphianism, are found lodged in the branches of the great mustard-tree, no unusual degree of penetration is needed to discover a counterpart to this picture of Jude in the actual condition of much that now passes current under the name of Christ. Nor is it in such palpable enormities alone that we trace the fidelity of the prophet's testimony, for have we not heard that but a short time ago in the most noble and venerated of England's abbeys one of the most cultured and courted of the dignitaries of the Establishment, who is high in royal favor, in speaking of the cross declared that the execution on Calvary was a hideous calamity! While the true-hearted child of God must needs shudder at such disclosures as these which are every day coming to the front,

he has the comfort of knowing that the very fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures of Peter and Paul, of John and Jude, who all wrote of these days, is in itself a powerful encouragement to personal faithfulness to our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, as well as an incentive “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” being convinced that these iniquities and profanities, which are more and more characterizing nominal Christianity, form the prelude to that longed-for moment when our heavenly Bridegroom shall disclose His own peerless beauty and divine glory to the enraptured eyes and thrilling heavenly hearts of those beloved saints who constitute the church, His bride!

“But ye, beloved” (vers. 17, 20), how refreshing to observe that thus blessedly does the apostle distinguish the loyal hearted and holy brethren of Christ, introducing now the admonitions which so solemn, so awful a state of things as he forewarned them of, called for in respect to the saints of God. And it is (1) “remember” the spoken words of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are referred first of all to the paramount authority of scripture, the sure foundation and unfailing resource for faith in this day of evil. (2.) “Building yourselves up on your most holy faith,” the faith once delivered to the saints (ver. 3), being that upon which it is our privilege to be ever edifying one another. (Compare Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Thess. 5:11.) (3.) “Praying in the Holy Ghost,” for even our dependence, which such a state of things is calculated to produce, and the expression of it before the Lord, must be the work, of the Spirit of God. (4.) “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” not making it or keeping it, but keeping ourselves in the blessed sense and comfort of it, nestling, as it were, in the genial warmth and holy joy of the divine affections. (5.) “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” even its consummation in glory when He receives us unto Himself. (6.) “Making a difference,” not drawing with saints the hard and fast lines of a rigorous legality, inflexible and unfeeling as a rod of iron, but in the grace of Christ distinguishing things that differ, and according to the heart of the Father having compassion where divine compassion may be shown, rescuing out of the fire, and nevertheless (7) “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh;” in other words, “the bowels of Jesus Christ;” for the sinning brother to be reconciled with holy hatred of the sin.

Our epistle closes with one of the finest doxologies which the Spirit of God has embedded in the pages of divine inspiration. After the exact depiction, complete exposure, and sweeping denunciation of the apostates, calculated to preserve the true-hearted from their machinations, and after the sevenfold exhortations which have been noticed, the saints are finally referred to the immutable resources we have in a glorified Christ, according to the ways and to the purposes of God. The wilderness way and the rapture into glory are concentrated in one verse! Is it the former? There is grace enough in His blessed heart and power enough in His mighty arm, in every exigency to preserve us from falling. Is it the latter Then shall He present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exultation!—that which His own heart is set upon for its unmeasured joy is what will be the first operation of His hand, as it were, when at the long-waited-for word of the Father He comes forth from His throne!

To “the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now and to all the ages, Amen.”

King Agrippa: Acts 26

In Agrippa there was, I believe, more curiosity than conscience, though there may have been some desire to profit by the occasion to know what the doctrine was which had so stirred up people's minds, a disposition to inquire which was more than curiosity. In general his words are taken as if he was not far from being convinced that Christianity was true; perhaps he would have been so if his passions had not stood in the way. But it may be questioned whether this is the force of the Greek, as generally supposed, and not rather, “in a little you are going to make a Christian of me,” covering his uneasiness at the appeal to his professed Judaism before Festus by an affected and slighting remark. And such I believe to be the case. The notion of an “almost Christian” is quite a mistake, though a man's mind may be under influences which ought to lead him to it, and yet reject it. He would have been glad for Paul to be sit free. He expresses his conviction that it might have been done if Paul had not appealed to Caesar. He gives his opinion to Festus as a wise and reasonable man; but his words were in reality dictated by his conscience—words that he could venture to utter when Festus and all the rest were agreed that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

God would have the innocence of His beloved servant proved in the face of the world. His discourse tends to this. He goes farther, but his object is to give account of his conduct. His miraculous conversion is related in order to justify his subsequent career; but it is so related as to act upon the conscience of Agrippa, who was acquainted with Jewish things, and evidently desired to hear something of Christianity, which he suspected to be the truth. Accordingly he lays hold with eagerness of the opportunity that presents itself to hear the apostle explain it. But he remains much where he was. His condition of soul opens however the month of Paul, and he addresses himself directly and particularly to the king; who moreover, evidently engrossed by the subject, had called on him to speak. To Festus it was all a rhapsody.

The dignity of Paul's manner before all these governors is perfect. He addresses himself to the conscience with a forgetfulness of self that showed a man in whom communion with God, and the sense of his relationship with God, carried the mind above all effect of circumstances. He was acting for God; and, with a perfect deference for the position of those he addressed, we see that which morally was altogether superior to them. The more humiliating his circumstances, the more beauty there is in this superiority. Before the Gentiles he is a missionary from God. He is again (blessed be God!) in his right place. All that he said to the Jews was right and deserved; but why was he, who had been delivered from the people, subjected to their total want of conscience and their blind passions which gave no place for testimony? Nevertheless, as we have seen, it was to be so in order that the Jews might in every way fill up the measure of their iniquity, and indeed that the blessed apostle might follow the steps of his Master.

Paul's address to king Agrippa furnishes us with the most complete picture of the entire position of the apostle, as he himself looked at it when his long service and the light of the Holy Ghost illuminated his backward glance.

He does not speak of the assembly—that was a doctrine for instruction, and not a part of his history. But everything that related to his personal history, in connection with his ministry, he gives in detail. He had been a strict Pharisee; and here he connects the doctrine of Christ with the hopes of the Jews. He was in bonds “for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers.” No doubt resurrection entered into it. Why should the king think resurrection impossible, that God was not able to raise the dead? This brings him to another point. He had verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth, and had carried them out with all the energy of his character, and with the bigotry of a devout Jew. His present condition, as a witness among the Gentiles, depended on the change wrought in him by the revelation of the Lord when he was engaged in seeking to destroy His name. Near Damascus a light brighter than the sun struck them all to the earth, and he alone heard the voice of the Righteous One, so that he knew from His own mouth that it was Jesus, and that He looked upon those who believed in Him as Himself. He could not resist such a testimony. But as this was the great grievance to the Jews, he shows that his own position was formally marked out by the Lord Himself. He was called to give ocular evidence of the glory which he had seen, that is, of Jesus in that glory; and of other things also, for the manifestation of which Jesus would again appear to him. A glorious Christ known (personally) only in heaven was the subject of the testimony committed to him. For this purpose He had set Paul apart from the Jews as much as from the Gentiles, his mission belonging immediately to heaven, having its origin there; and he was sent formally by the Lord of glory to the Gentiles to change their position with respect to God through faith in this glorious Jesus, opening their eyes, bringing them out of darkness into light, from the power of Satan to God, and giving them an inheritance among the sanctified. This was a definite work. The apostle was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and he had taught the Gentiles to turn to God, and to act as those who had done so. For this cause the Jews sought to kill him.

Nothing more simple, more truthful, than this history. It put the case of Paul and the conduct of the Jews in the clearest light. When called to order by Festus, who naturally thought it nothing more than irrational enthusiasm, he appeals with perfect dignity and quick discernment to Agrippa's knowledge of the facts upon which all this was based; for the thing had not been done in a corner.

Agrippa was not far from being convinced; but his heart was unchanged. The wish that Paul expresses brings the matter back to its moral reality. The meeting is dissolved. The king resumes his kingly place in courtesy and condescension, and the disciple that of a prisoner; but, whatever might be the apostle's position, we see in him a heart thoroughly happy and filled with the Spirit and love of God. Two years of prison had brought him no depression of heart or faith, but had only set him free from his harassing connection with the Jews, to give him moments spent with God.

Agrippa, surprised and carried away by Paul's clear and straightforward narrative, relieves himself from the pressure of Paul's personal address by saying, In a little you are going to make a Christian of me. Charity might have said, “Would to God that thou wert!” But there is a spring in the heart of Paul that does not stop there. “Would to God,” says he, “that not only thou, but all those that hear me, were.... altogether such as I am, except these bonds!” What happiness and what love (and in God these two things go together) are expressed in these words! A poor prisoner, aged and rejected, at the end of his career he is rich in God. Blessed years that he had spent in prison He could give himself as a model of happiness; for it filled his heart. There are conditions of soul which unmistakably display themselves. And why should he not be happy? His fatigues

ended, his work in a certain sense finished, he possessed Christ, and in Him all things. The glorious Jesus, who had brought him into the pains and labor of the testimony, was now his possession and his crown. Such is ever the case. The cross in service—by virtue of what Christ is—is the enjoyment of all that He is, when the service is ended; and in some sort is the measure of that enjoyment. This was the case with Christ Himself, in all its fullness; it is ours, in our measure, according to the sovereign grace of God. Only Paul's expression supposes the Holy Ghost acting fully in the heart in order that it may be free to enjoy, and that the Spirit is not grieved.

A glorious Jesus—a Jesus who loved him, a Jesus who put the seal of His approbation and love upon his service, a Jesus who would take him to Himself in glory, and with whom he was one (and that known according to the abundant power of the Holy Ghost, according to divine righteousness), a Jesus who revealed the Father, and through whom he had the place of adoption—was the infinite source of joy to Paul, the glorious object of his heart and of his faith; and, being known in love, filled his heart with that love overflowing towards all men. What could he wish them better than to be as he was except his bonds? How, filled with this love, could he not wish it, or not be full of this large affection? Jesus was its measure.

Chapter 145

The Law and the Gospel of the Glory of Christ

THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS ON 2 Cor. 3

We learn here what a Christian is, and how a man comes to be one. First, we notice what introduces the subject; and next, the circumstance to which the apostle alludes as bringing out the true character of Christianity.

The apostle had been forced, by the attacks of those false Judaizing teachers, who said he was no apostle, to speak of himself, though he is grieved to have to do so. He began, in the end of the previous chapter, to say a few words which lead to this: “We are not as many who corrupt the word of God,” &c. Then he asks, “Do we need letters of commendation to you, or from you?” He means just such letters of commendation as are given now. But he tells them, “Ye are our letter of commendation.” He had them so much on his heart, that, if people asked him for proof of his apostleship, he just said, “Look at the Corinthians.” At this time they were going on well; they had received the first epistle, and the apostle had seen Titus, and learned that it had produced its effect. They were brought back again to a right walk; his heart was enlarged towards them (chap. 7:11), and he could say, “Ye are our epistle.” He could hardly have said so in the first epistle, though he was the means of their conversion.

Next, he shows how or why they were his letter of commendation. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,” &c. (Ver. 8.) They recommended Paul, because they recommended Christ. He then passes to a comparison of this with the law, which introduces the general subject of the chapter. “Written.... not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” The law of the ten commandments, as we all know, was written on tables of stone; the Corinthian Christians, in contrast with that, had Christ graven on their hearts. This is what a Christian is: an epistle of recommendation of Christ to the world, by having Christ engraven on his heart by the power of the Spirit of God. It is spoken of the Corinthians collectively, though it is true also individually. He does not say, Ye ought to be the epistles of Christ, but “Ye are.” This was the position they were in. If I call myself a Christian, even without being one, I am in the position of an epistle of Christ. My profession, though it be merely profession, is a profession of Christ. The apostle could hardly have had the heart to say that of the Corinthians, when they were walking badly. Still, they were in that position. They were before the world to show out Christ, as it is expressed doctrinally in chapter iv.— “that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” At the end of this chapter he speaks of it as growth into the image of Christ. It is the same thing under a different figure. There, too, we see how it is brought about.

To return to how this is introduced. These Corinthians were a testimony to Paul's ministry—a letter of commendation of him—because they were a letter of commendation of Christ before the world, showing what the power of Christ's life was in a man; his motives entirely changed, and above all that is in the world; a walk of holiness; unselfishness; self-restraint; the power of money gone; a conversation in heaven. He had alluded to the tables of stone on which the law was written, and he follows out that line of thought in the chapter. He refers to the fact, that, when Moses came

down from the mount the second time, his face shone, so that the people could not look at him, and asked him to put a veil upon his face. That veil is done away in Christ; nevertheless it is still upon the heart of the people when the scriptures are read, but when they shall turn to the Lord it shall be taken away, just as Moses put off the veil when he turned to the Lord. They will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. When Moses came down from the mount the first time, it is not said that his face shone, because then he brought pure law; but the second time a certain measure of grace was added: God had been revealed as “the Lord, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” The way in which He spared Israel then was by His goodness, which He had caused to pass before Moses (he could not see His glory). The people could not look on the glory of God—not even at the reflection of it in Moses' face.

It is a most touching history, showing out again and again the grace, and forgiveness, and patience of God. First, Moses went up and got the law, graven by the finger of God on two tables of stone; but before ever he had brought it to the people, they had broken it. They had made a golden calf to worship, and thus broke the very first link with God: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Moses, seeing this, cast the tables of the law out of his hands, and broke them. Thus pure law never came into the camp at all. Law came in afterward, when mercy was shown too, but unmixed law never. How could Moses carry the tables of the law into the midst of a people who were serving other gods? How could he put the ten commandments beside the golden calf? When he comes within hearing of the voices of them that were singing and dancing, his indignation is kindled, and he casts down the tables, and smashes them. That was where pure law ended.

Moses went up again, taking new tables, according to the word of God, who wrote the law upon them afresh. He had told the people, “Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin;” and it is lovely to see how he pleads for them, and how God answers in goodness and grace. He reveals His mercy in government, as “forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” This is sometimes called the gospel, which it is not at all. God did indeed bear with Israel in patience, but still He adds, “In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.” It was not forgiveness as we know it now. He forgave them in not cutting them off, and putting Moses and his seed in their place, as He had threatened. Moses had said, in beautiful disinterestedness and love for the people with whom God's name was bound up, “If thou wilt not forgive them, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.” The Lord shows present mercy and forgiveness, but at the same time puts everyone of the people on his own responsibility. “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.”

This is the first part. Even this (law qualified with mercy), so far from being the gospel, is what the apostle calls the ministration of death and condemnation. Then, in contrast with this, he speaks of the gospel—of Christ's work—as the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness. A person not in the presence of God may not find the law a ministration of death and condemnation, because his conscience is not awakened. He is like Paul, “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless;” “alive without the law once.” But that is never found in the presence of God; there it is, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” The young man who came to the Lord (asking, “What good thing shall I do?” and saying, “All these things have I kept from my youth up,") had not got a bad conscience, in a natural sense. He thought he was going on very well, and he came to know what was the best thing he could do; he did not ask to be saved. The Lord dealt with him as He dealt with Saul. He brings down the law upon the very motives of his heart. Saul might be satisfied that

he was blameless touching the righteousness which is in the law, but when the law said, “Thou shalt not lust,” all was over; he was discovered and condemned. “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and. I died.” Why? Not because the law is wrong, but because it is right, and I am not right. The Lord did not say to the young man that he had not kept the

He told him to go and sell all he had, and give it to the poor. This immediately brought out the lust of money: “And he went away grieved, for he had great possessions.”

See, again, how the Lord uses the law in the case of the woman taken in adultery. (John 8) The scribes and Pharisees bring her before Him in a most wicked way, hoping to entrap Him. If He said, Stone her, He was no more a Savior than the law; if He said, Do not stone her, He was breaking the law. The Lord does not weaken the authority of the law, but He applies light to them all, telling them, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” They found they were in the presence of God, and they went out, one by one, owning practically that they had all sinned, and were under the condemnation of the law. They felt the detecting power of God—the veil was taken away, and they could not bear it.

Our consciences may be quite at ease while we are far from God and unawakened; but the moment we have to face what we are in the presence of God, we see that our case is desperate. We all know, more or less, what self-righteousness is, and we can go on with it well enough till we get God's eye upon us. There is not a man in this town who is not washed in the blood of Christ, that, if called apart to answer for himself to God, would not try to get away as fast as he could. He may have an excellent character, and deserve it too, but he has not a perfect conscience. We may go on for a long time as decent natural men, without anything to shock the conscience; but the moment God's presence is recognized, the veil is off, God is seen, and His word searches the thoughts and intents of the heart: then we can understand the words of poor Job (and there was none like him in all the earth), “He cannot answer him one of a thousand.” “If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” That is, though clean in the eyes of men, he would be in God's sight like a man brought out of a ditch. Then he goes on to say, “Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me.” This is what we have got in Christ; God has taken away our fear.

The law is most useful in this way to convict the soul, where known in its spirituality. It demands from us what we ought to be for God, as God's law must do, and then tells us, if we do not answer to it, we are cursed. The apostle goes even a step farther in Rom. 7. A man may be quickened, born of God, so as to say, “I hate these evil things, that I do.” The law says, “So do I, and that is the reason I curse you.” It is because the law is right, “holy, just, and good,” that it kills us morally because we are sinners. It is useful in this way, but it always ends in condemnation. The time will come when God will write it in the hearts of His people, and then the case will be different. The law will not curse, but bless. When the law comes to the conscience, saying, “Thou shalt not lust,” no man can stand it; the lust of the flesh is detected, and it is shown to be not subject to the law of God. “So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” This is the sum of it. Sometimes the flesh may run to excess of riot, and sometimes it may be very respectable; but this is true of all in

their natural standing as children of Adam. Man is a bad tree, and cannot bring forth good fruit.

The law deals with our consciences. It is not an arbitrary thing. It takes up the relationships and duties which already existed among men before the law was given, and were owned of God, as father, husband, wife, child, &c. It comes with God's sanction and authority to these relationships, and gives His rule for them, and says, If you do not maintain them according to it, you will be cursed. Conscience owns the propriety of it, and says it ought to be so. The law does another thing. It not merely says, “Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother,” &c., but it says, “Thou shalt not steal,” “covet,” &c. It is an instrument and weapon in God's hand to restrain and punish the evil propensities of men. But a man might not be a thief, or an adulterer, or in any other outward way offend against the positive prohibitions of the law, and yet it will take hold of him. Here comes in the great principle upon which all hangs: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.” Is it what you do? People can delude themselves sadly about it, and say they do love God thus, not knowing themselves. But then comes the second great part of the law: do you love your neighbor as yourself.? Are you as sorry when your neighbor loses his fortune as if you lost your own? Oh! you say, you are expecting something supernatural. Just so—I am. You do not love your neighbor as yourself; you do lust. And if you do not love your neighbor whom you have seen, how can you love. God whom you have not seen? If you are on the ground of the law, God comes, and demands (though you may be free from theft, murder, and the like), Do you love your neighbor as yourself, or do you lust in your heart? When the conscience is really touched by this, it cries out, “O wretched man that I am!” The use of the law is to bring us to this, and not merely to convict us of open sins, which it does. It adds this detection of lust to all its rules for human relationships, and all its prohibitions; for otherwise a man might be a hypocrite, and live outwardly very fairly, and so be righteous according to the law, which could not be.

The law does not give life, and it does not give strength. Man's great need is power to do right. I may know what is right well enough, and even have the desire to do right, and yet something else have power over my heart, so that I do wrong. Neither does the law give a motive to love. It tells me to love God with all my heart (and conscience owns I ought to do so), but why? Because I shall be cursed if I do not. But that will not produce love. Thus law gives neither righteousness, life, nor strength; for, though it puts an object before us, it gives no revelation of God to draw love out. In Christ we get all these. He sets His seal upon the law as a perfect standard of what man ought to be. He charges Himself with our sins. He does give life, and strength, and God as an object. Conscience consents to the law that it is good, but feels that for this very reason it must condemn me because of what I am. There is no mercy, or salvation, or redemption in the law; it is a ministration of death and condemnation. Have you kept the law for a whole week? Have you loved God with all your heart? Has there been no love of anything else? Has nothing else possessed your heart at any time? Have you been thinking for your neighbor as for yourself? Have, you not, perhaps, been thinking of getting on in the world? Well, that does not do for God—it could not; if there were such a state of things in heaven, it would not be heaven at all. What, then, can the law do but announce condemnation; for it cannot sanction sin? In the very nature of things it must be so. Men would like to be in heaven, because they think it is a happy place (and so it is); but if a man were taken as he is, and put there, he would get away if he could. Do you think he would find pleasure and delight in Christ being glorified, and in having nothing but Christ and the Father's love to occupy his mind and heart? He could not bear it—it would be to him a most monotonous

and tiresome thing. It is only deceiving ourselves to think that heaven is a place where a man in his natural state could be happy. I have dwelt upon this to show where we are on the ground of law, but I turn now to the ministration of the Spirit. Let us see how God deals with us in Christ.

Men had been sinners, lawless sinners and law-breaking sinners, before Christ came. His coming brought an additional element of sin. God came into this world in goodness. What did it do to Him? Speaking of the ministration of the Spirit, a part of His mission was to convict the world of sin, because they believed not on Christ. (John 16) His message to the world from God is, Where is my Son? He has been among you in grace and love: what have you done to Him? Just as He said to Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? The unconverted heart is still the same; it would get rid of Christ, though it cannot kill Him now of course. What did He do here? He healed the sink, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead. But God was too close to men, and they took Him and crucified Him. I cannot even call myself a Christian, without saying, in effect, I am in a world in which the Son of God has been rejected and cast out. His murder was of course a deed of law-breaking, but it was a great deal more—it was the rejection of God come in love and grace. It was the display of this, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. I insist upon this last point. When it is really seen and brought home to the conscience and heart, a soul is in a condition to receive blessing from God. He sees himself to be a lawless sinner, a law-breaking sinner; and one that preferred the world, and its vanity and dross, to Christ. When we see this, all our sins are out before God; we are law-breakers and God-haters. This we learn in the cross, though the law showed it too. “For my love, hatred,” Christ would say.

But when I come to that in which my hatred for God is thus manifested—the cross, then I learn that Christ died for it. This is the fullness of the triumph of God's love over my sinfulness. After God had tried man in every possible way, without law and under law, mixed with mercy and long-suffering, He sent Christ, saying, Surely they will reverence my Son; and we know what they did to Him. God came into the world to save us, that where sin abounded, grace might much more abound; and it was in that very act in which man showed that he hated God, that the work was done which saves us, showing that God's love is superior to man's wickedness.

What I see first in the blessed Lord, even in His life, is God coming down to men, and walking in grace and holiness through the world, in order to bring God's love to everyone in it. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” He brought divine love to those who owned what they really were. He tore off the mask of pretended righteousness from the Pharisee, but where He found a poor wretched soul—like the woman of the city, who dare not show her face among decent people, much less to God—He said, I will have you. To the proud and insensible Pharisee He said, “You gave me no water for my feet” —he did not offer Him even the common courtesies of life; “but this woman hath washed thy feet with tears.” Thus the self-righteous man is exposed by the light, but the poor woman—a sinner confessed—finds divine love, and, more, forgiveness. All this is a great deal more than promise. There are blessed promises to believers, but God's dealing with the soul of a sinner is not on the ground of promise. The Syro-Phoenician woman, for instance, being a Canaanite, had no promise, except to be exterminated. When she cried to the Lord as Son of David, He did not answer her; He did not know her in that way at all. She drops that, and the Lord graciously waits upon her till she gets down to her true place. “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He tells her “It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs": how can I give the things promised

to Israel to Canaanites? What does she say? “Truth, Lord” —I am a dog— “but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.” Her heart apprehends that God is good enough to feed people who are not children; He is good enough to receive a wretched sinner who has no righteousness, and not even a promise. God revealed in Christ showed her there was love in God even for a person who was entitled to nothing. Christ could not, would not, deny this.

Thus God brings down souls into their real condition before Him, where they have not a word to say, and not till then do they get the blessing. This is what I get in Christ as to salvation. It is not a promise only: He was the Messiah who had been promised; but He was there as God present with the sinner; and now we have got even more, for He died for us. Think of this, that God Himself came down to meet me, a poor sinner, when I could not lift up my head! And what did He bring? Perfect love; God so loved the world, that He gave His Son. He could not allow sin, but would put it away. I get a step further when I see that He was the Bread of life that came down from heaven. Then there must be eating His flesh, and drinking His blood.

I turn now to the cross. It was the manifestation of goodness, in the midst of the wickedness of the world, in a way never to be found anywhere else. During Christ's lifetime the heavens could open upon Him, and testify to His perfection and the Father's delight in Him; and thus I learn the terrible evil of the heart that could resist such goodness. When I come to the cross—supposing I am thus convicted of sin—what a wretched creature I see myself to be; I have hated this blessed One, and, more than that, my sins brought Him there. But He is not there now I come to the cross, and there is no Christ on it. Where is He? He is sitting at the right hand of God. But my sins brought Him to the cross; they were on Him there. Has He gone to God's right hand in glory with them upon Him? No. What has become of them? I find in the cross that God has dealt with my sins when they were upon Christ. It was when He had by Himself purged our sins that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. 1:3.) This is the contrast in Heb. 10 The Jewish priests were standing daily, offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down. He will rise up for judgment when the time comes; He is now waiting, not on His own throne, but on the Father's, till His enemies be made His footstool. We get there this special work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for our sins, according to the scriptures. He was made sin for us there; He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and in consequence had to drink the dreadful cup of God's wrath. But it is all over, and now that I see Him seated at God's right hand, I am bound to believe in the efficacy of that work once for all. The word used there is a very strong one; there is no interruption, no discontinuance of its efficacy. Therefore the worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins. He cannot come to God without finding that Christ, who bore his sins, is there, and entering into the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.

There is a great deal of looseness and unbelief at the present time (thank God, not so much in these countries) as to the immense value and import of the death of Christ. In that death God has been perfectly glorified in all that He is, and, at the same time, man's need has been met. If God had merely manifested His hatred of sin in the destruction of the sinner, it would have been righteous surely, but where then His love? If, on the other hand, sin was passed over, men allowed to commit sins, and no more about it, there would be no righteousness.

When I come to the cross, I find what could be found nowhere else—righteous judgment against sin, but perfect love to the sinner at the same time. The more we look into it, the more we see the value of the cross, the more precious will Christ be to us. I get in the cross man in absolute wickedness, hating what is good, hating God, who had come down in mercy to him, who had shown love and compassion to him in all his sufferings and yet had for His love hatred. Satan had complete power over man— “this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Not one remained with the Lord in that hour, even the disciples ran away. I further get there absolute perfection in Man—that is, in Christ—taking even the cup of wrath in perfect obedience, “that the world may know that I love the Father.”

I get there also God in perfect love towards the sinner, and in perfect righteousness against sin. Every question of good and evil, in their deepest and highest character, is settled there (I do not say for them that slight it). The first man stood upon his responsibility in the old, or first, creation, and he failed, and ruined all. The second Man glorified God in the midst of the ruin; the results are not all seen yet, but they are all secured—even the new heavens and the new earth depend upon His work on the cross. All that man is in evil, and all that God is in righteousness and love, are exhibited there. Thus it was the ministration of righteousness. The thing that manifested God's righteousness was this, that, Christ having glorified God in the place of sin and ruin, God glorified Him at His own right hand. That is where I know Christ now; the cross is over once for all, though its value abides perpetually, and the Man who was on it is at God's right hand—the place which He had before the world was, in His own divine person, but which He now occupies also in virtue of His work. He is there because He put all my sins away, and glorified God in doing it. On this the Holy Ghost comes down, and makes known that Christ is there; He makes known a great deal more, too, as dwelling in me. That is how it is the ministration of the Spirit.

Thus the gospel ministers righteousness for my soul—righteousness for those who had none for God. When man had nothing but sin, Christ was made sin, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. All that is over, and righteousness has been testified in setting this blessed Man—not an ordinary man, of course, or he could not have done it—at God's right hand. Such is my position now, as to my acceptance with God. This ministration of the Spirit was not merely the Spirit speaking in prophecy of a work to be accomplished, but the Holy Ghost come down because it had been done. There were promises before; the life, and death, and resurrection of Christ all clearly testified of; but the thing was not actually done. Saints then rested on promise, and God owned their faith; but I do not rest on promise now, but upon this, that Christ has finished the work which His Father gave Him to do, and that, having borne my sins, He is now at God's right hand in righteousness. Therefore when I come to the cross, I find He is not there; He has been there, but He is gone up on high, and the Holy Ghost has come down to make known to those who believe that His work is finished, and their sins all put away. And, not only so, but that work has put a Man into the glory of God: He is entered as our Forerunner, and He will come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

We are not there yet; we have the treasure in earthen vessels, but the gospel we have received opens up heavenly scenes: it is the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We see the effect of this, for example, in Stephen individually. I am not now speaking of the work of the Holy Ghost to convict of sin, and to point us to the cross of Christ, but of His sealing of believers. (Eph. 1:13.) God gives the Holy Ghost to dwell in a man after he believes. A Christian is

a person whose body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and therefore John is not afraid to say, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” The Holy Ghost thus dwelling in a man gives him to know that Christ has completed the work which saves and delivers him, and gives him also to look forward to the glory. What was the effect of looking at the glory in the face of Moses? They were afraid, because it convicted them of their sins. But when I look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, far more glorious than in Moses, does it alarm me? No, on the contrary it is the proof that I am brought to God; it is the testimony that I am saved, because I see it in the One who bore my sins on the cross. I see the love that He showed in dying for us, and I see the efficacy of His work in His being there, because He is there and glorified as the Man who died for me and bore my sins. Instead of being terrified,” we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.” This glory is presented in three ways: the glory of God; the glory of the Lord; and the glory of Christ. I see it in the One who has put away my sins, in the One who did not spare Himself, but drank the dreadful cup for me; and I can delight to look at it. I have got an object that makes my conscience perfect before God. (Heb. 9)

The effect of thus thinking of the Holy One who gave Himself for my sins, is, that I am changed into the same image; it has this sanctifying power. I can look into the very glory of God with joy and delight, and know, moreover, that I shall be like the One who is there. (1 John 3:2.) As we have borne the image of the earthly, se shall we also bear the image of the heavenly. The heart is thus filled with Christ, and the effects are soon seen. Of course there is progress in this, and watchfulness in our ways is needed to preserve and manifest it; but how we get it is by contemplating the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. There is also the fulfillment of the Lord's promise of what would take place when the Comforter was come: “At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” People tell us you cannot know that you are in Christ; but my answer is simply, I do not believe you, for scripture says ye shall know it. What did Zacharias say of even John the Baptist? “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.”

Then I am called to walk in this, and the more closely I walk, the more my heart is purified, and I see more clearly. The word of God, and all the helps that He has given us, come into operation, that we may grow up unto Him in all things. I am not trying to find out how I can get accepted; I am accepted. All that is settled, in order that I may be free to think of holiness. You cannot think of holiness really till you have peace about acceptance. You ought to think of being accepted first. It is the most solemn question possible, Can God have me? We are judicially before God according to the righteous requirements of His nature. But this is not holiness. Holiness is that I delight in good because it is according to God, and hate evil because it is contrary to God. Naturally I cannot turn to that until my soul is settled as to whether I am accepted or not. Then I can go on to follow holiness, not to get acceptance, but as that in which God delights, and I delight too, and bear more of Christ's image every day.

A little further on, in this very epistle, the law is brought in as requiring righteousness from man, and man cannot give it, and therefore there must be death and condemnation. But when all that man is—lawless, law-breaking, Christ-hating—is manifested; when sin has come to its highest pitch in the cross, God's wonderful grace comes in, and makes that cross the very means of salvation to sinners. When the soul is awakened to what it has done, and then finds that God has

already dealt with its sins on Christ, once for all, that He has by Himself purged our sins, then the conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God. I have a new nature in the light, as God is in the light, and I look to have my heart answer to this in practical holiness, because the question of acceptance is settled. I am separated to God personally. I look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the testimony that I am a saved man, and I seek to walk in the Spirit, as I live in the Spirit. We must not grieve the Holy. Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. We are to be followers of God, as dear children, walking in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us. We are to walk in the consciousness that we are God's children, and to behave ourselves as God's children. Thus we are the epistle of Christ. The soul has received this full and blessed truth, that, if I am in Christ, I am in perfect acceptance before God, and Christ is in me. Then let me take care that nothing else comes out of me.

I only add one word, which clears up many a difficulty. Very often, in divine things, we cannot see a ray of light, when the same principle in human things is as plain as A B C. Our duties always flow from the position we are in. It would be foolish to expect persons who are not my servants, or my children, to behave as my servants or my children; when they are, then they must behave as such. You must be a Christian, a child of God, before you can behave as one. You do not become a child by trying to act like a child; but when you are a child, you are bound to behave as such. But your being a child does not depend on your behavior. Think of anyone saying, You are my child, and you must try and continue to be my child still!

I just put this to each of our souls—are we the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men? Are we practically in the place which belongs to us? Take a heathen who has heard of Christianity, and what it is, and who expects that all Christian people are living for Christ. He comes here, and he sees people running after money, and pleasure, and honor, and what will he say? Why, that Christians are no better than the heathen; that people here are running after just the same things as in China. They are not epistles of Christ. Let our consciences consider this: how far we really are a letter of commendation of Christ before the world. It is an immense privilege. It should be like what the Lord said to the poor man who had been brought to his right mind: “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.” What a blessing and honor it is that He who loved us, and gave Himself for us, can use us poor worms as a practical, manifest, testimony for Himself before the world! J. N. D.

Chapter 146

Legality and Spiritual Elation

It may be accepted that all of God's people—whose souls are in His presence—have desires after holiness. Neither does the fact of the age in which a believer lives affect the principle, for if the Holy Spirit be not hindered, He is assuredly leading on those who are partakers of the divine nature to God.

Holiness, practically speaking, results from fulfilling God's will, pleasing God. The nature of things is not changed by labeling them other than what they are, and very frequently what is supposed to be holiness is nothing of the kind. Those who watch the working of the soul know how subtle self is, and as it reappears over and over again in various garbs. Jacob was Jacob despite Esau's garments. Though he declared it was not his, yet the voice was the voice of Jacob. Isaac was blind to the reality, but in ordinary Christian life it is less difficult to deceive others than ourselves! Indeed it is as astonishing as bumbling to discover what we are, and to see ourselves as others see us. All pride lacks sense, but spiritual pride excels all other pride in foolishness; and the man who glories in himself, his attainments, or knowledge, before God, is spiritually proud.

Now accepting that desires after holiness are common to God's saints—supposing such saints not to be morally away from God—we are confronted with strange differences in men's minds as to what holiness is. Unquestionably, if there was implicit obedience to scripture, these differences would not occur, but the fact of their existence is evident.

Holiness cannot exist in the soul apart from Christ. A man, who is a Christian, but who is trying to be holy, is legal, working on himself to get something out of himself, and thus far leaving Christ out. It matters not to what school he may belong, or what his attainments may be. Again, until what Christ has done for him, or what he is in Christ is realized, his desires after holiness will, generally speaking, run in a wrong path. In other words, the knowledge of the standing of the Christian in Christ affects the state of the Christian for Christ. But the practical difficulty is this: when a per. son is converted, he is usually some time learning what his standing is, and before he has learned it, his spiritual instincts, as we may express it, yearn after a state of holiness. Hence there is no little danger of these instincts pursuing a wrong direction, and the end resulting in self—either despondent or exultant, and if exultant producing spiritual pride.

Take for example a man who has divine life, but not peace. He realizes that he is far from practical holiness; he tries, resolves, and binds himself in order to reach the ideal of his desires. This is legality. He is working at self, shaping it into proper form. Many believers are at this hour in cruel bondage by reason of such efforts, perhaps sinking down into despair, fearing that after all they have no part or lot in the matter, but are deceivers of their own souls. How mysteriously the eye of the soul in such an one is hidden from Christ!

On the other hand, some imagine that they have in part, at least, succeeded. They also took the legal road, and, while legal, become inflated with fancied success. Thus legality and inflation twine round the stem of spiritual pride. And very humbling it is when the Spirit of God shows that all such

growth must be cut down before any real holiness can exist.

The supposed saintliness of many in monasteries and convents illustrates the transition from legal bonds to fancied holiness. Quite true, such believers do not possess the notion of true holiness. They have no just idea of Christ in the glory of God, nor of His having magnified God on the cross, no idea of the new creation; but such believers, though having false principles, may have true desires, despite the channel in which the desires run. Such an one, in order to reach ideal, wishes to become what he feels he is not. By a strange perversity he does not read the whole of the scriptures. This is always a dangerous line to get upon. He selects, or rather his teacher selects for him, parts of the Gospels, or perhaps of the Revelation portions which keep before him a suffering Jesus, the Lord as martyr. He tries to become like this Jesus in order eventually to work up to holiness. This is his ideal, and he determines, let us say humbly, to reach this goal.

In the work of cultivating himself be may go as far as the monk, held up to admiration, who one day, when listening to a brother reading, happened to lift his eyes and to gaze dreamily upon the trees and sky. When he awoke from his brief reverie, his ears had lost the thread of the book! Abashed at his worldliness and to restrain himself from such wanderings in future, he had an iron collar made for his neck, and bending his head towards the earth, chained it to his foot, never more to allow his eye to entice his soul to wander. This was legality, not holiness. It was being “bound in affliction and iron.” Fetters do not render a man holy, be they of iron or of creeds.

But thus far is only half the mischief. The spirit of the fetters is attractive unless the liberty of God's presence be enjoyed and “Christ in you” be known. Far worse follows, for a few steps further on and the brother of the chain and collar is not only greatly respected by his fellow monks, but he is also respecting himself very much! This miserable mortification, not by the Spirit, results in self-elation. Yet a few stages further, and he is exulting in visions, and has become ecstatic! A saint indeed in the eyes of thousands.

Where is Christ in all this? Ah! Where? and where is self? So large that the Lord is not to be seen. So ends the road, though the sign-post at its commencement had written thereon— “To holiness.”

Now Protestants may smile or pity, and rejoice that they are delivered from such delusions, but whatever our name, our natures are the same; self is the same, and herein lies the danger. Who dare say, that his heart is altogether free from the attractiveness of legality, or that in him there is no tendency to elation, especially when the subject is holiness?

There are many Protestants in whose souls legality and spiritual elation are combined. In their reasoning the first stage runs thus: “I am dead, therefore I must attain to what I am.” Pressing a condition of deadness upon a soul as an attainment is simply legality and leaving Christ out. It is practically telling a soul that he must realize his position before believing it. It is expecting something from self instead of faith in Christ. And a subtle and cruel way of torturing a soul it is, though neither one nor the other be intended. When the brother with the iron collar tried to be dead to the sky by means of his collar, he meant by its means to attain to a condition of deadness.

This condition of soul is analogous to the first period of the ascetic's state when he is striving after his ideal but has not reached it. Miserable and contracted, morbid and self-occupied, trying by self to be dead to self, it may be labeled “spirituality,” but it is “Romanistic.”

Some reach the elated state by this path. They do not think that they have sinned for given periods of time, and others go so far in their monastic zeal that they ignore the relations of life and treat their parents and children as dead. The Romanist or Anglican shuts himself up in a cell, and so becomes dead to duty and affection.: the others become so by either offending or ignoring those whom God has given them to win and to love. It is the spirit of the monk, but without the discomfort of the monk's cell. A thoroughly freed soul would walk as Christ walked. He would earnestly seek the good of men, he would use the world as not abusing it, thank God for all His creatures, for food and sky, and have his heart with Christ where Christ is.

We may trace an analogous series of mental workings in those who have either obtained in a crude and partial way a knowledge of Ephesian truth, or who have received the knowledge without the soul having been rendered receptive by the Holy Spirit.

It is quite possible to take up the heavenly standing of a believer in a legal way and to demand of the soul, as it were, that the truth be accepted; and when this is the case, Christ is dissociated from the doctrine, and self—notwithstanding that self is verbally allowed no place—is worked upon. It is impossible to learn Christ legally; and doctrines, separated from Christ, only wither the vitality of the soul. And the higher truth goes, the more sorrowful will be the results when it is pressed legally. A man, who has the doctrine of the heavenly standing of believers, but has not apprehended Christ where He is, will be in danger of far worse elation than a simply self-righteous person. How often we hear of the heavenly place occupied by the believer! how seldom comparatively, that it is as in Christ we are seated in the heavenly places It may be said in reply that this is taken for granted; be it so, but it is no uncommon thing for the soul to boast, or let us say, to be occupied with the standing in heaven, even to the leaving out of “in Christ.” “I am a heavenly man” may mean, I am nothing, but am in Christ in heaven; or it may mean, I am one who has attained to what others have not.

No doubt there is often a confusion between the heavenly standing of the believer, and his state in relation to that standing. The standing is unchanging, the state is just where the soul is. But a man, who thinks that he has reached a heavenly state because he has been taught his heavenly standing, makes a grave mistake. Indeed he is in imminent peril of boasting in the doctrine, or rather in himself as knowing it. When this is the case, there is a peculiar way of looking down upon other believers, a tone of soul which seems to say, “I am a superior person.” It is a chip off the old block of Pharisaism, “This people who know not the law.”

Many persons, when, a few years ago, the fact of self being dead with Christ was brought out, mistook the peace which the knowledge gave for practical holiness. They imagined that they were almost perfect because they had learned, and by grace, too, that self was to be reckoned dead. But freedom from self-occupation needs result in occupation with Christ, otherwise there will not be holiness. In a similar way persons now, who perhaps for years have known simply the forgiveness of their sins, have their eyes opened to the believer's heavenly standing, and simply because they know the standing, imagine themselves practically heavenly. It is a very great mistake indeed; and if this confusion between standing and state be allowed to remain in the soul, anything but holiness will be the result. Spiritual elation is not infrequently to be traced in such cases. A kind of ecstatic enjoyment of a character not unlike that of the monk or the nun, when they have progressed to the date condition. Such simple acts of practical Christianity as visiting

the sick, caring for the poor, and in some cases, even the gospel to sinners, are regarded as inferior occupations unsuited to the “heavenly” atmosphere. It seems to be forgotten that there are chapters iv., v., and vi., in the Ephesians, and that to be heavenly is not be a dreamer but downright practical in the home, in the relationships of life, and in Christian warfare.

Humility never advertises itself; spiritual placards are an abomination. It is utterly hateful to read a man's statement of himself, that he did not sin for twelve months and the like; and it is also melancholy indeed to hear Christians telling us how dead they are to the world, and how much they are in heaven, and perhaps pointing to different things about them as proof of what they say. There is no test more solemn than that of the Master, “By their fruits ye shall know them,” and humility is one of the first blossoms of grace in the soul.

The believer, to whom God has given for his soul an apprehension of Christ where He is, and the knowledge that Christians are seated in Christ in the heavenly places, will not wish to emulate the monks and nuns, and to read only one set of portions from the word of God. He will surely from this standpoint seek to be acquainted with the whole counsel of God. It is ever a dangerous thing when only favorite scriptures are read; it shows clearly that a mind so acting is unbalanced. God has given to us the whole of His word, and we need every verse of it, and surely none require the exhortations of scripture more than those who rejoice, and rejoice before God, in heavenly truths, as we see evidenced by the concluding chapters of the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians.

Holiness is the very yearning of divine life. God has mercifully delivered many from trying in the flesh to imitate Christ; He has shown what self is, and its judicial end in the cross of Christ, and that His people are to reckon themselves to be dead unto sin. God has done more, He has opened the minds of many to the knowledge of a risen Christ, and that to His likeness all His own shall be conformed. The path of holiness is walking as Christ walked, being Christ-like on this earth, and the really heavenly man will be known by his ways. H. P. W.

Chapter 147

Life by the Word

My Dear Brother,

I have nothing very especial on the points you speak of, save holding fast the great foundations that it is a new life communicated. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life;” only 2 Peter 1:4 is more conformity to the divine nature, as you say, though not merely attainment.

The word is the instrument as it is said, faith comes by hearing, ■κο■, report, and hearing, ■κο■ by the word of God. It is hard to say how the word merely works, save that it is God's method of the revelation of Christ, and where accompanied by the quickening power of the Spirit, it becomes thus the means of life, what is spoken of as the word communicated to the soul by the Spirit becomes life.

In Paul's case it was sight, yet revealing His Son in him, indeed the words of Christ too came to his car. The Holy Ghost gave reality in his soul to that which his senses told him of. The written (or spoken word if true) is a revelation of that which is true of Christ, and of Christ Himself, so that while it is the divine power of the Spirit by which we are quickened, it is the revelation of Christ to the soul (which) is objectively that which quickens me, what the Spirit brings to my soul, so that it is faith, faith in the report, which is the outward means, while the thing contained in the word which is life, Christ. The word in itself is merely the outward means or instrument, and by itself, though all truth be in it, produces nothing (unless to leave us without excuse).

The incorruptible seed is clearly in contrast with corruptible, or nature. But as the living Word was the carpenter's son, without the work of God in the soul, so the revelation of truth, and Christ, and grace in the written word too. His words were the expression of Himself, and the Spirit of God has given us what is needed for salvation and blessing, and also revealed Him as in glory. Each make us responsible to receive them, but to have life-giving power, the Holy Ghost must reveal what is in them. It is a comparison or allusion to natural birth, but there is a divine nature communicated, a new life, Christ our life, brought spiritually into the soul by the operation of the Holy Ghost, with the word which reveals them. God reveals His Son in us, and so we have life, Christ our life, and so morally and intelligently, by the word which reveals Him. God begets us, though it be by the word, we are born of the Spirit, the Son quickens us, the Spirit is the immediate power as in all God's works, but He is pleased to do it by the revelation of Christ by the word. By the word in James, and in 1 Peter is either meant “by” as an instrument, or what is called the instrumental dative. It is of all importance to see that a new life is communicated, that Christ becomes our life, just as we had the life of Adam in the old man, the flesh.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

Chapter 148

The Lord in Matthew 28

The sabbath-day was ended. It was the night before the first day of the week. The women were there, the sabbath over, poor things, without any assignable cause, but they loved the Lord. The hope of embalming Him would have availed little with the keepers; but love could reckon on what seemed hopeless. Man was not to roll away the stone. Pleas of unbelief might have been raised. God acted by His angel, and Jesus manifestly was not there when it was rolled away. (Compare verse 6.). “He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Angels own Him their Lord, are witnesses to His resurrection, as ministers in His weakness and suffering; alway His due and ready servants, concerned in the speedy honor of Christ and comfort of His disciples; but they cannot go beyond their message or commission. In that they speak with authority.

Verse 7. The women, with instant thankfulness, or readiness of. obedience, with fear and great joy, run to tell His disciples. The account here is very brief, as of Jesus' death, merely taking in the facts together which apply themselves to the evidence of the immediate subject.

It would seem, then, that the Lord rose before the stone was removed by the angel, who was, for the satisfaction of the disciples, and a testimony to others that His appearance, was not delusive—a wonderful testimony to that wonderful change awaiting us. Here a summary only in connection with the immediate subject is manifest. No interview with the appearance is mentioned, save that in the mountain in Galilee, where, moreover, a spiritual commission is noticed. He was seen of them forty days, and conversed with them. John gives the apostolic meeting twice in Jerusalem and at the sea of Tiberias. There are other interviews in 1 Cor. 15, where we learn, too, that He was seen by above five hundred brethren at once. Matthew was at many of these in person; and this shows how entirely their accounts are matters of inspiration, and not merely the Holy Ghost aiding or directing the memory for things which, in such cases, Matthew might naturally have been expected to mention, be does not, but simply what puts the dispensation on its own basis as to this, the Spirit so dealing by Him. The Lord had left Jerusalem, and gives them, therefore, His word in His accustomed place with them, and putting them in the new commission there in the power He had now given Him to all nations, and He with them. They were now to disciple them all the Gentiles, gathering them in the new full revealed name, and He would be with them. Hence merely what is characteristic is synoptically related: the earthquake, angel speaking, Jesus speaking, and then meeting all His disciples in Galilee. Comparing accounts, we find all the disciples in great perplexity about it, no idea of resurrection. (So John 20; Luke 24:22, 24.) Though some particulars may have been credited, no understanding or faith of the great fact.

First, then, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and probably some others—at any rate one—came to the sepulcher with spices, and to see the tomb. They found the stone rolled away. Mary Magdalene, who, in the first part, appears to have been alone, ran and told Peter and John, and they came to the sepulcher, and found it so, and returned home. The women go in, the angels address them, telling them He is risen. At this moment also Mary Magdalene seems to have been

alone outside, weeping. The angel addressed her, and then, turning round, she saw and conversed with Jesus Himself, and receives a special message to the disciples. Jesus met all the women, who got a general message to the disciples, which they delivered.

The message of the angel here is to the women, thus generally, because given in fact to the women, Mary being then outside the sepulcher, and getting a particular word. She had gone off as soon as she saw the stone rolled away, merely saying, “They have taken away the Lord,” &c., and had then seen nothing of the angels. As the women went to tell the disciples, the Lord met them, and added His personal testimony to the angels. We learn from Mark that the Lord was first seen of Mary Magdalene: Peter and John having come on Mary's account, find it so, and go home, wondering at what had happened. They appear then to have received the fact that He was risen on seeing the sepulcher, but to have seen nothing of God's mind in the scripture concerning it. Jesus had not yet opened their understanding to understand the scriptures, nor breathed the Spirit into them by which they could, though they might credit what they saw and heard from His month. Mary had returned to the sepulcher, and stood without, weeping. Then the angels appeared to them, and spoke; they do not, from John, seem to have appeared to Peter and John at all. They spoke to Mary without, she, stooping down and looking in, repeated the words used to Peter, only “I” for “we.” Others had gone with others, and she mentioned common ignorance; for then no angel seen, and no message. Now she repeats her own anxiety, being alone. All the angel had yet said was, “Why weepest thou?” Having answered, she turns, and sees Jesus, who, to the same question, adds the awakening suggestion, “Whom seekest thou?” and she makes a reply which shows the profoundest ignorance, but love withal. Jesus names her, His own loved but far wandered sheep, by name, and who so loved could be ignorant of that voice? All was told at once, and Jesus—His heart of love makes her the messenger to His brethren (strictly Jews)—her, the chief of sinners, possessed with Satan's full power, seven demons. Mary goes and tells the brethren that she had seen the Lord, and that He said these things.

The women, whoever they had been, when Mary went away the first time, go into the sepulcher, and then the angel says, “Fear not, I know that ye seek Jesus,” &c. As they went, they also meet Jesus, and received the message from Him to the disciples, and returned with it to them. Mark 16:9, compared with John, makes all plain, and shows the order, the only omitted circumstance being where the women were subsequent to Mary's going away and her returning again. They appear not to have had the energy, without love, to do anything, but to, have returned, and were blessed subsequently. Their messages then were not believed by the apostles. Meanwhile, in the course of that day, He appeared to Peter, also to the two going to Emmaus. When these came back, they found the apostles gathered, occupied with the application to Peter, but much incredulity in their minds, though Peter's testimony had weight, but no real faith in the matter. The statement of the two returned disciples did little; their testimony was not believed. Thus gathered, and brought to this point, they have Jesus Himself appearing in their midst, shut up for fear of Jews, and then, or previously at supper. Even then, till He ate, they believed not, for joy. John and Luke give the contrast of real state. For as yet they understood not the scripture, and then opened He their understanding, &c. This done, they saw the mind of God, and believed, on the authority of God's word, in the resurrection. When the two reached Emmaus, it was towards evening, and the day was far spent. After this they had seven and a half miles to return, so that it was late when they came in; and as they were speaking of these things together—I suppose at their evening

meal, Jesus appeared, and ate of the remains of that meal, the broiled fish and honeycomb; and then He spoke what is given in Luke and John. All saw, Thomas being there.

When the women went to tell the disciples, the soldiers recovered from their alarm (occasioned by the angel, earthquake, rolling away of stone, &c.) The fact being now manifestly known, and they hindered by its character from arresting the women, go to tell the chief priests what had happened. It is not said that all left the tomb, nor did it matter where they went. I observe that these chief priests are always holding a council.

There is no single inquiry of the will of God, but the wisdom of this world, to gain their ends. Their opposition to the Lord was deliberate and willful. They knew from their own guard what had happened, and if they could give but thirty pieces of silver for the Lord, as His utmost worth, they would furnish much money to evade the evidence that He was risen, and discredit Him when the need arose. They spread their report. The Lord's testimony puts us behind the scenes. The eleven went to Galilee. Here it was Peter went a fishing—active-minded Peter! They met at the mountain where the Lord had appointed, and, seeing, they worshipped Him, but some doubted. So constant and strong their unbelief—the heart of unbelief in all. Then, however, Jesus met them, and, in speaking, stated the entirely new ground on which His present commission to them tested—not Messiah's authority over the Jewish peoples whatever gathering may have been to that, but the wide-spread and universal authority of the risen Son of man, due by virtue of His death, which alone redeemed them to God; and vindicated His character, and to which He had creation's title, though thus taken as Heir of them all, as Son of God. Here, however, He speaks of authority given to Him which is as Son of man, given Him in heaven and on earth. The heathen were His inheritance. They were to go and call all nations unto the obedience of faith. Heretofore He had, as the Seed of David after the flesh, presented Himself to Israel, and was sent but to them. Now He was declared to be the Son of God with power, and the isles were to wait for His law.

There are four different commissions in the Gospel directed to each. Here it is the exaltation of Messiah to all power in heaven and earth, and the consequent commission to disciple all the Gentiles, in contrast with the mission in chapter 10. Now His exaltation, through the rejection of Him, took a wider scope, the result of Israel's rejection of Him. They were accordingly to baptize the Gentiles, not into John's or even Messiah's baptism, but into what was fully revealed by His death and resurrection—the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This was the position. and unfolded fellowship with God into which they were brought, both for God's display of Himself and the economy of grace, not Jehovah and Messiah, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, paramount and superior to all previous, and all the unfolded fullness of the Godhead, in fellowship with the glorified Lord, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in them. Mark, being more expressly the ministry of Christ, gives not the outreaching power of dispensation now opened by His death, and founded on the place of power where He was, but the new power of ministry itself, and its consequences. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature [or the whole creation]” —(compare Rom. 1; Col. 1:16-23)—though there is the ministry of the church also here.

In Luke, suitably to that Gospel, we have not the economical scope of the Gospel, or its result, but its moral subject and scope, involving withal therein Jew and Gentile alike as sinners For Luke looks at man. (Chap. 24:46, 47.) In John, as the Sonship of Jesus is the great truth, who He was in person, the authority and power of His person in mission was the thing brought forward. (Chap. 20:

21-23.) We have the authority of the Sender from His person, title, and work. It was authority delegated in grace.

Chapter 149

Letter on the Lord's Death

Dear Brethren—All exclusive points are out of place at the Lord's table: it is clear Christ's death is before us...—It was not to be done in remembrance of deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of Him— “my memory.” But the simple answer to this link-breaking out of the sentence is, that there is nothing about it in it. The Greek does not mean breaking every link with the creation, and says nothing about it; that is a simple fact. Should anyone press it as a consequence, if led by the Spirit of God, all well, and show that Christ's death involved it, if it be so, is another matter; but it is not in that sentence. I am not quite sure that I understand it, and though I am quite disposed to see a right intention, in those who taught it, for it was breaking with the world, I doubt a little that they do any more. My impression is, that their intention is right, and that they aim at an important truth, but I cannot go quite so fast as some. When He comes again and takes this earth and governs it and blesses it, it is as Himself risen, that is true: but you can hardly call this world then the new creation. “The link of life in Him with this world was broken,” but then I should be a little shy of speaking of His being linked with it at any time, though coming into it as a true man born of a woman, for the suffering of death and partaking of flesh and blood. But He says, “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.” And again, “Ye are of this world, I am not of this world; ye are from beneath, I am from above.” Yet, I repeat, I believe the object to be right (that is, that we are crucified to the world, and the world to us), at least, I am quite ready to suppose so. But I affirm positively it is not ε■ς τ■ν ■μ■ν δν■μνησιν, though it be in death He is symbolized before us; but it is Him we remember, and I doubt that the form in which it is put could be made good from scripture, and scripture is wiser than we are. But as an effect, it does imply our having died to the world; for we show forth the Lord's death till He come; but I cannot admit with this absoluteness that every Christian is, according to scripture, dead to the old creation, because his body is of the old creation: we are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. I see it held up as desirable that a man should live absolutely in the power of the Spirit, and know nothing else. But he that marries does well: what creation is that of? and he that forbids to marry does very ill. I see two things: God's part in the old creation, and yet fully recognized, marriage as at the beginning, children, amiable nature (the Lord loved the young man when He looked on him); but a power brought in wholly above and out of it. If one lives according to this, all well, it is to be desired; but to condemn the other is to condemn God. Sin has come in and spoiled it, and there is thus hindrance, care, sorrow in the flesh, that is true; but God ordered it in the beginning, and God owns what He ordered till He brings in something new. Dead to sin, to the world, to the law, that I find in scripture, but not to the old creation, and that is the place of every Christian, and he is to hold himself so; but dead to the old creation God does not say, for it is God's creation, and every creature of God is good. Live above it in its present state, all well, and better, if it be given to us; but death to the first creation, and breaking every link with it, is not true whilst we are in the body. Scripture does not say so; and scripture, I say again, is much wiser than we are. There is a new creation, and as in Christ we are of it, I think we may say the first fruits of it, and of His creatures at any rate. Καιν■ κτ■σις is a very singular expression; it is not “he is” as in English, but merely affirms its existence and character for one in Christ. But then when the scriptures say He died, it is

not to the old creation; but “He who knew no sin was made sin,” and elsewhere, “In that he died, he died unto sin once.” It is well and safe not to go beyond scripture. Fresh truths and mighty powers fill our sails, and it is well; but they may, if we trust them, and the consequences we draw, carry our minds on to rocks hidden underneath the surface. The word of God checks, or rather keeps us in the right and safe course. The first intentions may be right: but when not so kept, when one's own mind is trusted, it may run into open ungodliness—the common result of the human mind being trusted with mighty truths, or rather trusting itself with them; and in these days this has to be watched.

Chapter 150

The Lord's Supper

The apostle, guided by the Holy Ghost, seizes the opportunity to declare to us the nature and the import of this ordinance. We may notice here, that the Lord had taught it to him by an especial revelation—proof of the interest that belongs to it, and that it is a part of the Lord's mind in the entire Christian walk, to which He attaches importance in view of our moral condition, and of the state of our spiritual affections individually, as well as those of the assembly. In the joy of Christian liberty, amid the powerful effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost—of the gifts by which He manifested Himself in the assembly, the Lord's death, His broken body, was brought to mind, and, as it were, made present to faith as the basis and foundation of everything.

This act of love, this simple and solemn deed, weak and empty in appearance, preserved all its importance. The Lord's body had been offered for us! to which the Holy Ghost Himself was to bear witness, and which was to maintain all its importance in the Christian's heart, and to be the foundation and center of the edifice of the assembly. Whatever might be the power that shone forth in the assembly, the heart was brought back to this. The body of the Lord Himself had been offered, the lips of Jesus had claimed our remembrance. This moral equilibrium is very important to saints.

Power, and the exercise of gifts, do not necessarily act upon the conscience and the heart of those to whom they are committed, nor of those always who enjoy their display. And, although God is present (and when we are in a good state, that is felt), still it is a man who speaks and who acts upon others; he is prominent. In the Lord's supper the heart is brought back to a point in which it is entirely dependent, in which man is nothing, in which Christ and His love are everything, in which the heart is exercised, and the conscience remembers that it has needed cleansing, and that it has been cleansed by the work of Christ—that we depend absolutely on this grace. The affections also are in the fullest exercise. It is important to remember this. The consequences that followed forgetfulness of the import of this ordinance confirmed its importance and the Lord's earnest desire that they should take heed to it. The apostle is going to speak of the power of the Holy Ghost manifested in His gifts, and of the regulations necessary to maintain order and provide for edification where they were exercised in the assembly; but, before doing so, he places the Lord's supper as the moral center, the object of the assembly. Let us remark some of the thoughts of the Spirit in connection with this ordinance.

First, He links the affections with it in the strongest way., It was the same night on which Jesus was betrayed that He left this memorial of His sufferings and of His love. As the paschal lamb brought to mind the deliverance which the sacrifice offered in Egypt had procured for Israel, thus the Lord's supper called to mind the sacrifice of Christ. He is in the glory, the Spirit is given; but they were to remember Him. His offered body was the object before their hearts in this memorial. Take notice of the word “Remember.” It is not a Christ as He now exists, it is not the realization of what He is: this is not a remembrance—His body is now glorified. It is a remembrance of what He was on the cross. It is a body slain, and blood shed, not a glorified body. It is remembered, though

by those who are now united to Him in the glory into which He is entered. As risen and associated with Him in glory, they look back to that blessed work of love, and His love in it which gave them a place there. They drank also of the cup in remembrance of Him. In a word, it is Christ looked at as dead: there is not such a Christ now.

It is the remembrance of Christ Himself. It is that which attaches to Himself; it is not only the value of His sacrifice, but attachment to Himself, the remembrance of Himself. The apostle then shows us, if it is a dead Christ, Who it is that died. Impossible to find two words, the bringing together of which has so important a meaning, the death of the Lord. How many things are comprised in that He who is called the Lord had died! What love! what purposes! what efficacy! what results! The Lord Himself gave Himself up for us. We celebrate His death. At the same time it is the end of God's relations with the world on the ground of man's responsibility, except the judgment. This death has broken every link—has proved the impossibility of any. We show forth this death until the rejected Lord shall return to establish new bonds of association by receiving us to Himself to have part in them. It is this which we proclaim in the ordinance when we keep it. Besides this, it is in itself a declaration that the blood on which the new covenant is founded has been already shed; it was established in this blood. I do not go beyond that which the passage presents. The object of the Spirit of God here is to set before us, not the efficacy of the death of Christ, but that which attaches the heart to Him in remembering His death, and the meaning of the ordinance itself. It is a dead, betrayed, Christ whom we remember. The offered body was, as it were, before their eyes at this supper. The shed blood of the Savior claimed the affections of their heart for Him. They were guilty of despising those precious things, if they took part in the supper unworthily. The Lord Himself fixed our thoughts there in this ordinance, and in the most affecting way, at the very moment of His betrayal.

But if Christ attracted the heart thus to fix its attention there, discipline was also solemnly exercised in connection with this ordinance. If they despised the broken body and the blood of the Lord by taking part in it lightly, chastisement was inflicted. Many had become sick and weak, and many were fallen asleep, that is, had died. It is not the being worthy to partake that is spoken of, but the partaking in an unworthy manner. Every Christian, unless some sin had excluded him, was worthy to partake because he was a Christian. But a Christian might come to it without judging himself, or appreciating as he ought that which the supper brought to his mind, and which Christ had connected with it. He did not discern the Lord's body; and he did not discern—did not judge—the evil in himself. God cannot leave us thus careless. If the believer judges himself, the Lord will not judge him; if we do not judge ourselves, the Lord judges; but when the Christian is judged, he is chastened of the Lord that he may not be condemned with the world.

The government of God is in the hands of the Lord who judges His own house: an important and too much forgotten truth. No doubt the result of all is according to the counsels of God, who displays in it all His wisdom, His patience, and the righteousness of His ways; but this government is real. He desires the good of His people in the end; but He will have holiness, a heart whose condition answers to that which He has revealed (and He has revealed Himself), a walk which is its expression. The normal state of a Christian is communion according to the power of that which has been revealed. Is there failure in this? Communion is lost, and with it the power to glorify God, a power found nowhere else. But if one judges oneself, there is restoration; the heart being cleansed from the evil by judging it, communion is restored. If one does not judge oneself, God

must interpose and correct and cleanse us by discipline—discipline which may even be unto death. (See Job 33; 36 John 5:16; James 5:14, 15.)

There are yet one or two remarks to be made. To “judge” oneself is not the same word as to be “judged” of the Lord. It is the same that is used in chapter 11:29, “discerning the Lord's body.” Thus; what we have to do is not only to judge an evil committed, but to discern one's condition as it is manifested in the light—even as God Himself is in the light—by walking in it. This prevents our falling into evil either in act or thought. But if we have fallen, it is not enough to judge the action; it is ourselves we must judge, and the state of heart, the tendency, the neglect, which occasioned our falling into the evil—in a word, that which is not communion with God, or that which hinders it. It was thus the Lord dealt with Peter. He did not reproach him for his fault, He judged its root.

Moreover the assembly ought to have power to discern these things. God acts in this way, as we have seen in Job; but the saints have the mind of Christ by the Spirit of Christ, and ought to discern their own condition.

The foundation and center of all this is the position in which we stand towards Christ in the Lord's supper, as the visible center of communion and the expression of His death; in which sin, all sin, is judged. Now we are in connection with this holy judgment of sin as our portion. We cannot mingle the death of Christ with sin. It is, as to its nature and efficacy, of which the full result will in the end be manifested, the total putting away of sin. It is the divine negation of sin. He died to sin, and that in love to us. It is the absolute holiness of God made sensible and expressed to us in that which took place with regard to sin. It is absolute devotedness to God for His glory in this respect. To bring sin or carelessness into it is to profane the death of Christ, who died rather than allow sin to subsist before God. We cannot be condemned with the world, because He has died and has put away sin for us; but to bring sin to that which represents this very death in which He suffered for sin is a thing which cannot be borne. God vindicates that which is due to the holiness and the love of a Christ who gave up His life to put away sin. One cannot say, I will not go to the table (that is, I will accept the sin and give up the confession of the value of that death). We examine ourselves, and we go; we re-establish the rights of His death in our conscience, for all is pardoned and expiated as to guilt, and we go to acknowledge these rights as the proof of infinite grace.

The world is condemned. Sin in the Christian is judged, it escapes neither the eye nor the judgment of God. He never permits it; He cleanses the believer from it by chastening him, although He does not condemn, because Christ has borne his sins, and been made sin for him. The death of Christ forms then the center of communion in the assembly, and the touchstone of conscience, and that, with respect to the assembly, in the Lord's supper.

Notes on Matthew 16-17

Chapter 16. We arrive at that part of the Gospel where other ways of God, other manifestations of His character and of His glory, are substituted for Judaism. The kingdom and the form that it would take have been already revealed to us in chapter 13. However, though the form announced in the parables was to be new, the kingdom itself was in view since the time of John the Baptist, though it could not be established then, Jesus being rejected. Purposes of God, important in, very different respects, were to be accomplished through the death of the Lord. And although the judgment of Israel had been plainly declared, and the new condition of the kingdom depicted in the parables of chapter 13, the power and the patient grace of the Lord were manifested in the midst of the people, up to the close of chapter 15. But now all is terminated: the church and the kingdom of glory take the place of an Emmanuel Messiah in the midst of the people. The unbelief of the heads of the nation is manifested in their request for a sign from heaven; signs enough had been given. It was not genuine faith, and the Lord reproves them and goes away. They knew well enough how to observe the signs of the weather that was coming; how was it then that they did not see the far clearer signs of Israel's condition—signs which were precursors of the judgment of God? It was nothing but hypocrisy: they should only have the sign of Jonas; the death and the resurrection of Jesus bringing the judgment, the terrible punishment of the nation, as a natural and necessary consequence of the scornful rejection of their Messiah come in grace.

The disciples themselves participate, not in the want of sincerity, but at least in the want of intelligence, of the Jews. Their faith understood no more than that of the Jews did the power that had manifested itself daily before their eyes. Jesus was to find nowhere a heart that understood Him. This isolation is one of the most striking features of the ordinary life of the Savior, a Man of sorrows in this world. The Lord introduces what was going to be substituted for the kingdom in Israel by a question destined to bring out the doctrine of His person, the first foundation of everything recognized by faith. “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” This is the character assumed by the One in whom God was proving men according to His own thoughts and according to His counsels. The heir of all the glory which belonged to man according to the determinate counsel of God taking His place among men here below, and before God the representation of the race, a race then accepted by Him, although He associated Himself with all their miseries, the true heir and representative of the race alone perfect before God.

Psa. 8; 80:17, and Dan. 7 represent Him thus to us in the Old Testament according to the thoughts of God. Men, struck by His miracles and His walk, had their opinions; faith, through the revelation of God, acknowledges His person. Peter, answering the question addressed to all, proclaims this truth, the foundation of every hope, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It is worth while saying a word as to the character of the great apostle.

We know what was the burning ardor of this man, an ardor which placed him in difficulties from which his moral power could not succeed in extricating him and which even brought him, when God permitted it for his good, to deny his Savior and his Master. So far as he was sustained by

human strength, this ardor was a continual snare; but under God's hand, when grace took hold of the vessel, he became the instrument of the most blessed activity. I find this instructive difference; human energy cannot sustain the trials of faith. It may bring us into circumstances where these trials are found, but the strength of man's will cannot make us triumph. If the power of God is there, we triumph over temptation; the flesh which has brought us into it cannot do so. Nevertheless God can make use of the vessel which He has formed; then the power of God is there to hold us up, sheltered from evil by His arms. Now what I desire to remark here is that God makes use of the vessel for His glory; whilst, when the vessel alone and the energy which is in it are at work, it fails in time of trial, and the energy, which God makes use of as an instrument, brings us, when it acts alone, into temptation, in which it cannot cause us to triumph. Sincerity and zeal in that case only cause us to fall because there is too much confidence in ourselves. Here it is the ardent confession of what the Father Himself had revealed to Peter. There are two parts in this confession—Jesus is the Christ, that is what the Jews denied. This was the first thing to be acknowledged in Jesus. He was the One who had been promised to the fathers and to Israel; but, further, He was of the fullness of that eternal Godhead, in which was the power of life; “the Son of the living God.” Resurrection was the proof of it in the very place where death had entered. Thus, at the commencement of the Epistle to the Romans, He is of the seed of David according to the flesh, and marked out Son of God in power by resurrection of the dead. The promises of God were thus not only accomplished in His person, but the person in whom they were accomplished was Son of God in a power of life which is in God only; not only Son of God born into this world according to Psa. 2—Nathaniel had acknowledged that—but Son of the living God as to His person. Up to that time this had not been acknowledged; the Father had revealed it to Peter, the Father in heaven had made known to him His Son upon earth.

At the same time the Lord also shows His authority by giving to Peter a name in accordance with the confession that he had just made, with the truth which (while establishing His divine person, His relationship with the Father, and that as a man) laid the firm foundation of what was above all promises, of what had never been promised of the new thing, the church of the living God. Against this power of life in the person of the Son, the might of Satan, who had the empire of death, could not prevail. It is not here the death and the resurrection of Jesus, or His work, and the proof by this power of life that He was the Son of God in power; it is the essential character of His person revealed by the Father to Simon Bar-jona. Christ also says something to Him. As the Father had revealed the true character of Jesus to Simon, Jesus also (it is thus that we must take the sentence) gave him a name and a position. His person as Son of the living God was the foundation of the church called to have its true place in heaven, for it is in this character that it is presented to us here. It is Christ who builds, and up to this day the building is not yet completed. What we have here is not what Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 3. He, Paul, had laid the foundation of that house; others brought materials, each one on his own responsibility, so that wood, stubble, hay, were to be found in the building. That was what has been built under human responsibility upon the earth. What we have here is found again in 1 Peter 2:4, 5, where there is no human architect, but where living stones come and are builded together into a spiritual building. The same thing is found again in Eph. 2:20, 21. It is Christ who builds a spiritual house, and the power of Satan could not touch it. It is the assembly which Christ builds for heaven and for eternity.

But there was yet another thing. The Lord, Master of all, gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. He receives from Christ authority to administer the kingdom upon earth, and whatever he might decree here below would be sanctioned. It is no question, remark well, of keys of the church; one does not build with keys. Further, although Simon may receive the name of Peter, a testimony to his personal faith, which linked him with the Rock, and an acknowledgment of the fact, that like a stone in its nature he belonged to the Rock; nevertheless here he does nothing at all, nor has he any authority, in the church. Christ Himself builds, “I will build my church.” No one else has any part in this. Peter himself acknowledges it in his epistle (1 Peter 2:4, 5), by an evident allusion to this passage; the living stones come to the “living Stone.” The administration of the kingdom of heaven is confided to him. The keys of that kingdom are confided to him. For, I repeat, no such thing exists as keys of the church. Christ builds it, that is all. Now one can see well in the Acts that Simon Peter was the chief instrument of God in the work; and no true Christian doubts that what he established by his apostolic authority, with the sanction of the Lord, is from heaven. We must further remark that the only succession in that authority is found in two or three gathered in the name of the Lord. (Matt. 18:17-20.) Christianity has accepted with strange facility the idea that there are keys for the church, an idea which is nowhere found in the word. Then, this error being once admitted, another was accepted, namely, that the church and the kingdom of heaven are the same thing, an idea also which has no foundation in the word. The passage that we are considering clearly shows that they are two distinct things. Christ does not build a kingdom, He is the king of it; whether as such He be either hidden or manifested. Further, a kingdom is neither a bride nor a body, as the church is, and the reader must remark, that since it is here Christ who builds, He certainly places none but true living stones in the house. At most there is a certain analogy in regard to historical limits and circumstances, with the house of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 3 in which were found hay and stubble, the building in that case being left to the responsibility of mall. What is positive is that in no case are the church and the kingdom the same thing. Further, to have confounded the church, which Christ alone builds, and which is not yet completed, with the house which Paul founded upon earth, is one of the origins of the Romish system, and of the high church, wherever it may be.

The church then, so far as built by Christ, is the kingdom of the heavens replacing the Christ coming to the Jewish people according to promise, and the disciples receive the peremptory command not to announce henceforth Jesus as the Christ. On the other side the Lord from that time begins to make known to them that He was to be rejected, to suffer and rise. Peter cannot receive such a declaration. We see here how one may receive from God a revelation of the truth and be found in a practical state below the effect of this truth on the life. Peter had been taught by God Himself touching a truth which necessarily brought on the cross. For this his flesh was not at all prepared; further he who had just been called blessed by the Savior is now denounced as doing the work and as having the thoughts of Satan. As a natural affection there was nothing to blame; but it was the mind of the flesh, not of God. It is a solemn thought for us that one may possess a truth as really taught of God and be opposed to the consequences which flow from it in the life. In this case the flesh is not judged according to the measure of the truth known, so that the divine effect of this truth should be produced in us. But the Lord, always perfect, puts Himself under the yoke of what was absolutely necessary to realize that which was worthy of God-redemption. The things which are in the world, its ease and its glory, are not of the Father. Man is carnal; Peter savored what was of man. It is terrible to see that it suffices to say the things which are of man to

show what was evil and opposed to God. It is only the cross which is truly worthy of God. Christ always walked in obedience and in the love of the Father, which were fully manifested in Him. Also the earth was for Him a desert land, dry and without water. He savored always and perfectly the things which were of God; but this brought on the cross in this world. Also each of us who would enjoy the blessing of God must take up his cross and follow Christ. If one spares himself, one spares flesh; one loses Christ so much and finds oneself in opposition to God. He that loses his life for the love of Christ will have it with joy when all is according to God. The soul is not to satisfy vanity and carnal selfishness; it is gained forever in tasting the things of God: such is what the cross means in a world opposed to God in all that He is.

There is besides more than this moral fact; there are positive ways of God. If the Son of man is actually rejected by the world, as presenting perfectly the ways and the character of God in its midst, the time comes when God will make valid the lights of Him who was faithful, and when He will manifest it in the glory which is due and belongs to Him. The Son of man will come in the glory of His Father; not in the humiliation of the obedience in which His moral perfection was manifested, and in which, at His own cost, He perfectly glorified God, but (for He is Son of the living God) in the glory of His Father, and with His angels, then He will render to each according to His conduct.

This gives room for the manifestation of the kingdom such as it will be manifested when the Son of man will come in His glory. It is what the transfiguration meant as shown in chapter 17. Chapter 16 had replaced Israel and the Christ in Israel by the church and the kingdom of the heavens, by a Christ put to death and risen, basis of the establishment of God's counsels in divine righteousness, man being thus placed in a position entirely new.

Chapter 17 replaces the transitory system of the law and of the Christian in Israel by the kingdom of glory and by the order of things flowing from it. The mountain of transfiguration is not Horeb. It is no longer the first Adam put to the proof by a law, perfect role of what ought to be in this fallen world. It is the second Adam seen in the result of the trial He had undergone; He, the victorious Redeemer who could bring other men to the same glory; He the head of all, perfectly approved by the Father; a Man in whom He found all His good pleasure; His Son, His well-beloved seen in glory, and Moses and Elias with Him. And these two men represent the law and prophecy in its highest order, for Elijah was not a prophet at a time when the law of God was recognized. He was in the midst of apostate Israel, as Moses in the midst of a captive people. Elijah returned to Horeb to denounce this apostasy and the refusal of the testimony of God, whatever had been His patience; for in fact nothing was then left but the election of grace, and Elijah went up to heaven after having displayed his grief on Horeb. Elisha was the prophet of resurrection, having returned across the Jordan which Elijah had crossed to go up to heaven. People have wished to see in this the living changed and the dead raised, and I have no objection. In fact, these two classes will be with the Lord in the glory of the kingdom. Still I do not see that this is the chief object of the Spirit, but rather the putting aside of the law and the prophets, of the law and the patience of God towards Israel. They now give place to the Son Himself, to God's well-beloved, whilst they bear witness to Him.

Something is still left to be remarked. A bright cloud comes and envelopes them: it was the Shekinah of glory. The cloud had led Israel and filled the tabernacle with the glory of God, in such

a way that the sacrificing priests could not stay there for their service: the word used here is the same as that used in the Septuagint when the cloud filled the tabernacle. It was in the cloud that Jehovah came to speak with Moses at the door of the tabernacle which he had set up outside the camp. Peter calls it “the excellent glory.” (2 Peter 1:17, 18.) What is presented to us here, however, is the glory of the kingdom in which Jesus is recognized by the Father as Son. The disciples do not enter into the cloud like Moses and Elias, as takes place, I suppose, in Luke 9:34. That is to say, the heavenly part, the Father's house, is not found in Matthew, the glory indeed is, and the Son come in glory with His own, but not the dwelling near the Father on high: here we are in relation with heaven, but not in heaven.

These words, “hear him,” present to us the voice of the Son as the only one which ought to be heard henceforth. Not that Moses and Elias had not preached the word of God, but the order of things which they represent is past; and the words of the Son revealing the Father are those which we have to listen to. The law and the prophets have given testimony to the Savior Himself, as it is said; but they addressed themselves to man in the flesh. Now it is the Son of man after death, raised and glorified: redemption being accomplished, the counsels of God in grace are revealed. The former witnesses disappear and Jesus remains alone: Son of God to whom the Father gives testimony, in whom the Father reveals Himself. Peter, like so many Christians, would have wished to mingle the three, but such is not the instruction of the Father. However, until Christ was raised, this new testimony had no place, nor cause of existence. (Ver. 9.)

The difficulty suggested by the opinion drawn from Malachi by the scribes, the last testimony given, (namely, that Elias was to come before the glorious day of the Lord) presents itself to the disciples. The Lord confirms this testimony and speaks of it as a thing which was to come to pass. He comes in the first place; the idea is true, and he will restore all things. The prophecy of Malachi shall be accomplished, but as Jesus came to suffer before His glory, so too there had come one to go before His face, and he had had to be rejected like Him whom He announced. Then the disciples understood that He spoke of John the Baptist, come before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elias. For what concerned the kingdom all in fact was only provisional. The king was there indeed, the Son of God Himself, but for a greater work even than establishing the kingdom: to save sinners and glorify God Himself by His death. To establish the kingdom He will return; but then all was prepared for faith to have its foundation, and for man to be without excuse; it was for that reason that the Lord could say, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come” (chap. 10:23), although He was there. However, His establishment as king has been deferred, the last half-week of Daniel still remains unaccomplished, and even the whole week, for unbelief; Christ is seated at the right hand of God till His enemies be set as the footstool of His feet, having by Himself purified our sins, gathering, as we know, His co-heirs according to the counsels of God, co-heirs given to Him before the foundation of the world.

Afterward we find here, on our way, that which, without arresting the accomplishment of the counsels of God, made impossible all idea of the establishment on earth of His power, such as it was then manifesting itself. The disciples themselves did not know how to profit by the faith of this power to make it effectual; the power of Satan was in the world, whether directly or indirectly. The Lord was there to remove all the effect of this power and the consequences of sin. He had bound the strong man. A case of this power of evil presents itself to His disciples, and they cannot make use of the Lord's power to subdue it. It was then useless to continue to exercise this in the world if

His disciples themselves did not know how to profit by it. And the Lord says, “How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?” However, as long as the power is there, Jesus, unchangeable in His faithful goodness, exercises it in grace. “Bring thy son hither.” Great consolation for us! If the faith of all fails, the Lord's goodness never is lacking. We can count on His power and on His grace, as always sure and indefeasible till all is finished. However the want of faith in His own is the sign that the patience of God is on the point of finding no more room for its exercise; the power of evil brought the Lord to this point; the practical unbelief of His own drives Him away; it puts an end to these ways, in regard to which unbelief manifests itself.

Two great principles are laid down by the Lord in reply to the question of His disciples. First, faith can do everything, according to the willed action of God at the moment of its exercise; but to overcome the enemy where he shows his strength specially, a life of retirement is needed, which, in the consciousness of the strife in which we are engaged, refers to the presence of God, and places itself before Him in abasement of the flesh, and in entire confidence. This confidence displays itself in dependence on Him, owned in order to seek divine action. The Lord (ver. 22) returns to His instructions with regard to His rejection and His crucifixion. Delivered up to men, He must be put to death, and He must rise again. The disciples entirely ignorant of salvation are deeply pained by it, but at the end of the chapter the Lord places His disciples, at least Peter, and according to His grace all of us, in the same relation with His Father as that in which He was Himself, whilst at the same time manifesting the divinity of His person. It is one of the most torching expositions of what was about to happen through the change that His work would produce—the revelation of a position always true as to His person, true as to His relationships, having become man before God, but which was about to be demonstrated in a glorious manner by His resurrection. At the same time He introduces His own beforehand into His own position, now that He was about to give up the kingdom in Israel, as far as it belonged to Him there; not that He had just announced to His disciples His death and resurrection as necessary for introducing them into greater blessings than those which they enjoyed through His presence.

Peter wished that He should be considered a good Jew; when the tribute collectors asked Peter if his Master paid the didrachma (owing by the Jews for the service of the temple), the disciple answered, Yes. When Peter returns, the Lord anticipates him, knowing, without having been there, all that had passed. He asks him if it is from their children or from strangers that the kings of the earth take tribute or taxes. Peter answers, From strangers. “Then,” said the Lord, “the children are free.” He and Peter, children of the great king of the temple, were not liable to pay; but, adds the Lord, “that we may not offend them, go thou to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a stater [two didrachmas].” Then the One who not only knows everything, but who disposes of creation with equal power and knowledge, places Peter afresh in the same position as Himself: “That take and give unto them for Me and thee.” Peter therefore is also a son of the great king of the temple. At the same moment in which the Lord shows that He knows everything divinely, and that He disposes of everything as Master of the creation, He places Peter in the same relationship as Himself with Jehovah. He submits to the prescription of Judaism in order not to stumble the Jews. But He and Peter are really exempt, as sons of the great king. What perfect grace! At the very moment in which He must give up His relationship with the unfaithful people, He introduces those who follow Him into a far more intimate relationship with the God of Israel, and at the same time with Himself. He is Son,

being man, and His own are with Him in the same blessed relationship.

Chapter 152

Notes on Matthew 18

The three chapters, 18,19, and 20, up to the end of verse 28, form a subdivision of our Gospel. They show us from the Savior Himself the principles that ought to characterize the disciples in the new order of things on which they were entering—principles of life and conduct, individual and collective. Nature, as far as established of God, is owned; but the state of the heart is sounded, grace and the cross characterizing all the new system. The first principles enjoined by God in the Christian order are humility and simplicity.

The disciples, as usual, wished to have a good position in the kingdom, each for himself, this time, however, more in relation with moral character, with qualities. The Lord's answer is limited to calling a child, and placing him in the midst of His disciples, as an example of the spirit which ought to characterize them: he who resembled that little child should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The child pretended to nothing, and passed for nothing in the eyes of the world. He who was nothing in his own eyes should, be great in God's eyes. Whoever should receive a little child in the name of Jesus had entered into His thought—into the estimate that He had of the world, and of the things that were in it. As to the principles of his conduct, he received Jesus Himself, acting upon the principles which governed Him. But, further, should there be in the child faith in Jesus, then, whoever should cause him to stumble in the way of the Lord, or should put an obstacle in the way, so that he should not follow Him, was fastening a millstone around his own neck to drown himself; and, worse still, there were stumbling-blocks in the world, but woe to him who should place them before the feet of others. The question between man and God was entirely laid down. They were either for or against Him. Neither was it any longer a question of a captivity in Babylon, of a governmental chastisement, however severe it might be, but of being finally cast into hell; it would be better to lose the best of one's members than to find oneself there.

But the special principle of the ways of God which were then being manifested was grace. The Son of man had come to save that which was lost—a testimony of immense range! It was no longer the accomplishment of the promises made to Israel, nor the Messiah, as Head of the kingdom, expected by that people, and reigning in their midst, but a Savior, Son of man, but of man lost without Him. Man was lost. The difference between the Jew and the Gentile disappeared before the total ruin which was common to them, and before the salvation which was coming in His person. According to this spirit of grace, it was unsuitable to despise even the least important of human beings. Salvation was there, and the little child was of value in the eyes of God. God, who was giving His Son for the lost, took account of children. He took an interest in the happiness of men, and the child was not the least part of it. The work of Christ was available for them; He had come to save that which was lost. It is no question here of bearing the sins of the guilty, but of the general principle of the coming of the Savior. “Lost” speaks of our condition; “guilty,” of what we have done: we are all lost together, every one will give account of what he has done in the body. Judgment relates to this latter point; bearing the sins of many does also; but lost is the condition common to all. Now children under the benefit of the work of Christ are accepted of God; “their angels continually behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,” said the Lord: a comforting

passage, which gives us the happy assurance that children

The Lord uses the image of the shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, as in the case of other sinners. It is a question here, not of bearing sins, but of saving the lost. As to the condition of man, all are together lost; children, as a condition before God, are the objects of His love; through the work of Christ they can see His face. The Lord does not go further than the fact of their position, through the work that He has done according to grace. Small, and despised by men (by the learned, great in their own eyes, but who are, after all, of this world), God set great value on them. They had not yet learned the spirit of the age: evil itself, in them, had not developed itself before the eyes of God: there was simplicity and trust, so that, as a condition, they were a model. Nevertheless the work of Christ is laid down as the foundation of all. It is not man in his pretensions, it is God in His grace, that we have before us.

The same principle of grace (ver. 15) applies to the Christian walk in regard to wrongs which may have been done to some one. Only what we have just been looking at spoke of what concerned the individual and sin before God. In what we are about to examine, we find our relations one with another, and along with that the assembly and discipline.

In what precedes we have seen what must characterize the individual and the counsel of the Lord with regard to the evil which would exist in the individual himself. We have seen that man ought to be like a little child, and that, having to do with God Himself in the light, evil should be intolerable to him. He must put it away at all cost. With others evil is not allowed, but the Christian must act in grace. He warns his brother, if the latter has done him a wrong, then takes two or three witnesses with him, in order that the facts may be confirmed, and that it may not be mere personal recrimination without proofs, if he does not yield to them. In this case the complainant will tell all to the assembly, and the witnesses are there; and if the one who has done the wrong does not listen to the assembly, the one who has suffered is free to regard him as a stranger to all common privileges. It is no question here of the discipline of the assembly. It may be that the one who has done the wrong deserves to be put out, but what the Lord regulates here is the conduct of the individual who has suffered the wrong. The first object is to gain the guilty brother. If one cannot do this, one must no longer act of one's own accord as judge of one's own cause. The facts must be confirmed, as well as the perverse will of the individual, by others who have no interest, in carrying their own views; then the assembly intervenes with its authority.

Here we are entirely upon new ground. It is not a question of Jehovah's patience in grace with His people on the earth, but of the conduct of those who have part in the new privileges which flow from the new position taken by the Son of man. Important principles are also brought out. Authority resides in the assembly, the authority to bind and to loose. The true apostolic succession is in the two or three met in the name of Jesus. It is not in individual successors, either of Peter or of the other apostles, but in the assembly, that is found the spiritual authority sanctioned by heaven. Let the wisdom of an apostle, if there is one, guide them; it is nonetheless the assembly which judges as a last resource. It is the assembly that must be listened to. In it is found judicial authority—the power of binding and of loosing, and the reason for this is given, namely, that, where two or three are met in the name of Christ, He Himself is there. The same principle applies to the requests one presents to God. Where two or three agree to ask a thing, it is granted. It is not individual will, nor a purely personal desire. The two or three being met in the name of Jesus, Jesus is there. The

request is the fruit of a spiritual agreement, and God answers the request. The value of Christ and the thought of the Spirit are found there.

This position of the two or three, and the relationship in which grace has placed them in virtue of the name and presence of Jesus, is evidently of all importance. The privilege which was given to Peter to establish the kingdom upon earth, falls as a heritage to the two or three truly gathered to the name of Jesus. There, and there only, is the divine sanction put upon what is done on earth. God can no doubt sanction and guide an individual, but an individual has not the authority which is conferred upon the two or three thus gathered. The promise made to the prayer of the two or three thus gathered to the name of Jesus, and agreed as to what they wish to ask, is also infinitely precious. Thus placed, Christians dispose of the power of God. It is a question of the things to which the Spirit of God leads their thoughts by common agreement. Now, for a soul which is sincere, and which seeks only the will of God, to be assured of God's power being employed with that object is a great favor. In what a blessed manner this associates us with divine activity in love in the work that this love wishes to do on earth! The basis on which this favor is confirmed to us is equally precious. Jesus Himself is present where two or three ere gathered to His name. What encouragement! Now that He is in heaven, absent bodily, He is Himself present spiritually with those who trust in Him here below. What an immense privilege it is to feel that, until the Lord Jesus come to take us to Himself, we may count on His presence in our midst when we gather to His name!

The remainder of the chapter (ver. 21) presents to us the spirit in which a Christian must act with regard to the one who may have offended him. It is no longer a question here of the way traced higher up, if he refuse to acknowledge his wrong, but of the disposition of the Christian to forgive it him, even if he should often repeat it. The Christian should always forgive—should never get weary of showing grace towards the one that may have offended him, for a man might acknowledge his wrong, and yet repeat it. Ought this always to continue, and the Christian always to be ready to pardon? Yes, we must always act in grace. God has pardoned us much more. In Luke 18 the repentance of the one who has offended his brother is supposed. Here the principle is that forgiveness—such a case occurring—must always be granted. It is the Christian spirit which is established. I do not doubt, although the principle may be universally established as a Christian principle, that allusion is made here to what happened to the Jews. God, in His ways with the nation, having pardoned them the crucifixion of His Son, they would not have grace shown towards the Gentiles, and were placed in consequence under discipline, under punishment, until they shall have paid the last farthing. It is not a question of expiation, nor of an individual, but of the nation and of the government of God.

Notes on Matthew 19

Next the Pharisees raise the question of marriage, which gives the Lord occasion to lay down some principles as the basis of natural relationships, and of grace in the Christian; then, at the same time, to bring out man's true moral state according to nature; and, finally, the consequences and the principle of devotedness according to grace.

That which God ordered in the beginning is strictly maintained. God created man, male and female; he united the two to be but one flesh, and this union is indissoluble according to God. Sin may break the bond, but divorce is totally forbidden under any condition, but that of the fact by which the bond is thus already broken. It is God who has formed this link; man has no right to break it. Since then a power was come to work in man, outside and above nature, which can put him outside natural relationships, it can take and endow him with energy, in order to keep him, apart from those relationships, for the service of the kingdom. The relationship of marriage is fully recognized, its holiness, its indissolubility; but God has taken possession of man, so that he might be for Him. In His creation, that is, God has made marriage; but the Holy Ghost, acting in power, appropriates to Himself a man, who, from that time, recognizes marriage, and yet does not marry for love of the kingdom of God.

Next (ver. 18) we have nature viewed on its beautiful side: little children, and a young man of charming character. In the Gospel of Mark we read, “Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him;” but his heart had to be put to the proof. Little children, with whom malice, falsehood, and the spirit of the world were not yet in action, furnished the model of what was suitable to the kingdom of heaven; the root of evil, no doubt, was there, but it was the creature in its simplicity and confidence, things which the world despised, and not will, bearing fruits of wickedness and corruption. Thus their character, being such, served as a model. The difference between the amiability of nature and the state of the heart before God, was to be shown in the case of the young man. Irreproachable in his conduct, be sought the Teacher, who appeared to his conscience able to give the most excellent directions for well doing. He comes with the thought that there is goodness in man, and in his eyes goodness was manifested more in Jesus than anywhere else. He seeks His counsel as to how to gain eternal life by his doings. He addresses the Lord as a man, a Rabbi, attracted nevertheless by what he had seen in Him. He calls Him good. The Lord stops him short, “‘One only is good.” Now the young man did not know Him as such. He had not asked what must be done to be saved, but to have eternal life. The Lord reminds him of the commandments, the rule for the man who wishes to have life through the law: “This do, and thou shalt live.”

Now the young man did not know himself, nor what the law of God was in its holiness. He wanted to do in order to gain eternal life. The Lord does not speak of eternal life; He takes the young man on the ground of the law, which promised life to those who fulfilled it. The young man, irreproachable in his conduct, like Saul, and not knowing the spirituality of the law, replies that he has kept the law in everything the Savior speaks of. What lacked he yet? If he would be perfect, he

must sell that he had, and follow Jesus. The state of his soul is at once made manifest. The heart of the man, irreproachable in his morals, was under the yoke of attachment to what he possessed. He leaves the Lord sorrowful, his heart having been shown out in the light which poor human nature can never endure. Nature, however amiable it may be in its character, is morally entirely at a distance from God. Here is an amiable young man, seeking to do well, showing what is called the best dispositions, with the means to do a great deal of good, as soon as the light comes, convicted of being under the dominion of an idol—of preferring his ease and his riches to the One whom he knew to be good, to whom he had come to seek direction as to the One who could best direct him. His heart was entirely possessed by evil, by an idol.

The Lord had already judged man, when declaring that none was good save God Himself; nevertheless, He goes still farther. The disciples, astonished at such a result, and at that which the Lord had said about riches, which, in the eyes of a Jew, were the sign of the favor of God, and which, at all events, furnished the opportunity for doing good works, cry out, “Who, then, can be saved?” If none were good, and if good dispositions, with the means of doing good, were worth nothing, if these means were rather a hindrance, who could be saved? The Savior's answer is categorical. If it was a question of man, no one. As far as man is concerned, it is impossible; good is not in him; he is the slave of evil by his will and his lusts. But God is above evil—He can save. It is evident that we are on an entirely new ground—on the ground, not of a law which pats to the proof, but of the truth itself, which, while magnifying what is created by God, declares the entire moral ruin of man. God can save. This is the only resource. This is the fundamental truth as to the natural man. Now let us see what is the effect and the principle of grace, where it acted, and where men had left all to fellow the Lord.

The apostles had done what the Lord had invited the young man to do; they had left all, and followed Jesus. What should they receive The Lord answers by turning their eyes towards the kingdom established in glory. They would be on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The Son of David, the Son of man, seated on the throne of His glory, would have His princes over the twelve tribes, judging them, and themselves also seated on thrones. But He will be Son of man, and will have taken out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; then princes shall rule in judgment. (Isa. 32)

And not only the apostles, but everyone that had forsaken that which nature loves, which God Himself owns in its place; everyone who should renounce himself for Christ, renouncing also everything that was dear to him, should have an hundredfold in reward, and inherit eternal life. It is not a question of the special position of Israel, as in the case of the twelve companions of Christ at the time of His humiliation in Israel but at all times, in every place, he who should lose the present life for His name's sake, should receive an hundredfold, and eternal life. This is the principle, for we have already an hundredfold down here, and afterward everlasting life. The Lord says here, “eternal life;” to the young man he only said, “Thou shalt enter into life;” for the law had no formal promise of eternal life, it only said, “This do, and thou shalt live.” Life and incorruptibility have been brought to light through the gospel. God had promised it before the world began, but in due times manifested His word through the preaching of the apostle. (Titus 1:2, 8.) Eternal life is twice mentioned in the Old Testament (Psa. 133; Dan. 12), but the two passages refer to the millennium. No doubt there were facts, such as those of Enoch, of Elijah, and passages like Psa. 16, which gave ground for that belief which the Pharisees had rightly received. The Sadducees had known

neither the scriptures nor the power of God. But the passage which the Savior quotes shows how obscurely this doctrine was revealed, save for a spiritual eye. Christ was the eternal life come down from heaven. (1 John 1) With Him, and specially after His death, it was fully manifested. This already takes place here; one gives up the good things of life here below, oneself; one receives an hundredfold, and inherits eternal life. When He says, inherits, He turns our eye towards that which is properly eternal. I have already said one may have an hundredfold here below, even with persecutions, as Mark says; but then the inheritance surely is not limited to this world, and the eternal life, although we possess it already down here, belongs to another world, and never ends. The Lord here reveals it clearly, while carrying our thoughts to new things, and declaring that this denial of oneself should bring advantages a hundred times greater.

There was a danger, as did not fail to happen, that man might think of a kind of bargain with God: so much labor and sacrifice, and a proportionate recompense. Wretched principle! but which man is quite capable of inventing. The Lord, therefore, adds verse 30, that many first should be last, and last should be first.

Notes on Matthew 20

Chapter 20:1-6, shows, to explain it, that while recompensing each sacrifice faithfully according to His goodness, God is sovereign in what He gives; and that if He judges good, He can find the occasion of giving, to those who, in man's estimate, might not have labored so much, the seine reward as to those who wished to gain according to their labor. The first workman has for principle, so much labor, so much pay the others betake themselves to the goodwill of the lord of the vineyard. You shall receive what is just; and grace recompenses beyond all desert of labor. Such is the great principle of all true service rendered to the Lord. There is the principle in question, and the final phrase (ver. 16), refers to what was said at the beginning: “So the last shall be first, and the first last.” It is the inverse, however, of what is said (chap. 19: 30), at the beginning of the parable, where this sentence refers to the thought of man, “What shall we have therefore?” whilst the final phrase refers to the thought of God who takes pleasure in blessing, according to the riches of His grace and power according to His goodness. It is always thus in every case. The workman shall receive according to his labor, as that happened to the first that was called. God gives according to His goodness and His grace. There had not been a refusal to the invitations among the last (ver. 6, 7): God called them when the moment that pleased Him arrived.

In the last words by which He closes the parable, the Savior establishes in a formal manner this principle of grace. Many are called, but few chosen. This principle is laid down as the foundation of all for many. We find the same principle in chapter 22:14, where it is also laid down as the basis of all. A single man furnishes the example of it. A mass of people unite under the standard of Christianity, giving themselves up to the call of God; a small number only among them comes under the influence of the word of God, and is the fruit of it. It is this sovereign grace which is the true and only source of all blessing. Here the Lord, after having spoken of the operation of this grace in the parable, lays it down in an abstract way as the basis of all.

There are yet some other moral traits of deep interest which relate to this in connection with the Savior's humiliation. (Ver. 17-28) The Lord warns His disciples on the way to Jerusalem, that He must be condemned to death by the Jewish authorities, and delivered to the Gentiles, but that He will rise again the third day.

The sons of Zebedee (ver. 20) raise the question, which is that of the whole gospel we are studying, but in a thoroughly selfish spirit. They think, for they believe in Jesus as the Messiah—of the immediate establishment of the kingdom, since the king was there, and they would wish to possess the most exalted places in it—to sit on the right hand and on the left of the King. But God was thinking of things of a very different character of excellence which also belonged to the moral state of man and his relations with God; now God was revealed in Jesus. There, moreover, is the key to the Lord's history—the Messiah, in fact, was there—this King announced in the promises and prophecies., Now, after the flesh, the Jews were the children of the kingdom and the heirs of the promises. But the revelation of God, necessary to the accomplishment of these promises, revealed the hatred of the human heart against God, and that the more that this revelation was

being accomplished in humiliation in grace to save. Had He come in judgment, all would have been taken away. He came then in grace. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

Farther, there was need of expiation, without which no sin could have been forgiven. Always, whatever was the grace with which God was there, it was always God, and man would have none of it; and Jesus, the true Messiah, in whom all the promises were Yea and Amen, found Himself rejected. But God in His divine wisdom made use of this hatred to accomplish expiation, absolutely necessary to save any one whatever, or for Israel itself to be blessed; showing thus the state of man's heart with respect to God, and opening at the same time the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

Thus the Son of man (a far wider title than that of Messiah, since it embraces all the rights of Christ in the counsels of God) was to suffer, to be rejected, put to death, then to arise from among the dead in order to lay the foundation of the eternal blessing of man, and even the temporal blessing of Israel, on the assured basis of the atoning work which Christ was about to accomplish. These things could only be accomplished according to the power of an altogether new position—beyond death, the power of the enemy, and the wrath of God; according to the position of man risen, fruit of a work accomplished and approved by God, and a proof of divine power; a position consequently unchangeable, and not a blessing dependent on the responsibility of man, under which all was called in question, as in the case of Adam, who, in fact, failed in it. Here, the blessing was to rest on a work in which God was about to be perfectly glorified. He has been, in fact, put to the proof, this gracious Savior, but only to manifest His perfect faithfulness and obedience, whatever may have been besides the depth of His sufferings. But then He must drink the cup; the cross was His lot. Not only that, but His disciples must follow Him in that path. A. victorious Messiah would place His own on thrones of judgment, but with a Savior dying on the cross, all that must, for the moment, be laid aside. He must first accomplish a work of a far different character of glory; and open to His disciples (with regard to what would result from it here below) a pathway like His own. They must follow it; there was the path which He Himself trod, and which he was tracing for them to follow Him. The two disciples, their hearts filled with carnal desire of greatness, their spiritual sight wholly obscured by the thought of Messiah's earthly reign, and only looking at human glory, ask of Jesus the favor of sitting on His right and on His left in the kingdom of their desires. But as in many other circumstances the folly of the flesh is only an occasion for the Savior to bring to light the thought of the Spirit. In the world this kind of greatness was doubtless met with everywhere; but this was not Christianity. He who seeks to be great, and to take the lead among Christians, has entirely falsified the Christian character. He will be the last of all; and the true way of having the highest place is to serve, considering oneself as the slave of the wants of other disciples. It was so that Jesus had done; He was not come to be ministered to in this world, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. A lesson simple and clear indeed, but of all importance! The seeking for personal exaltation is only the selfishness of the flesh, the spirit of the world which is enmity against God. Love delights to serve—this is what Christ did; pride and selfishness love to be served, and to take priority of others. In reading of such instructions, we are evidently beyond the idea of a Messiah come to reign and we find ourselves in the thoughts of a God of love; in presence of the revelation of grace and the Word made flesh, in Him who emptied Himself, who humbled Himself and who is now exalted. This passage is so much the more

important because it terminates all the history of the Lord except His last days at Jerusalem. All His life of service ends here, and these words impress an indelible character on this blessed life, showing us solemnly, and in a manner as touching, as it is powerful, what ought to be the character of our own! To serve in love, and as far as this world is concerned, to be content to be nothing, while following in the footsteps of our precious Savior. Oh that His own may learn this lesson in which the flesh could not have been a part, but which gives us the joy of finding ourselves following Jesus, where purified from selfishness, our eyes may contemplate the beauty of that which is heavenly, and where we enjoy the brightness of God's face; where, in a word, life of Jesus in us, enjoys that which belongs peculiarly to Himself.

In the first evangelists, those called Synoptic, the account of the last days of the Savior commences here. Then in order to present Himself for the last time to the Jews, He resumes the character of Son of David. Would Jerusalem yet receive her king?

We may here indicate briefly the difference between those three evangelists and John. The three are historic; they relate to us the life and the ministry of Jesus from three different points of view: as Emmanuel the Messiah, as the Prophet-servant, and as Son of man in grace. Moreover, in these evangelists, His service is accomplished entirely in Galilee, in the midst of the poor of the flock. The result is that He is rejected; but He is presented to men in order that they may receive Him. They will have none of it, but it is there for them. We have already seen that while there as prophet and Son of David, He manifested God in this world. If man, or Israel, had received the Son of David, Son of man in grace, they could only receive Him with all the divine features which were peculiar to him, consequently they could not but bow before the manifestation of that which was divine. It could not be otherwise, for God was there. This is what man did not wish.

In the gospel of John, He is presented at the outset as God Himself, and consequently as already rejected, as He is seen in chapter i. 10,11. The Jews from the beginning, and throughout the whole of this gospel, are treated as reprobates. The necessity of the divine work in its two parts, the new birth and the cross, is asserted. Election and the sovereign action of grace, and its absolute necessity for salvation, are brought out everywhere. No one can come to Jesus, unless the Father who hath sent Him, draw him. His sheep receive eternal life and shall never perish. In this gospel nearly all takes place at Jerusalem except what is related in the last chapter.

Let us remember that Jesus presents to the heart of His own the spirit in which they must walk in this world as the spirit in which the Savior Himself walked, He, the Lord of all, meek and lowly in heart, serving the others by love.

The Lord, going out of Jericho (ver. 29) accepts from the blind men the title which He bears in relation to Israel, to whom also He is about to present Himself for the last time as having a right to this title. “Have mercy on us, O Son of David,” says the blind men. Not lending Himself to the impatience of the world which would not occupy itself with the misery of the blind men, the Lord stops, heals them, and they follow the Son of David, a clear testimony rendered to the reality of His title. But He presents Himself here too as the “Lord,” that is, as Jehovah Himself.

Notes on Matthew 21

Arrived at Bethphage, near Bethany, He sends two of His disciples to the village, where they should find an ass and its foal, in order to His sitting thereon, and thus entering the city of Jerusalem, which was near. Prophecy had announced this fact: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation [or saving himself]; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Remark, however, these words, “just and saving himself,” are omitted here. He was first to come in humiliation; later He, the true King of Israel, should come with power, bringing with Him the deliverance of the people. Notwithstanding, though in humiliation, He acts already with royal and divine authority, and God disposes hearts to own Him. The owners of the ass let it go at the demand of the disciples. In the Gospel of Luke we find more details; here we have the fact that He acts as King The crowd, under the divine influence, recognize Him also as such, and He enters, in the midst of this triumphal procession, into the holy city, accompanied by the cry, Hosanna to the Son of David. All the city was moved, and the multitude said, “This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.”

Now that He is owned prophet and king (His priesthood was to be accomplished elsewhere), the hand of Jehovah displays itself clearly. It was not then the testimony which failed in the heart of the Temple. The Lord exercises His authority in purifying the people, profaned by the trading which took place there, and which provided for the wants of those who had need of animals for their sacrifices. This traffic brought in with it another, that of money-changers. They had made the house of God a den of thieves. Matthew only cites the passage. It was the house of His Father, but such is not the point of view presented here. He is the King, Emmanuel; also His power is manifested in grace; He heals the blind and the lame.

All this provokes the hatred of the chiefs of Israel, who express their sore displeasure. The Lord quotes to them Psa. 8, which reveals to us the Son of man, according to the counsels of Jehovah, when the Messiah is rejected of Israel. It is well to remark the two citations in verses 9 and 16. The first is taken from a psalm constantly cited by the Lord and His apostles, which reveals the restoration of Israel in the last days, when they shall own Him whom they pierced. (Psa. 118:25, 26.) Hosanna means, Save now, or Save, I pray thee. Other verses of this psalm are frequently cited. Psa. 8 presents the position of the Son of man, all things being put under His feet, when (in Psa. 2, which shows Him King in Israel and Son of man) He has been rejected, but with the declaration on the part of Jehovah that He will be King in Zion, spite of Israel and the world, which is invited—at least its chiefs—to bow before Him. (Compare John 1:49, 50; Matt. 16:20, followed by xvii.; Luke 9:20-22.) Now (ver. 17) the Lord wishes no more of Jerusalem; He quits it, goes to Bethany, and there passes the night.

The fig-tree (vers. 18-22) represents, I have no doubt at all, Israel, or man, under the covenant of the law, who is judged definitively and forever. There was nothing but a fine appearance, without fruit, and there never should be any more on that footing. But the Lord takes occasion of the fact,

that at His word the fig-tree withered forthwith away, to show His disciples the effect of faith in them. From the time it was found there, all difficulties should disappear. Not only would Israel under the law wither away, but all the worldly power which raised itself against them should disappear under the waters of the judgment of God.

In verse 28 the Jewish authorities raise the question of that of Jesus, the usual way with those who officially possess authority, when God is acting outside of this last by His spiritual power. The Lord, in His divine wisdom, does not contest official authority in its sphere, but He presents a case which went to put its value fully to the proof. Divine power does not want authorization, and it had fully manifested itself; but Jesus answers as in humiliation, and morally, as we can always do with His aid if we cannot manifest this power outwardly. At any rate God does not work miracles to satisfy incredulity. The Lord proves, by their own confession, their incapacity to form a judgment on what was done on God's part. John wrought no miracles. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? If it was from heaven, John had borne witness to Jesus, and why did they not believe? But they were afraid, because of the people, to answer, “Of men.” “We cannot tell,” said they. How, then, pretend to judge of the mission of Jesus? But now they have to be judged in their turn, as well as all the sections of the Jewish people.

In all this part of the Gospel, Christ being rejected, the present time thenceforward is bound up, without interval, with His second coming in judgment, as we have seen it in the citations from Zech. 9, Psa. 118; 2; 8 Only the Lord lays down, quite from the first, the character of this rejection.

In verses 28-32 He proposes to them the case of the two sons; the first saying, I will not go, but afterward going; the second answering, I go, sir, but not going. Such was the pretended obedience of the Jews, whilst poor sinners repented of their sins and followed Christ. His interlocutors owned that it was the first of the two sons that did the will of his father. The Lord applies the case to them, and adds that, though they had seen the repentance of others, they did not repent one whit more.

Then, in verse 33, He sets out their history in the parable of the vineyard let to the husbandmen. The vineyard had been carefully put in order, and hedged round about. The owner sends his servants to receive his share of the fruits. Such were the prophets; but they were persecuted and killed, as Stephen too accused the Jews in Acts 7. Last of all He sent His Son. But man [the Jew], with all the advantages he could enjoy on God's part, would have the world—the religious world, if you will—without the Son of God, without God and His authority, for he who has net the Son has not the Father. The husbandmen cast Him out of the vineyard, and kill Him. The Jews said that such miscreants ought to perish miserably. Then the Lord quotes the same Psalm (cxviii.), already mentioned in the earlier part: “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” The kingdom was taken from them, and given to those who should bring forth the fruits thereof.

Then (ver. 44) the Lord makes the difference between the effect of the judgment which should befall them, and that which should happen in the last days. They should fall on the stone of stumbling, and be broken; whereas those on whom it should fall in judgment should be crushed, and ground to powder.

Having heard these words, the chief priests and Pharisees perceived that He spoke of them; but they were held back by the fear they already had of the mind of the multitude; for these regarded Him as a prophet.

What a solemn testimony the mouth of the Lord renders here of the crisis through which the human race was then passing, through which the soul passes still, when Jesus is announced! He who stumbles against the stone is ruined; but the Lord will come in judgment of His adversaries, who will be overwhelmed by the power of His advent in glory. The rebellious authority which rejects the truth is always feeble, and depends on the opinion of the world. A bad conscience is always feeble. He who has the truth, and faith, can say the truth; he is in the hands of God, and knows it. Let us remember that the world in which we live has rejected the Son of God. The gospel says to man, on God's part, What have you done with My Son? What can he answer? God announces grace with long-suffering, until His long-suffering would be useless; but the world is judged, having not only sinned, and violated the law when it had the law, but rejected God Himself come in grace.

Not only has man been driven out of the earthly paradise, a world (so to speak) which God had created around Him, but, as far as that depended on man, he has driven God from this world outside, which sin and lusts had formed around man. He drove out God, when His love brought Him here below, where He was delivering man every day from all the evils which sin had introduced into the world. Man does not want God; he will not have Him at any price.

Notes on Matthew 22

The parable of the husbandmen refers to the responsibility of man, even when it treated of Christ's coming. Now the Lord proceeds to speak of the ways of God in grace toward Israel and also toward the Gentiles. In the preceding parable it was a question of seeking fruit as God was doing in Israel. Here a king makes a marriage-feast for his son, and invites the guests to the feast. Remark also that it is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens (ver. 2), whilst in the preceding parable they were seeking the fruits according to a fixed measure of obligation, that is, the law, though this were by the ministry of the prophets and the Son, without the kingdom being in question.

Those first invited were the Jews, and of course also during the lifetime of Christ. (Ver. 3.) Afterward, when all things were ready He sent once more His servants—the apostles after His death—to invite them to the wedding-feast (ver. 4); but they made light of it. We find here the two characters of men: the preoccupied whose interest is in the world, and who do not trouble themselves about the Lord; and the violent who persecute His messengers. (Vers. 5, 6.) Luke, as is so often the case when moral things are treated of, enters more into detail, whilst for the other part he recounts in few words a crowd of incidents which do not make a moral picture. Luke 1 say, enters more into details for the purpose of showing what excuses men present for neglecting Christ; then he gives us to see the Lord seeking in grace the poor despised ones of Israel when the chiefs would not have the Messiah.

Here we have the great historical fact that Jerusalem and the Jews as such would not have anything to do with Him and would persecute those that are His, bringing on themselves as they have done the judgment of God and ruin.

Afterward He causes them to seek out the Gentiles, sinners where they are, and the guest-chamber of the wedding-feast is filled with people. But then comes a judgment which is exercised with regard to all these guests. We have only one example here, but this to lay down the principle. Christendom gathered by the message of the gospel is the object of God's judgment according to the nature of the invitation which has been made. For a wedding-feast there must be a wedding-garment. One must have put on Christ to have part in His joy.

We find here too another principle important and worthy of remark, a principle which flows from the form of the parable: the judgment is an individual judgment.

Here is that which I would say. The first part of this parable, of which the subject is grace, brings judgment on the Jews, who had despised the invitation of the King acting in grace and summoning them to the feast, who had evil-entreated the messengers, and who, following up their refusal to render Him the fruits of the vineyard, had outraged His servants the prophets, and finally laid their hands on His only Son and put to death His beloved. But at the end of the parable, when, the invitation having been sent on all sides, the house was filled with guests, though Christendom be cut off like Judaism, another sort of judgment is revealed to us, an individual judgment, in which it

is a question of knowing if the individual is in a state which suits the privileges he enjoys. It is not a question of the destruction of a city and of the nationality of. God's earthly people, of an exterior judgment which closes the economy, the existence of the nation under the old covenant, all the Jewish system. It is a question of knowing whether the state of him who is present at the feast suits the marriage-supper of the Son, of the great King: if not, whilst the feast continues, the individual unfit for the marriage-supper is cast into outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The principle established, one sees that it applies alas! to many: many are called, but few chosen.

The parable of the husbandmen is the history of Judaism up to the rejection and the crucifixion of Christ; that of the marriage-feast is the history of the reception of the gospel, first by the Jews, then by the Gentiles, with that which results from the exterior participation in that grace, and the sorting which takes place in the very bosom of those privileges.

In resuming the order of the thoughts from chapter 20:29 we have seen thus far: the presentation of Jesus as Son of David at Jerusalem; the state of the Jews laid down as to the fact in the parable of the two sons; their judgment as a nation in the parable of the vineyard, a judgment which besides had been already described in the fig-tree become dried up.

Here it is useful to draw attention to the difference between these two cases. In the two it is Israel without fruit, judged and set aside; but in the case of the fig-tree it is Israel in fact, such as the Savior found them: plenty of leaves, a fair appearance, but no fruit answering to what the Savior was seeking, to what His heart wanted; also the judgment has another and more profound character. The tree was bad; human nature under the culture of God Himself was worth nothing. On His entrance into this world there was on the Savior's path but one people which had enjoyed this culture; it was Israel—man having all the advantaged which man could have as placed on his responsibility here below. Now man according to the flesh is condemned; never will he bear fruit: it is all over with him.

The parable of the husbandmen attaches itself rather to the nation, as sphere of the ways of God, an economy on the earth; not human nature under the law, but the chiefs of the nation to whom the vineyard of God had been confided. God had had long patience. He was seeking fruits which were due to Him; and His messengers, His servants, had been dishonored, ill-treated, and even killed. There was one thing more that God could do, and He did it; He sent His Son. The husbandmen cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him; they must undergo the judgment they had deserved. It is not the incurable evil, the flesh which cannot please God, which perishes before His eyes; it is an exterior and terrible judgment falling on the nation which, notwithstanding all the patience of God displayed toward it in its long career, has crowned its iniquity by rejecting and crucifying His Son. This people suffers the public judgment of God; it is a body ruined, broken, in consequence of its sin; it will be ground to powder (save the small remnant God has reserved for Himself) when in the last days it will be found an adversary and apostate.

After this parable we have the kingdom of the heavens, the grace which Israel equally rejects, but which, being spread far and wide, fills the house with guests, Gentiles as well as Jews. Here we find also judgment, but bearing on the question whether the individual is suitable for the position in which he is found.

Now after these great principles, after these features which give us the situation, all classes of the Jews, each in its turn come to be judged, just whim they thought they were to cast divine wisdom into perplexity by questions it could not answer; for they believed themselves wise and thought they had to do with a poor unlettered Galilean. How blind this world, and religious men; and how wicked the heart of man! The Lord is in their midst in grace, and these men, the one as much as the other, would show that He is in the wrong!

First (ver. 15), the Pharisees gather together and take counsel together, seeking to entangle Him in His words. They hold strongly themselves to the Jewish self-government, as being the people of Jehovah who were not to be subject to the Gentiles. The Herodians, on the contrary, attached themselves to Herod's dynasty, representing the imperial power of Rome which had placed him there as a subordinate king. They thought that, if Jesus acknowledged the Roman authority, He would lose in the eyes of the people His character of Messiah who was to deliver them from that yoke: if He rejected that authority, they might denounce Him to the civil power. It was of small moment to them that they should be inconsistent, if they could only get rid of God and His truth. The bitterest foes become friends to rid themselves of Christ. As Herod and Pilate, Pharisees and Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees, all the world agree for that. The Pharisee and the Herodians came then together to question Him, and ask, while flattering Him for His integrity, if, yes or no, one ought to pay tribute to Caesar. The Lord, perceiving clearly their hypocrisy, points it out to them; then He asks them to show Him the current money with which they paid the tribute in the country. Whose image and superscription did this piece bear? They say to Him, Caesar's. Render then, said He, to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's. God had subjected the Jews for their sins to the Gentiles; they should own His hand and submit to this yoke, until God according to His promise should free them from it. Meanwhile they should render to God the things which are God's. They were doing neither the one nor the other. Rebels against God in all their ways, they were constantly rising against the Romans. Astonished at the Lord's answer, they leave Him and go their way.

The same day the Sadducees who deny the resurrection, came to submit to Him the case of a woman, who, according to the law of Moses, had had seven husbands. Whose wife of the seven, demand they, should she be at the time of the resurrection? Here a fundamental truth was in question: also the Lord's answer is formal and precise. To put the resurrection in question was to be ignorant of the scriptures and of the power of God. Death did not terminate the existence of man. If God was the God of Abraham, of Isaacs, and of Jacob, He was not the God of those who did not exist. All live for Him, if they are dead for men; and, though life and incorruption are only brought to light by the gospel, the Old Testament sufficed to show that God had been, and was, and would be the God of the faithful, in order that they should be with Him, not only as souls but as men, soul and body, even as He had made them; only risen, a thing necessary after death. When God said, I am the God, of Abraham, Abraham was a man living for Him and was to be raised. But the Lord treats also the positive side of the question. In the resurrection all is changed: it is no question either of marrying or of giving in marriage; one is as the angels of God in heaven. It is not the question here of the position one, may be found in, but of the character in which one subsists. The resurrection is a foundation of the gospel. Our faith is vain if Christ is not risen: a thing evidently true, for if man rises not, Christ Himself is not risen. He is then dead also without remedy or answer; He is vanquished, not victor. The Sadducees are put to silence, and the two great sects

of the Jews have nothing more to say.

But the Lord having done what the Pharisees, adversaries of the Sadducees, could not do, the curiosity of the Pharisees is excited, and they were gathered together. (Ver. 34.) One among them questions the Lord; but his demand has for result that Jests lays the true foundation of the law and the prophets, and then establishes clearly the situation of things, the question of the moment, as God regarded it. Which, asks the lawyer, is the great commandment in the law A question much debated among the Jews, for whom each commandment had a special value, the observance of each of them gaining, as in an examination, so many good marks from God. The Lord seizes the occasion, offered in the ways of God, to establish the fundamental principles of the divine law. To love God with all the heart, such is the first commandment. The second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. All in man hung on these two things. It is the Summary of what man ought to be, the root and the measure of human righteousness. It is not in any way a revelation of divine love; it is not at all a question of grace, nor of an open way for the sinner to come to God; but it is the perfect rule of what a man should be, a divine compendium of the substance of the law, the law on which the prophets insisted in seeking to recall the people to its observance.

Now all changes. In His turn Christ questions them. He had been clear and positive as to the resurrection, clear and positive as to the essence and the foundation of the law that man should have kept (and in keeping it he would have enjoyed the life of God; but he is a sinner); now He presents to them the question, grave and decisive for them, of the judgment they formed on Christ and thus on His own person. What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say to Him, David's. How then, says Jesus to them, does David in Spirit call Him Lord? saying, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? This is what was going to happen. He was about to quit the position of Son of David on earth, Heir of the promises made to the Jews, to take His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No one could answer Him a word, and from that day no one dared to ask Him any more questions. All was closed between the Jewish people and the Lord, save alas! to put in execution the thoughts of hatred which they had in their heart.

Notes on Matthew 23

Without speaking of the instruction it contains, this chapter is important because it shows the manner in which this Gospel moves in the relations of God with Israel, whilst indicating the judgment which the people were drawing on themselves by the rejection of the Messiah.

We find here, first the position of the disciples in the midst of the Jews, as long as God would endure these last, and that which, in this respect, suited the servants of Jesus; then the iniquity and the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees; lastly the love and sovereign grace of Jesus, grace which overflows and displays what He is, even when He is announcing judgment. Hence all this part of the Gospel is bound up with the ways of God in relation with His earthly people, as the then moment when all that was passing is bound up with the last days. All connects itself with the Jews of that time and with the relation of the disciples with this people, and thence passes to the last times, leaving the church aside, save that the mention of the last times introduces necessarily the responsibility of those who replace the Jews as servants of the Lord during His absence, and finally the judgment of the Gentiles.

The disciples are left by the Lord in the relation with the Jewish chiefs in which they were then found and up to the judicial rejection of the people at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The Savior places them in the same category as the multitude. All were subjected to the authority of the scribes and the Pharisees. These were seated in Moses' seat; and one ought to hear them as to injunctions which they drew from the law given by his means. Nevertheless one must carefully guard against following their walk: they were hypocrites who spoke and did not act. They made the law very strict for others and very light for themselves; they loved to appear before men with the forms of piety to acquire a religious reputation; they sought the first places in the synagogues, salutations in the public places, and to be called Rabbi, making themselves esteemed in the eyes of the world by religion.

The spirit of the disciples was to be the opposite of all that. They were not to be called Rabbi, for Christ alone was their Master, and they were brethren; they were not any more to call others by the name of father, for one only was their Father, He who is in the heavens; finally they were not to be called teachers, for Christ alone was He who taught them. He who would be great in their midst was to be their servant, for whoever exalted himself on earth would be abased, and he who abased himself would be exalted. This. is just what Christ has done, whilst man, having wished to exalt himself and be as God, has been abased and will he yet more in facing the judgment of God. (Cf. Phil. 2)

Afterward (ver. 13) the Lord denounces the scribes and the Pharisees, those religious doctors of the day, putting His finger on the different traits of iniquity which characterized them. They shut up the kingdom of heaven before men, and would neither enter nor let others enter; for religious doctors always oppose the entry of the truth into other hearts. Their life was a life of hypocrisy. They sought to profit through their religious character by the purse of those whose weakness exposed them to their artifices. They made long prayers. They would be proportionately severe.

They showed (ver. 15) a prodigious zeal for their religion, but they made their proselytes morally worse than themselves. They proposed the subtleties of casuists and neglected the essential things of the law of God. Exact as to the minutiae of the tithes demanded by the law of Moses, they neglected justice, mercy, and faith, all that which was really important in the eyes of God. They washed the outside, and within they were full of rapine and unrighteousness. Hypocrites! they used to build the tombs of the prophets and were sure that, had they lived in the time of their fathers, they would not have imbrued their hands in the blood of those messengers of God. They testified thus to being sons of their fathers. Well! let them fill up the measure of their fathers.

Never did the Lord accuse any as those whom we may call the clergy of His time, those who, under religious forms, were the great obstacle to the success of His work here below. Serpents, offspring of vipers, said He, how should you escape the judgment of Gehenna? The meek and lowly Savior, He who had begun His career by describing the character of those who should be blessed, closed it, rejected by the religion of the world and of forms, by describing the hypocrisy and unrighteousness of those who were opposed to the blessing of their neighbors; end He has done it with severity so much the more terrible as it was the mouth of love and peace which expressed itself thus.

Such is the starting-point of these burning words which put in light, as He could do it, the true character of the religion which will not have the truth. At least, said they, they would not have taken part in the persecution nor in the death of those who brought the message of God. But God had His eye on them: they would be put to the proof in that respect. Christ, for it was the Lord Himself who judged them thus, would send prophets, wise men, and scribes (which He did after having ascended on high); whom they would persecute, kill, scourge in the synagogues, to, maintain religion intact, but (it is God who pronounces the judgment) in order that the righteous blood shed on the earth since Abel up to Zechariah may come on the generation on which God has bestowed His last and greatest boon, and which had also shown in the highest degree the perversity and the iniquity of man. We know, according to Rev. 18:24, that it will be just so with Christendom under its Babylonish form.

The very solemn point which is here put in evidence is that iniquity accumulates. The patience of God waits, and not only that, but it employs all means to recall to sincerity and to Himself those who possess the truth and who have at least its form. The most touching appeals, the most energetic warnings, the condescension which makes use of reasonings almost from equal to equal, all this is rendered useless by the obstinacy of men in despising grace and in practicing iniquity. Finally, when God has exhausted all His means of calling to repentance, then comes the judgment that this divine patience had suspended. It is at last brought in by sin accumulated from age to age, and by the hardness of heart which has grown with the despite done to divine warnings and to grace.

Nevertheless grace overflows from the heart of the Savior who speaks here in His divine character. Nothing more touching than the complaints of His grief in apostrophizing Jerusalem, which would neither receive His appeals nor come to be guarded and sheltered under the wings of divine love. The city is just characterized by the persecution of all the messengers of God; and how often He would have gathered her children together, as a hen her chickens under her wings! But now He Himself come in love is rejected, and “your house” (for He does not call it His) “is left

unto you desolate" —not forever, be it noted, for the gifts and calling of God are indefeasible, but desolate—till the repentance of the people manifested in the desire to see and to salute Him who had been promised according to Psa. 118, so often cited in connection with those days and the return of the Savior. This was what the children had cried in chapter xxi., a testimony called of God and produced by His power, when the people would not have their Messiah, true Son of David. The iniquity of the people; set under its responsibility, was come to its height; but Jehovah, according to His sovereign grace and according to His faithfulness, will come again in power as Deliverer, at least for the repentant remnant, when the iniquity of years, in this case as in all others, will have wrought the blessing of Israel according to God's promises, an act of pure grace and mercy towards children of wrath. (Rom. 11:29-32.)

Notes on Matthew 24

That which precedes shows how in all this we have the Jewish people under our eyes. What follows is the history of the Jews, or rather that of the testimony of the servants of Christ in the midst of the Jews, in the interval which separates the rejection of the Messiah, here in question, and His return in glory. They are still—or anew—in Palestine; not yet delivered nor publicly owned of Jehovah, but under His hand in chastening, if it is a question of those who are under the influence of His grace and of His word, and finally in judgment against those who cast themselves into the arms of Antichrist. This statement comes very naturally following up the testimony of the last verses of chapter 23, and is connected, as to its contents, with that which is there said.

The Lord quits the temple now forsaken in judgment up to His return, and sits on the mount of Olivet, separated by the valley of the brook of Cedron from the lofty plateau on which the temple was seen in all grandeur.

The disciples approach to draw His attention to the beauty of the majestic building. The Lord does not seek to turn away their eyes from the object which was pre-occupying them, but He foretells the complete destruction of what seemed to be the indestructible palace of their religion, necessary, in fact, for the accomplishment of the duties which it imposed, and the compulsory place for the offerings which were the only means of putting the people in relationship with God. All was about to be destroyed, from top to bottom, and their religion and all their relations with God, according to the ancient covenant which had to do with the temple, would be entirely abolished with it.

As far as it depended on the responsibility of man, the departure of the Savior left the temple void of its God.

The disciples ask Him when these things should come to pass, and what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. They mean the end of the age of the law, by the arrival of the Messiah, that is to say, of Jesus in glory, for the Jews acknowledged “this age,” that is to say the age of the law, and “the age of the Messiah,” which should terminate it.

Let us examine the answer of the Lord. It is divided into two parts. The first (vers. 4-14) gives a general sketch of their position, and of what would go on to the end. The second (vers. 15-21) presents the picture, the application of which is the development of Dan. 12.

This chapter, indeed, of the prophet announces the great tribulation through which Jerusalem will pass in the last times, a tribulation that has no parallel in the history of the world; after which the Savior will appear for the deliverance of His own, and to gather together from the four quarters of the earth the dispersed of Israel, that is to say, the elect of that people. The Lord occupies Himself more particularly with those who would be witnesses to His name, whilst describing the condition of things which so closely affected them. He leaves out of the question the church and all relating to it, and speaks of witnesses among the Jews, whom He warns against false Christs.

Now that the true Christ had been rejected, the people would fall a prey to these impostors, and many would be deceived. There would also be wars, and rumors of wars; the disciples were to be quiet; the end, that is, the end of the age, would not be yet. Nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there would be famines and earthquakes in divers places. It was the beginning of sorrows that would end in the accomplishment of the ways of God.

But in those days of trouble for the nation men would only become more wicked, and would break out in hatred against the witnesses for the truth. They would be killed, given up to be tormented, and they would be hated of all nations for Christ's sake. When once the bridle is loosed, the Gentiles, like the Jews, will have neither Christ nor truth. False prophets would arise, who would deceive the mass, and the love of many would wax cold because iniquity should abound. In such cases moral courage fails when faith is not in activity to sustain the heart, by causing it to look to the Lord, who is above all difficulties, whatever they may be. The disciples were to persevere to the end, for deliverance would come in due time. Our business is to reap, applying ourselves, without discouragement, to the work of the Lord; for them it is a question of being delivered. It is true, in a general way, for us also that we must persevere to the end. When the word of God speaks to us of the desert path which has to be trodden, it insists upon perseverance, and upon the maintenance of confidence unto the end, though there is no uncertainty shout the issue for the true believer, because God will keep him to the end. He is faithful to do it, but He it is who must do it: theta is the way, and we must walk in it. Danger is there, and we need to be preserved, but the sheep shall not perish, and none shall pluck them out of the hand of the Lord. We must, however, go on to the end; it is our duty to count upon God for that, but here in the last times there should be a deliverance. The word of God, notwithstanding the predominance of evil, should not be hindered; it would go beyond the limits of Palestine, and would carry to all nations tidings of the establishment of the coming kingdom. Then the end would come. It is not here the gospel of salvation, such as we have in Eph. 1, but the gospel of the kingdom, as John the Baptist and the Savior Himself had proclaimed it. The kingdom of God is at hand.

All this is a general view of the state of things which would take place at the end, and which began to appear immediately after the departure of the Lord—a state of things of which there would be a foretaste in what was about to take place between His departure and the destruction of Jerusalem, of which verses 4-14 give us a general idea.

The church, as we have already said, is left entirely out of view, the testimony sent to the Gentiles being that of the last days, when the church will be in heaven, and which will give occasion to the judgment described in chapter 25.

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is not found here at all: nevertheless this destruction was of great importance, because it put an end to all relation of God with the, people, as such, until it should be resumed on their return to the land at the end of the days. Luke 21:24 speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, adding that it should be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles should be accomplished. Dan. 9:26 speaks of it thus: “The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary;” and the desolation will be there by the judgment of God. At the end the Messiah will take the kingdom, when Jerusalem and the Jews have suffered to the utmost the judgment decreed by God.

Verse 15. The Lord comes now, in the course of His prophecy, to the moment predicted by Daniel, when the abomination which makes desolate would be set up in the place that the throne of God ought to occupy. There would then be, as we have seen, a time of testimony in Israel, which would reach to the ends of the world, to all nations; the servants of the Lord were to possess their souls in patience, and, although hated of all, to persevere unto the end. But for those who should be in Judea, the moment would come when an idol (for this is the meaning of the word “abomination") would be set up in the holy place. This idol is called the desolating idol, because the confidence placed in it, and the public affront given to God, would bring about the desolation of the people and of the holy place. When it should be placed there, the faithful ones in Judea were to flee unto the mountains. The Lord uses many figures to show the urgency of the case. He who might be upon the housetop was not to come down to take anything out of his house; he who might be in the fields was not to return back to fetch his garments; the moment would be so terrible, that it would only be a question of flight. But God ever thinks of His own. They were to pray, the Lord said, that their flight might not take place in winter, nor on the sabbath-day. When their time of tribulation—unparalleled in the history of the world—has come, God will consider the temperature most suitable for the flight, and of the conscientious spirit that would stop the faithful soul on a sabbath-day.

This passage clearly shows us that in all this it is a question of the Jews, and of Jerusalem and the neighborhood. It is the last half-week of Daniel, “a time of distress for Jacob,” but he would be delivered out of it. But woe to the women with child, and to those that give suck in those days—though in times of peace such would be subjects for joy to Jewish women: there should be a tribulation such as never had been. But the heart of the Lord thinks of all the difficulties, of all the dangers of His own. For the sake of His elect He will shorten those days, for otherwise no flesh should be saved; and in point of fact it will but be a misery prolonged according to man's will, for in three years and a half all will be ended.

The quotation from Daniel clearly shows us that it is not a question of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, for Daniel informs us that this time of tribulation is without a parallel, and consequently there cannot be two such. But further, the duration of the tribulation is twelve hundred and sixty days, or three and a half years: then followed seventy-five days for purifying everything, and then Daniel, having been raised, will have his part in these things at the end of the days. Now, whether you take the twelve hundred and sixty days as days—as I believe them to be—for a half-week of years, which corresponds to Dan. 9, or take them as twelve hundred and sixty years, the fact remains that nothing happened, either at one period or the other, corresponding to the Savior's prophetic words, nor to those of the Spirit by Daniel.

Luke does not speak of Daniel, nor of the abomination of desolation, for he occupies himself more with the present period and with the principles that belong to it. Thus he tells us on this occasion that Jerusalem would be surrounded with armies, and trodden under foot of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

After that (ver. 23) come the great signs. There will also be in those last times false Christs and false prophets, promises of deliverance which hearts will so greatly need at that terrible moment when all the false hopes of an unbelieving nation will have passed away. “Behold,” they will say, “he is in the desert; behold, he is in the secret chambers.” There will also be those who will work

great signs and miracles, so as to deceive, if possible, the very elect. The wickedness of men and the deceits of Satan will again be employed to turn souls aside, and to hinder them from humbling themselves, and from seeking deliverance where alone it can be found.

It is the terrible time of the enemy's power, and of the judgment of God upon the people, by means of the instruments chosen by the people to aggrandize themselves and establish themselves in their unbelief. It is no question here of Christians; they know that Christ is in heaven. To tell them that He is in the desert, or that He is in the inner chambers, would not meet any need of a Christian, and would produce no effect on those who might be Christians only by name. For the Jew, who will undergo the agony of an unparalleled persecution, and of the anger of Satan, who, cast down from heaven, will be filled with burning rage, knowing that he has but a short time; for the Jew amidst all this suffering, the despair of a heart, bitterly deceived by the promise of a deliverer already come, will be an evident snare. It is purely and simply a question of the great tribulation of Jerusalem in the last days, the time predicted by Jeremiah (chap. 37.), and by Daniel (chap. xii. 1), the deliverance of the remnant which becomes the nation being foretold in these two passages. The power of Satan, which developer itself at this time, is shown us in Rev. 12, the order of the time in Dan. 9.

The Lord warns His disciples, for in the whole of this chapter they are looked at as witnesses in the midst of the Jews. They were not to follow any of those will-of-the-wisps lighted by Satan to deceive souls, for the Lord, the Son of man, would come as lightning, suddenly and with a brilliancy which would leave no uncertainty with regard to His person thus manifested; He would come in judgment, there where the effect of the judgment was found before the penetrating eyes of God. (Ver. 28.)

The Lord makes some allusion to Job 30, though it is a proverbial expression which one need not go far to find the meaning of. Where the carcass of Israel is, there will the judgment of God descend with the sight and rapidity of an eagle.

After this rapid and prophetic testimony of the Lord foreseeing the judgment of the latter days, he announces with greater calmness the wide results of the judgment of God, as well as the grace that will gather together the residue of the people. (Vers. 29-81.) It is not so much a prophetic transport, placing the mind in the circumstances which it announces, as the revelation of the ways of God, given with the calmness and dignity that are suitable to the One to whom all is certain. All the authority, all the power, which exists will be overthrown and will fall. I do not doubt that there will be in the last times extraordinary phenomena (Luke 21:25), but I think that the Lord is here speaking of the fall of everything which by exalting itself governs the world. God interferes, and all the powers then in rebellion against Him will be overthrown forever.

This will happen immediately after the tribulation announced by the Lord and by the prophets. The disciples had asked what would be the sign of His coming. He had given them abundant warnings, and had declared to them the true character and dangers of those times; but the sign of His coming to the earth would be the appearing of His glory in the sky. He had laid before them what was connected with the earth, according to the need of those times. But the coming of the Savior was heavenly, and it was in heaven that the sign of His coming to the earth would be seen, the appearing, I do not doubt, of His glory in the heavens. They would see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory, and then all the tribes of the land (the land of Israel, I think)

shall wail because of Him, those who had rejected Him, and who now see Him returning in glory. The faithful sharing in a general way the fate of the nation, but delivered from their unbelief, will mourn, we know, in another manner (Zech. 12:10-14), looking upon the One whom they had pierced. The rebellious Gentiles, who exalted themselves against Jehovah, and against His Christ, will be destroyed, but here, I think, the Spirit has more in view the children of Israel.

But there is more; not only in Palestine will those who are written in the book of God (Dan. 12:1) be delivered, but the Son of man will send His angels (for now the angels have become the servants of the One who inherits all the rights of man, according to the counsels of God) to gather together all the elect of Israel from the four corners of the earth from one end of heaven to the other.

This terminates the history of the Jews and of the testimony of God in their midst, from the time when they rejected the Savior up to His return. We have seen the relation of the testimony of the disciples with the Jewish people, and the circumstances in which they are to render this testimony until the Lord's return. This ends at verse 31 of chapter 24. Verses 30, 31 of this chapter are connected with verse 31 of chapter 25. The historical portion of the prophecy is taken up again in this last verse, the throne of the Lord being established, so that He judges the Gentiles. Between these two we have exhortations to the disciples, and the responsibility of Christians during the absence of the Lord. The general result for Christianity is developed at the end of chapter 24. All depended on the living expectation of the Lord. If these should fail, the servant would take the mastery over his companions in service, and would tyrannize over them; he would join himself to the world, in order to enjoy its fleshly delights; the consequence would be, that he would be cut off, counted among the hypocrites, and cast outside. This gives occasion to more precise details as to the condition and the responsibility in which Christians are placed during His absence, and this is what we are about to examine.

Chapter 159

Notes on Matthew 25

The coming of the Savior gives occasion to look at Christians as ten virgins gone forth to meet the Bridegroom. The true force of the word is that the kingdom of the heavens will then have become like to ten virgins thus gone out. Nothing more solemn and more instructive than this parable as to the state of Christians. It is a question of the return of the Savior and of that which will happen to Christians, to the members of the kingdom, at that epoch. If the servant said, “My Master delayeth his coming,” it would be his ruin, the demonstration of the state of his heart. But in fact the Bridegroom would delay; and this is what has happened.

It is of moment to remark the mutual relationships in which the personages of the parable are found. It is not a question here of the church as bride. If one would absolutely think of a bride, it is Jerusalem on earth. Christians are regarded as virgins gone out to meet Him who was the Bridegroom. The Jewish remnant does not go out. When Jesus shall come again; it will be found there on earth in the relationships in which it will have remained here below. The Bridegroom tarried, and the virgins, the wise like the foolish, went asleep, no longer expecting the Bridegroom. Further, they go in somewhere in order to sleep more conveniently. Nevertheless there are of them such as have oil in their vessels with their lamps: it is divine grace which sustains the lamp of the Christian profession. They are not surprised. It is a question of those who make profession.

The moral state of the kingdom consists in this that all are gone asleep: the coming of the Lord is forgotten by all. At an unforeseen moment the cry makes itself heard, Behold the Bridegroom! God re-awakens souls that they may think of it; but what a testimony rendered to the state of Christians! That which should have characterized them, the thing for which, as a living state of the soul of the Christian here be low, one had been converted (according as it is written, “How ye turned to God.... to wait for his Son from heaven") had been entirely forgotten. They were no longer waiting for the Lord; and though there was oil in the vessels of some, the lamps were not trimmed. It is the soul that awaits the Lord which watches to be ready to receive Him. Their lamps shone no longer suitably. There might be smoke and ashes; the fire was perhaps not extinct; but there was little light, enough however just to manifest negligence and slumbering. Where was then the love for the Savior, when all forgot Him, no more occupied with His return? Fidelity and love to the Savior were equally at fault.

One is asked sometimes how it has happened that those so excellent men of past times had no knowledge of this truth—were not animated by this hope. The answer is easy: the wise virgins slept like the foolish. Waiting for the Savior was lost in the church. And, mark it well, it is the cry, Behold the Bridegroom! which awakens from their sleep slumbering Christians. One must not fall under illusions: the proper state of Christians depends on this expectation: “Ye yourselves [it is said], like unto men that wait for their lord.” Without doubt the new nature that the Christian receives produces essentially the same fruits, whatever be the circumstances in which it is found; but also the character is formed by the object that governs the heart; and there is nothing which detaches from the world like waiting for the Lord, nothing which searches the heart like this

expectation, in order that there be nothing that suits not His presence. Nothing consequently introduces like it the feelings of Jesus in the judgment that it conveys on good and on evil; nothing like it for cherishing affection for Jesus in the motives which govern our conduct. Remark also that in reality it is the same waiting for the Savior, the fact of watching in waiting for Him, which is in question here: not at all the service that we have to accomplish during His absence. Service and the responsibility that attaches to it are found in the following parable. (Chap. 25:14-34.)

The same distinctions are found in Luke 12. In verse 27 it is said, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching;” then the recompense is that they will enjoy the blessings of heaven and that Jesus will gird Himself to make them happy; afterward (ver. 43) it is a question of the service to render during His absence, and then the reward is the inheritance.

Returning to Matt. 25:1-13, I think the fact that the other virgins had to go away to buy oil means only that it was too late to have part with the Bridegroom, and that the faithful virgins could not then communicate grace. One must have it in time for the service itself. I will add that I do not think the foolish virgins were saved souls. The Bridegroom says to them, I know you not—what Jesus could hardly say to those who were His own.

In the parable of the talents (vers. 14-30) it is a question of service. The Lord goes away and confides to His servants a part of His goods to trade with them. They are the spiritual gifts that the Lord Jesus has imparted to those that followed Him when He went away. It is no question of that which providence has given us, nor of all men, but of the servants of Jesus, and of that which He has given them at the moment of His going away. There is a certain difference between this parable and what is found in Luke 19. In this latter passage the same amount is given to each of the servants; human responsibility enters into it for more in the thoughts of the Spirit of God; also the reward is proportioned to what love gained. Here the amount is in reference, according to divine wisdom, to the vessel to which it is confided; and each faithful workman is equally called to enter into the joy of his Lord; he is set over many things, but he enters into the joy of his Lord. Faithful to Jesus according to what was confided to him, Jesus makes him enjoy His own joy. The principle of work is the confidence that the workman has in the master, and the spiritual intelligence which that confidence gives him.

The talents had not been entrusted to them for doing nothing with: in that case the Master might have kept them to Himself. They understood well that they had been put into their hands in order that they might traffic with them for the Master during His absence, and they employed those talents, those spiritual gifts, for the Master's service. Their heart knew that Master, desired His profit and His honor, sought no other authority or warrant for work than the fact that He had confided these gifts to them, and the zeal of a heart made confident through the knowledge that they had of Him. What the third servant lacked was exactly this true knowledge of the Master. In his eyes He was an austere man. And, mark well, when there is not the true knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ, one has always an entirely false idea of Him. The heart ever betrays itself by the idea that one forms of God, and unbelief always makes of the true God a picture from which the heart revolts. Knowledge of the rights of God as well as. of His love is lacking. If God were such as unbelief imagines and His authority is recognized, one would act accordingly; but when His love is unknown, His authority is despised. God only reveals Himself in Christ, in Christ alone can He be really known.

This case of the unfaithful servant marks also distinctly the difference between gifts and grace, and the effect of grace in the heart. We have no practical example as to this in the New Testament, yet the principle is clearly established in 1 Cor. 13 In the Old Testament we have examples of the Spirit's power without conversion taking place—far from it indeed. This is what also explains Heb. 6. Here sloth and unfaithfulness flow from the ignorance in which the servant is concerning his Master's character, as well as from the false and guilty idea that be had formed of Him.

Let us remark in our two parables an important fact which we shall find again elsewhere. The Lord, In the teachings which relate to His coming, says nothing which can give one occasion to think that it must necessarily be delayed beyond the life of those whom He addresses. Thus the virgins who slept are the same who awoke; the servants who received the talents are the same as those whose work is taken account of at the end. We know that many generations have appeared and disappeared since the departure of the Savior, but He did not wish that they should be expecting beforehand any delay. In the same way, when He wishes to give the history of the church to the close, the Spirit of God takes up seven churches which existed, at that moment in order to describe in seven epochs the great features of that history; so that, although we may recognize now these features and these periods, there was nothing when the Apocalypse was written which announced in a formal manner any continuance of the church on earth.

There is another remark I have to make. What is said in verse 23 seems to me to state a general principle. Those who possess Christian privileges without any living enjoyment of them, without truly knowing the Lord Jesus Himself, lose all that they have (this answers to Heb. 6); whilst those who are faithful to the light they possess acquire more. This, too, is the explanation given in verse 29. The judgment upon the wicked servant is executed in verse 30.

We have gone through in these three parables the judgment of Christendom, of the church viewed as a divine system established on the earth, but exposed to the consequences of being established on the foundation of human responsibility; then of individuals who profess to be Christians considered with regard to their duty of waiting for the coming of the Lord, and in relation to their service during His absence. In verse 31 the Lord again takes up the thread of what He had already said with regard to the history of the earth and the things which will happen at His coming. This verse is linked, as I have said before, with chapter 24:31, before which all the relationships of the remnant with the unfaithful people and with the Gentiles, first in testimony, then in unparalleled sufferings, had been set out as preceding the personal coming of Savior, who will put an end to these sufferings. Now when the Lord shall appear in these circumstances, it will not be only to shine, and then to disappear, as a flash of lightning. He will sit on the throne of His glory; then when His warrior judgment, namely what is executed on His adversaries shall be accomplished (see Rev. 19:11), the Lord seated on His throne will judge the nations of the whole world to whom the gospel of the kingdom shall have been sent. This mission is found announced in verse 14 of chapter 24, which closes the first part of the prophecy of that chapter. It is a question there of the gospel that Jesus preached during His lifetime, as well as John the Baptist; it is not the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus, (that is to say, a work of eternal redemption fully accomplished), but the solemn fact that the kingdom was going to be established; it is the “everlasting gospel.” The Lord was about to begin to break the serpent's head by the establishment of this kingdom, to take in hand His great power and act as King. This testimony is to be rendered after the catching up of the church and before the manifestation of the Lord. The

testimony rendered to the Jews is found in chapter ix. of the Revelation; but here we learn that it will be heard also in the entire world before the end comes.

At the time then when the Lord shall be seated on the throne of His glory, He will begin to pronounce His judgment on the nations and to execute it. The word mentions two kinds of judgment, the warrior judgment, and that wherein the Judge is in session as supreme and recognized authority. Thus Rev. 19 is the warrior judgment. In chapter 20 begins the judicial session which is held when the power of the King has established His throne, and He sits there to judge. (Rev. 19:11; 20:4.)

As to the destruction of the beast and his armies, it takes place by the coming of the Lord, who destroys his armies and casts the beast and the false prophet at the same time into hell. Then He establishes His throne in Jerusalem. After this Gog comes, thinking to have all his own way; he finds the Lord Himself, and perishes on the mountains of Israel. Then, the throne being established in peace, the Lord sits there to judge the nations to which previously the gospel of the kingdom had been sent. The terms of the judgment show us that it is no question whatever of a general judgment, as people commonly think of it. They are there judged according to the manner that they treated the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom. It is of this only that they here give an account to the Judge; it is on this only that He questions them. Now, as the greatest number of pagans have never heard of such messengers, this judgment cannot be theirs, being wholly inapplicable to them. Besides at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans the judgment of the nations is pronounced, their guilt established on entirely different principles, namely, that they gave up the knowledge of God when they possessed it; that they disregarded the testimony of creation, then that of conscience; finally, that they plunged, consequent on this voluntary alienation from God, into idolatry and corruption, who should do worst.

Next we find here three classes, the goats, the sheep, and the brethren of the Judge; that is to say, those who had not received the messengers, those who had received them, and the messengers themselves. It is the judgment of the quick, of the nations; a final judgment. They go thence to Gehenna, to everlasting torment, whilst the righteous possess everlasting life here on earth, but enjoy it with God. It is the judgment of the valley of Jehoshaphat when Jehovah shall have gathered the nations and there shall be multitudes in this valley of decision. The judgment of the quick is a scriptural truth as certainly as the judgment of the dead. Not only so, but the Jews were much more familiar, and this according to their own scriptures of the Old Testament, with the judgment of the quick than with the judgment of the dead. Doubtless there were in the Old Testament words which had given the Pharisee to understand the latter, as also the Lord justifies them on this point whilst He condemns the Sadducees. Yet these were held as good Jews, and the high priest and his family were of this sect. Nobody put their orthodoxy in question. They were wrong, we know; but when we see the passage by which the Lord convicts them, we understand how some who had not the Spirit of God might remain in ignorance of the truth in this respect. If one did not seize the fact that God looks at man as having a body as well as a soul, so that the life beyond death demonstrates also the resurrection, one has still trouble to seize the force of the proof alleged by the Lord. For him who knows that the Lord is risen and that we are to be conformed to Him, the thing is simple. Death touches only the body; if one subsists afterward, it is to be a complete man. One thing proves the other. The soul is happy with Christ meanwhile, but the man is not complete. He lives, the man who died; after death, all live for God, they are only

dead for man; this last state of death must cease, but will only cease at the resurrection. Meanwhile the soul is with the Lord, the witness, since life is not terminated, that death is not to retain him who is subjected to it.

Now Christians have trouble in believing a judgment on the earth, though they profess it in the Creed. But the word of God is clear thereon. Prophecy speaks of it largely. There is a judgment of the quick, as there is a judgment of the dead; and this judgment we have here, at least the most formal part, that where the Lord sits on His throne and personally judges the nations. Elsewhere they are suddenly destroyed by His glorious appearing, being found, either gathered to make war on Him as in Rev. 17:14, and 19, or surrounding the camp of the saints and the beloved city (and here they are suddenly destroyed by fire come down from heaven) as in Rev. 20:7-9. But here the Lord, seated on His throne, after having already contain lightning on those who were warring against Him, judges as King all the nations of the earth, according to the reception that each shall have given to His brethren the messengers of the kingdom, counting all that was done to them as done to Himself personally. Such is the grand principle of this judgment. “The sheep” disavow all pretension to have had regard to the King personally; but He takes as done to Himself all that they had done to His messengers whom He owned as His brethren. “The goats,” on the contrary, pretend never to have failed toward the great King; but on the same principle the indifference they had toward His messengers counts in the heart of the King for indifference toward Him. Thus it is just His judgment of the nations, but it is also a great encouragement for His servants whom He will send to the nations; it is also, in principle, an encouragement for all times. He thinks always of His own as if they were Himself. “Why,” says He to Saul, “persecutest thou Me?” This goes farther, it is true; for those that Saul persecuted were members of His body whilst He was in heaven; the others were His brethren on the earth. I speak of this as testimony to the great and precious truth that He ever bears the profoundest interest to His own—interest which never fails nor slumbers; which can doubtless allow the trial of persecution if needful, but an interest which, across all, holds the reins in His hand and owns the sufferings of His own for His name as a title of worth for the happiness of the kingdom which will be surely awarded them in its time.

I have still some remarks in detail to make. The Lord takes account of all the circumstances of the life of His own. The great aim of the parable that what is done to His servants is done to Himself; but He knows who is hungry, who is in prison, &c. Nothing escapes Him. Further, it is well understood that His own suffer, not only now but at every time during His absence. Afterward it is before the Son of man that the nations are summoned to render account of their ways. Besides, the Father judges nobody, but has committed all judgment to the Son. Here it is the Son of man come and seated on the throne of His glory. Remark that when He sits on the great white throne to judge the dead (not the living, as here), He does not come at all. Heaven and earth flee away from before His face. This is not to come there. He it is, when He comes in His glory (compare Joel 3:11, et seqq.) that He sits on the throne of His glory and that He gathers the nations. The blessed put on His right hand are blessed of His Father, but they are children; not companions of the Judge, like the risen and the changed; they do not come with Him; they were mixed up with the goats until the King separated them. Now this is not true of Christians, for the dead in Christ rise apart, then go to meet Him with those changed. They are risen in glory. Jesus, who was their first-fruits in His own resurrection, comes and transforms the body of their humiliation according to the likeness of His glorious body. Their resurrection is as a thing wholly apart, and alone the

faithful go to meet the Lord. Here He comes to the earth, separates the faithful and condemns the wicked who had despised their brethren, at the same time that He gives to those who had received them (His brethren) the kingdom prepared for them by His Father. This is not however the kingdom of the Father as in Matt. 13:48. Nevertheless all flows from the Father and from His counsels as the source and cause of the blessing. It is an earthly kingdom, the blessing of which flows from the counsels and the goodness of the Father of Him who was there as lion of man—a kingdom prepared for them not before but from the foundation of the world; the result of the government of God here below, but according to the counsels of God. The fire into which the wicked are to be cast was prepared for the devil and his angels.

Chapter 160

Notes on Matthew 26

Now, having finished that which He had to say when He had quitted or rather abandoned Jerusalem, the Lord recalls the attention and the thoughts of His disciples to His sufferings and His cross. Two days later came the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man was to be betrayed in order to be crucified. This was not the mind of the sages of the world, of the great men and the authorities, who found that the moment was hardly opportune at the time when there would be such a gathering together of people. For these, having enjoyed in vast numbers the effects of His power and His goodness, might stir up a tumult if the authorities attempted to get rid of Him in a violent and unjust manner. But in the counsels of God that was to be accomplished at this time.

True Lamb of God, He was to suffer for us in realizing the type of the deliverance out of Egypt by means of a redemption excellent in a very different way. Also the Lord, in the value of His perfection, announces to His disciples that which was going to happen, making use of the very plots of the guides of the nation to accomplish the counsels of God, whilst all their precautions were reduced to nothing. Now man was sufficiently wicked and the enemy sufficiently powerful, When God permitted it, that there should be no tumult. The world shows itself completely under the power of its prince, and the enemy of God. As far as tumult was concerned, there were only those cries, Crucify Him, crucify Him.

All that which follows is the solemn testimony that, at this supreme moment, the Savior, the victim of atonement, the Lamb destined for the slaughter, the Sheep dumb in the hands of him that shears it; was to find no succor, no refuge, no support for His heart, not one to have compassion on Him though He sought for it. At the same time His perfection, His grace are displayed so much the more that He is put to the proof.

We are going to run over a little in detail the account of this grace and of this patience. One learns in it the perfection of the Savior, where it is presented in the most touching and at the same time the most admirable manner. The close of the life of the Lord is distinguished in this respect that it is regarded at a different point of view in each Gospel, as also all the rest of His history, whilst Mark and Matthew present the same portrait with but little differences. But the Gospel of John shows us the person of the Lord God, the Word made flesh, eternal life in the world. Also in Gethsemane and on the cross, we find there neither suffering nor humiliation, but a divine person which passes through them in His power. In Luke, it is the Man who, in Gethsemane, feels more the trial as man, but who is victorious in it, so that on the cross the expression of suffering is not found. In Matthew, as the victim of propitiation, He answers nothing if it is not to make a good confession and render testimony to the truth, the solo motive of His condemnation. The Spirit of God shows here in a positive manner the forsaking of men and even of His disciples, in which the Lord found Himself without any consolation for His heart; then finally the forsaking of God on the cross when He cries to Him, praying that God should not be far from Him, when bulls and dogs compassed Him. In a word we have, in John, the Son of God always man; in Luke, the man; in Matthew, the victim of atonement; but the circumstances are of profound interest, and we wish to

touch on them.

Notes on Matthew 27

The death of Jesus being already determined in the unpremeditated council held at the beginning of the night, when He had been brought before Caiaphas, the scribes and the Pharisees held a formal council very early in the morning to pronounce His definite sentence; then they lead Him away to Pilate. Here we find the iniquity and blindness of all in presence of Him who was about to die. Judas who, evidently as it seems to me, thought that Jesus would escape them as He had so many times escaped, as long as His hour was not yet come, struck in any case in his conscience at seeing Jesus condemned, comes to the chief priests with the thirty pieces of silver. Seized with remorse, be declares that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood. Little sympathy awaits him there. They had attained their end; their business had succeeded; as to the sin of Judas, it was his affair. Such is all the compassion that remorse finds with those who make use of the iniquity that produces it. The end is attained; and if their instrument is lost forever, so much the worse for him; it is his business. They have gained their end. Judas casts into the temple the silver, poor price of his soul; then goes away to hang himself, sad end of a life passed without conscience near the Lord. Nothing hardens like that. The cruel and insolent indifference of the chiefs of Israel, that does not relieve a bad conscience, pushes to suicide this man, who loses his life, his soul, and the money for which he had sold it.

But what a picture of the heart of man we find in what follows! Men who had no scruple in buying the blood of Jesus could not put in the, treasury the money they had thus employed, because it was the price of blood! What a testimony to the blindness of conscience! How much scruples differ from conscience Good and evil affect, the conscience, which in itself is the noblest of the faculties. The scrupulous man is servile, dreads for himself, is occupied with ordinances, and fears to violate them. The god that the scrupulous serves is a god who watches over what affects him; and he abandons his miserable servant who does not take account of that which concerns the honor and the will of the master that he fears. It is a false rancorous god, the god of a heart that knows not the true God, even when the heart names him the Eternal. If the heart is but externally in relation with the true God, it will neglect that which bears upon His true character: righteousness, true holiness, love, to be occupied with His ordinances, which man without faith and without knowledge of God can accomplish, and which he fears to neglect because he is afraid of God. Now the chief priests could attach importance to Israel which was being ruined and which had been rejected before because of its iniquity: Israel ought not to be defiled; but for miserable Gentiles to whom the door was going to of closed on Israel, a field defiled by the money which had bought it was good enough. It is thus that a place of burial is bought for strangers. All is blindness, pride, and darkness. Light they would not have. But the counsel of God, declared long before by the prophet, was to be accomplished. When their counsel was opposed to that, it came to nothing; but their own acts of folly were accomplishing the prophecies that they heeded not, though they were constantly read in their synagogues.

Now Jesus was standing there before their governor. He bears a good confession before Pontius Pilate. He is the King of the Jews. When the Jews accuse Him, He is mute. He is there to be

victim. God gives testimony to Him by the dream of Pilate's wife; then the governor makes efforts to deliver Him from the bloodthirsty malice of the Jews, profiting by a habit they had of releasing a prisoner at Passover. But the unhappy Jews must consummate their iniquity, for the moment arrives when God permits iniquity to have its course even unto the end, in order that it should be manifested such as it is. Thus was propitiation accomplished by the suffering and death of Jesus. Pilate shows only the feebleness of a man who despised all that which surrounded him; of a man who would keep his conscience, but had very little of it and still less of the fear of God; of a man who, when it becomes too inconvenient to him to maintain righteousness, yields to the violence and perseverance in evil of a will which fights utterly against God and good. In the eyes of Pilate it was not worth while, for a poor just man who had no human importance, to compromise both his person and the public peace. He washes his hands of it, and leaves the responsibility of this death on those who desired it.

Poor Jews! This responsibility they take on them; they do also bear its penalty up to this day. “His blood,” say they, “be on us and on our children.” Terrible curse that this poor people calls on itself; curse which weighs on it until sovereign grace, in bringing a little remnant to repentance in which it will feel the sin which has been committed, changes the blood of a curse into the blood of expiation; and this on God's part who will cleanse them from the sin which they committed in shedding it. The sovereign grace of God is that alone which can find in the very iniquity of man the means of accomplishing the salvation of him who has been guilty of it. It is thus that we, who have been saved of this same grace, can render testimony to it everlastingly. In the work which saves us we have no part but our sins and the hatred which accomplished it on man's side. This poor people was on this occasion to show to what point it had fallen, abandoned of God. They chose a robber in place of the Son of God, a murderer, but a man who flattered their own passions in exciting them against the Romans, their masters, to whom they were subjected because of their sins. Now Pilate releases to them Barabbas and delivers to them Jesus after having scourged Him already owned to be innocent; for that which characterizes Pilate here is the want of heart and a proud indifference wholly stamped with cruelty.

Now the beloved Savior endures all the indignities which can rise in the heart of man brutal and free to exercise a power which finds its pleasure in making those suffer over whom it rules for a moment. For man is a tyrant by nature, and when several are united, there is no moral force found where the most amiable dispositions exist, and thus one falls to the bottom of the ladder; one is ashamed of amiability, and all is on the level of what is the lowest. Poor fallen creatures! Besides, Pilate, their chief, had given them the example of it.

Nevertheless, that which especially concerns us here, that which ought to interest us, is the Lamb destined to the slaughter, the Sheep dumb before its shearer. The precious Savior bears the insults and injuries of those who were only capable of taking joint pleasure in evil and of acting in consequence. He was not the One who would resist or do anything whatever to withdraw from it. He was come to suffer and give His life as a ransom for many. Only we can remark that Jews and Gentiles unite to reject and trample under foot Him who does not resist them. The chosen nation and the last beast, the Roman beast to which God had given the reins of power on the earth, put themselves in agreement, quite hostile though they were among themselves, to persecute and insult the Son of God. If the Jews go on before to demand His blood, the Gentiles lend themselves to the Jews to shed it. Now all is accomplished. The Savior is led away to be crucified, the victim of

propitiation for our sins.

It would appear that Jesus was physically feeble, for they compelled a man of Cyrene, named Simon, to bear His cross. They at least would not do so; alone, Jesus could not. Insolence and tyranny are here in play; in men there was joy in oppressing and putting to death the Son of God. Man was getting, rid of Him to his ruin. But though these bulls of Bashan were there, though these dogs surrounded the Savior, the great and for us the precious figure of the outline is the Victim silent and mute, the Lamb which goes to the slaughter. The account has a perfect simplicity; but the fulfillment of the prophecies unrolls before our eyes in an admirable manner; the spiritual view pierces across circumstances, contemplating the patient and divinely calm figure of the Son of God, perfect in His submission. They offer Him vinegar mixed with gall, the effect of which was to stupefy in the midst of the sufferings; but the Lord did not seek such relief. He was there to suffer and to accomplish the will of His Father, not to escape the consciousness of that which this obedience cost Him. They share His garments and cast lots on His vesture, which, without that, they must have torn. So it was written. Now, the Savior, exposed naked to the derision of the soldier, was not insensible to the ignominy which He suffered, although He did not turn away His face from it. There was no one to have compassion for Him; no one to confess His name, had not God the Father forced man to render testimony to Him, for Pilate had inscribed His title on the cross: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” The Jews had wished to avoid this affront; but that must turn to their confusion without remedy and veil, and He whom they had rejected must receive His true title in spite of them. Their King was crucified; but God had taken care that He should be owned and proclaimed such.

Nevertheless personally He was to be outraged to the last point. The lowest state in which man could find himself left him always man; and at this supreme moment it was no question of making the difference between us more openly wicked and another who should have escaped the degradation that sin produces. It was a question of placing man, such as he is, in face of the Son of God. Also a robber it is here on the side of men, associated with them against a God of love. In that they are together and equal. This robber could, in concert with the others, insult the Son of God. All is leveled; Christ alone is abased beneath man; a worm, as He said, and no man; yet was He God revealed in man. The Man who revealed God was there; and the reproaches that reproached God fell on Him. The Lord suffered and accomplished His work, more sensitive than any man to all that, for in Him was no trace of the hardness which renders insensible to circumstances nor of the pride which conceals them, or which at least seeks to conceal them: He felt all with a sensibility which all the malice of men could not change; and perfect in patience appealed to His God from them. “But thou, O Jehovah, be not far from me.”

The Jews boasted of having attained their aim. Man deceived by Satan thought to have rid himself of God whose presence troubled him. They wagged the head, saying, “He saved others: himself he could not save.” What words! To own His power fully manifested, to reject what was divine, to avow that they actually banished God from their midst! In fact, He could not save Himself, not being able to think of Himself: the love which had saved others went further and gave Himself for us. Perfect love for His Father, obedience to His commandments, His perfect love to us, hindered His saving Himself. He might have had His twelve legions of angels, but He was come for others, not for Himself; finally, loving His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end. If He was to save others, He could not save Himself. His love and His obedience were complete. That

which marks the frightful blindness of these poor priests, is that they cite the words which, in the Psalm where His death is described so as it is here described, come out of the month of the godless and the wicked. (Psa. 22:7, 8.) In all this it is a question of men and of Christ; but, as I have said, He appeals from them to God. Such is what we find in Psa. 22: “Be not far from me.”

Now comes the moment when His position, His relation with God, must pass before our eyes. “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.” Thus, even by outward circumstances, God separated His Son from outrages and insults purely, human in order that He should be alone with Him and entirely for His solemn work. He was alone with God, made sin nothing to turn aside the cap of justice; nothing to deaden it. The power which was in Him did not shelter Him; it rendered Him capable of bearing that which weighed on His soul; the feeling of the horror of the curse in the measure in which the love of the Father was familiar to Him; the feeling of that which it was to be made sin in the measure of the divine holiness which was in Him; and neither the One nor the other could be measured. He drank the cup of the judgment of God against sin. All forces Him to utter the cry—a cry which we are allowed to hear that we might know what passed there, the reality of atonement: “My God, my God, why hast thou. forsaken me?” —a forsaking which none can fathom, save He who felt it, but which, in the little measure wherein its shadow only touches us and passes over us, is more terrible than all which the heart or body of man can undergo. In the month of Jesus it expressed all that which His heart, and that heart alone, could feel.

Moreover, Psa. 22, from which it is taken, is the voice of Jesus Himself. Psa. 20; 21 speak of the sufferings of Christ, such only as man can understand when he sees them. They are, as it were, inflicted by men, and bring about the consequences which result from them for their victim and for those who inflict them—the exaltation to the right hand of God of the One who suffered; destructive wrath upon His enemies. But who was the enemy of Christ, in His character of expiatory Lamb? No one. He suffered, in giving Himself, on the part, of God in righteousness; the stroke itself—the sufferings—was the stroke of justice. Moreover, as to its consequences, in Psa. 22, all is grace and blessing for all those who are the objects of it—from the little remnant which thus acknowledged Jesus, and which became the church, to the millennium and “the people that shall be born.” All declare that He hath done this.

It is interesting to see all the testimonies of God in these Psalms (19-22.). The creation above (for down here it is too much ruined to serve as such); the law (Psa. 19); next (Psa. 20) the testimony of Jesus, looked at prophetically, such as He presents Himself to the heart of His disciples; the answer (Psa. 21); next, finally, what Jesus alone can manifest, that which passed between His soul and God, that which His soul only was capable of expressing. Now this was not either weakness or exhaustion, as some men of petty thoughts have taken into their heads to say; a materialism to which not only is the Christian doctrine unknown, but which betrays a total want of feeling and of sound judgment.

Now, not only the work has been accomplished, but all the circumstances which prophecy had announced as about to happen, have received their accomplishment. Moreover He Himself was to give up His life into the hands of His Father. It was not to be taken from Him. He gave it up Himself. He entrusts His mother to John; He then fulfills the last prophetic circumstance. A true Man, absolutely calm, and, as we men say, with perfect self-possession, He declares that He

thirsts as the result of His sufferings, and tastes the vinegar which is conveyed to His mouth by means of a sponge attached to a reed. All was finished; atonement, perfect according to God; the work of redemption; all the prophetic circumstances, absolutely everything had received its accomplishment, whether as to man or as to God. Then, with a cry which indicated at the same time a strength in its fullness and an entire confidence in His Father, He commits His soul to Him in that critical moment in which death had part, but in which it lost from that time forward all its power—at least for the believer. With this cry, which announces the end of all human relationship with God, save in judgment, and the end of all the means which God could employ to re-establish such a relationship with the children of Adam, Jesus expired.

At this very moment, that which expressed the impossibility of man's approaching to God, the veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom, and the sanctuary, the holiest of all, where the throne of God is found, is opened. We can enter with boldness (Heb. 10:19, 20) by this new and living way, because of the precious blood which has been shed. The ancient state of things was ended, whether as to the relations of man with God, or in that which concerns the very creation. Not however that the new order of things is yet established, because grace still seeks the co-heirs of Christ; but, in the rejection of the Son of God, all relationship of the first man and of the first creation with God has been ended forever. A new basis has been laid down in righteousness and by the full revelation of God in sovereign love, for the eternal joy of man, in the Second Adam and in the new creation. The veil, which characterized the state of man as to his relations with God, of man who was not only a sinner in Adam, but who had always failed, spite of God's employing all possible means in order to form fresh links of relationship with him—the veil which said, “Man cannot come to God,” is rent, the earth quakes, and the rocks are rent. The power of death is also destroyed, as well as that of the devil who possessed it.

Historically it was only after the resurrection of Jesus that the dead rose and appeared to many in Jerusalem, as a witness of that which had been wrought; nevertheless the fact is here connected with the death of Jesus, because it is by this death that the work of deliverance has been accomplished which made resurrection possible; a work to which testimony has been thus rendered in an extraordinary manner. It is a question of the bodies of saints—a precious anticipation of the first resurrection, when death will be swallowed up in victory. It will perhaps be asked, “What became of them?” None knows, because God has not said. The fact itself is a testimony rendered to the efficacy of the death of Jesus. The question only proceeds from the vain curiosity of man, and God does not make revelations to satisfy that curiosity.

The Roman officer who was on guard, consequently on the sentence pronounced on the prisoners, as well as the soldiers who were then with him, seeing the earthquake and all that had happened, are seized with fear, and acknowledge that Jesus is indeed “the Son of God.” This was the cause of His condemnation by the priests and scribes. They had involuntarily borne testimony to Pilate that He called Himself so, which had alarmed the latter, whom a bad conscience was already making afraid—so that, with all that had been noised abroad in Palestine through the deeds of power He had wrought there, this thought ran throughout the world; it was known of all. These extraordinary facts which accompanied His death, the cry full of strength with which, without apparent motive, He drew His last breath, all the circumstances which surrounded His departure from this world, bore witness that His death was more than a human death. The hearts of those who were taking part, overpowered by such events, might (even in their natural state) declare that

this was the Son of God. As to the result in themselves, no one can know anything of it. Here it is the testimony which these poor pagan hearts, under the influence of the events which were passing under their eyes, could not refuse, while the hardened hearts of the Jews— “his own” —of those to whom He had come, were rejoicing in His death. Nothing hardens like religion when the heart is not changed. The natural heart is evil, not hardened, and facts in which God manifests Himself can act upon such a heart.

From this time forth it is a question of the resurrection, testimony which God renders to the perfection of the Victim and the perfection of His work; to the divine perfection of the One who went down to death, into the lower parts of the earth, so that, having ascended on high, He fills all things, not only as God, but according to the efficacy of the redemption He had now accomplished. (Eph. 4) For the moment, what occupies us is the part which men took in these events, but, above all, the part which women took in them. It is here that the good handmaids of the Lord have their good portion. The disciples count for nothing in it; they had fled; and in all this scene of grief, with the exception of John, they are not seen. Moreover it is Mary Magdalene who becomes the messenger of the risen Lord, to communicate to the disciples the privileges He had just acquired for them. The women had already followed Him from Galilee; had furnished Him with what was needed for His wants while He walked as man on the earth; now they were going to care for His burial, if God Himself had not anticipated them. Already they had accompanied Jesus to the place where He was to be crucified, looking from a distance on the solemn scene which was displayed before their eyes. Now Jesus was to be “with the rich in his death.” Joseph of Arimathea goes. in therefore to Pilate, who delivers to him the body of the Savior. God wished to honor Christ, spite of the dishonor which was inflicted on Him on man's part, and even on account of that dishonor. Joseph puts Him in his own tomb, wherein man never before was laid, wrapping Him in a winding-sheet; next he waits, as the law required, till the sabbath should be passed, in order to carry out the honorable sepulture which he was preparing for Him; meanwhile he rolls a great stone before the mouth of the sepulcher. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (wife of Cleopas) are found there, watching and contemplating, with the profound interest produced by an ardent affection and by a bond of attachment which divine grace had created in their hearts, specially in that of Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.

Nevertheless it was not only three blessed women and Joseph, the disciples up to that time timorous, but whom the extreme iniquity of the Jews, as often happens, forced to show himself, who were occupied with the remains of Jesus: the chief priests, goaded by a bad conscience, which always inspires fear, think of what Jesus had said—for they knew it very well—namely, that He would rise again. With them it was a fixed determination, an enmity against good and against all testimony borne to its power, an enmity which left them neither rest nor respite. They go in to Pilate, asserting that His disciples might come by night, take away His body by stealth, then say that He was risen. They wanted Pilate himself to secure the body of Jesus. But they themselves were to serve as involuntary witnesses to the resurrection of the Savior. Pilate, full of contempt and not caring to serve their malice, leaves them the task of guarding against the removal of the Lord's body by His disciples. They place seals on the tomb, besides a guard to watch against every attempt of the kind. This was only to make the fact of the resurrection more patent, and to secure its proof in such a manner as to leave room, where there should be good faith in man, for no controversy.

Notes on Matthew 28

Here the recital becomes rapid and abrupt. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrive at the end of the sabbath—that is, the evening of Saturday—to see the sepulcher. Then, in the morning of the Sunday, the sepulcher opens, an angel having rolled away the stone from the entrance. The glory of this angel terrifies the soldiers who are guarding it, so that they become as dead. The same angel comforts and encourages the women; he shows them where the body of the Lord had lain, saying, “Fear not; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified, He is not here, for he is risen, as he said.”

That which follows has altogether the character of this Gospel: it is important to remark this. We find neither the profoundly interesting and instructive conversations which are recounted in the Gospel of John, nor the ascension which took place at Bethany, and is related by Luke. The angel tells the women to go quickly and tell His disciples that He was risen, that He was going before them into Galilee, and that there they should see Him. This makes conspicuous an entirely new character of His relations with them since His resurrection. He is still with the remnant, with the poor of the flock, in the place where the Messiah was to appear to Israel according to the prophecy of Isaiah. These relations are renewed on the footing of resurrection. No doubt He possessed all power in heaven and earth; but He was re-establishing His relations with the remnant of Israel, not yet as King manifested in glory to subdue the nations, but as associated with His disciples, viewed in the character of messengers of the kingdom, then when Christ, rejected from Jerusalem, had gathered the residue of Israel, and had recognized them in grace. Such is the character which the disciples wear here. The women go to announce these things to the disciples; they enjoy, by virtue of their faithfulness and their attachment to Jesus, this special privilege. They are the first witnesses (and that even to the apostles) of the victory which the grace and power of God gained over the efforts of the enemy, now conquered for evermore.

Nevertheless it is not only the angel who sends them. As they are going to carry the message to the disciples, Jesus Himself, full of love, comes to meet them, so that they may be eye-witnesses of His presence on earth: a touching response of the Savior to their fidelity; a blessed testimony, which proves that the heart of Jesus is as full of love and of human condescension now that He is risen, as when He was walking in lowliness down here, the most accessible of men. He also encourages them. But this fact is related to other truths which are connected with the position which the Lord takes in this Gospel, and specially on this occasion. In John, where the heavenly side and the actual position of the Savior are in question, He forbids Mary Magdalene to touch Him. She thought she had again found Him whom she loved, as come back on the earth to remain there in His character of risen Messiah. Such was not the case; He was ascending to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. His bodily presence on earth was no longer to be the object of affection to His own. He had placed them in His own position before His Father; in the same relationship as His own—ever a man with God, the well-beloved Son of the Father. This is why Thomas will only believe on condition of touching Him; the Lord grants him this favor, but makes him feel nevertheless, that those who believe now without having seen are more blessed

than those who will only believe when they see. Christians, though now they see Him not, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; while the remnant, typified by Thomas, will only believe when they look upon Him whom they have pierced.

The unhappy Jews seek to hide their confusion, without humbling themselves, without repenting. By bribes they induce the soldiers to spread the report, even at the risk of falling under the severity of the Roman discipline, that the disciples had taken away His body while they slept.

Finally, the eleven go into Galilee to a mountain which the Lord had appointed them. Doubt still remained in the heart of some, but they worship Him as soon as they saw Him. Their doubt is changed for us into certainty, based not only on the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul—the true foundation of faith—but on the clear evidence that it was neither a fable of their invention, nor a history arranged beforehand, nor the fruit of an ardent imagination which only saw what it wished. Some of the disciples themselves doubt, as we have seen in the case of Thomas; they believe only on irresistible evidence, sealed by the gift and the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven on the day of Pentecost. I think that there were present on that occasion other disciples besides the eleven; perhaps the five hundred of whom Paul speaks.

Here the mission of the apostles has its point of departure at the interview in Galilee with their risen Master; it is a remnant already associated with Jesus; it is not, as in Luke, a Savior who ascended to heaven, and who from heaven begins with Jerusalem, just as took place. Here Jerusalem is forsaken, and delivered into the hands of the wicked and of the Gentiles, while the remnant of Israel is associated with the Messiah rejected, but now risen; then those who are thus associated with the disowned Lord are sent to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This mission, up to the present time, has never been accomplished. The mission to the Gentiles was formally transferred to Paul by those who were pillars among the apostles (Gal. 2), with divine authority from Jesus glorified, and by the direct mission of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:4; 26:16-18.)

It is possible the other apostles may have gone later; but the history which is given us in the word does not speak of it, unless it be in a very general and even vague verse at the end of Mark. The apostles remained at Jerusalem at the time of the persecution which took place after the death of Stephen; then the gospel was carried to the nations by those scattered abroad, and later on committed to Paul. John is found in Patmos, left last of all to watch over the church in its decline. The last verses of Mark say that they went everywhere, and that the Lord wrought with them to confirm the preached word by the signs which it was granted them to per. form. However it may he here, in Matthew, the commission is given them. They were also to teach the baptized nations to observe all that Jesus had commanded the disciples, and He Himself would be with them to the end of the age. It is not the Christian mission properly so called; this is found rather in John 20, Luke 24, and Mark 16.

Chapter 163

Giving

The great characteristic of the present dispensation is that God is revealed as a Giver. In its season during the legal dispensation, that is from Moses to Christ, He made certain requirements on man; for man had, been created a responsible being, put into relation with His Creator as a creature, and under obligation to Him. The law was the perfect measure of those obligations due from the creature to His Creator. But addressed as it was to man already fallen under the power of sin, it could only bring out his infinite distance from God. And just as every standard puts to the test all things that are put under it, so the true use of the law was a test to bring to man's conscience his guilt, and to give him the knowledge of his sinful state by nature.

In this way it was a most useful schoolmaster to the Jew who would learn its lessons. Shutting him up to death under its, demands and potting him under the curse) it would phew him that the only way of deliverance and pardon was through the promised Messiah.

In due time the Messiah came, and the change in God's dealings with man was most sweetly brought out in the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus the Jew in John 3:16, and with the Samaritan woman in John 4:10. These were the words, “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life,” and again, “if thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and be would have given thee living water.” God was now revealed as a Giver, giving His Son; the blessed and only way by which poor guilty man, born in sin and lost, could have his sins met and answered for; the only way by which he could be delivered from his state of sin, and set in a place where he could really please and glorify God. And since the Gentile born in sin (yet having the light of creation and conscience as his rule), and the Jew (having the law as his perfect standard), have both been proved on that ground utterly lost, and shut up to death, so now Christ having been revealed to the whole world as the gift of God, both Gentiles and Jews are shut up to Him as the only way of salvation.

In scripture, we have in various places, God figured in relation to His creature as a creditor, and the sinner His debtor. (See Luke 7:41; Matt. 18:28) 24.) In Luke 16 we have man in relation to God, set before us as an unjust steward, who has wasted his Master's goods, who has already had to give an account of his stewardship, and received the sentence that he can be no longer steward.

Everything was committed to him, entrusted to his charge in the garden of Eden. Adam had dominion over the earth, and all its treasures, but alas! the One thing that God kept to Himself, as it were in His secret treasure box, man broke open and stole, and be has forfeited in consequence his own life, and all the treasures of the earth. His history since has been the misappropriation of his Lord's goods to his own use. Now, all this brings out that man is in debt to God, and not only that; he is a thief and unfaithful steward that has misappropriated his master's goods.

But behold the giving God as displayed in the gospel He has given His Son; His Son has paid the debts of every repentant sinner in His blood; not only that He has repurchased the earth and its treasuries, and though rejected now, will finally return again to take it in power, reigning over it in partnership with His fellow-heirs, to whom in the meanwhile He has given as their own superior portion the glory of heaven. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

And now my reader, before I go on, one word to you. Have you taken the place of the happy receiver? Have you, like the poor woman in Luke 7, owing your Lord the five hundred pence, taken your place at His feet, saying, Nothing to pay, yet owning your debt and your guilt? If so, behold His wounded hands and side pierced on the cross for you; there He bore your sins, there He paid the debt, and the consequence is, that on the righteous basis of His blood having been presented to God, free forgiveness comes to you from your creditor. He frankly forgives or remits your debt.

Christ was the grand exhibition of the giving God. He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. (2 Cor. 8) He emptied all His heavenly riches into our penniless stores, to pay our debts, yet of such worth was He, that all who believe in Him are lifted out of their abject poverty, and put into connection with Himself in His present rich place in heaven.

May the Lord open my readers' eyes to understand about God in His wondrous grace. Surely to do this is the foundation and source of all giving. I shall never understand the principle of giving till I understand the grace of God in His ways of giving salvation to me. Then having received all from His hands, having had all my sins answered for and blotted out, and having been put into connection with the infinite worth of His blessed Son's person who is in the glory, my state as a child of Adam is ended at the cross. I have eternal life now in the Son, and am able to go forth like the giving God to give to others; I see Him as my pattern and example, as shown in Christ, both as a giver and dependent one; and I am privileged to go forth and empty into the penniless stores of others what God has given me, either as Creator or Redeemer.

Giving to the world. Now giving has as its object two classes of people: namely, the world and the church. To the former, the dealing of God is that of pure grace, asking nothing, requiring nothing. To the latter, being under His government, there are more or less conditions attached. We shall see this brought out as we look at the various scriptures that bear on the subject.

In Matt. 5 the Lord says, that whereas it was said in old time, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; I say unto thee, that ye resist not evil. Give to him that asketh of thee, and to him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. I am not to ask questions if the recipient is worthy, neither surely am I to give the amount that he asks, but to give, for God gives. The people brought their sick to the Lord: the Lord having power and grace healed them, requiring nothing, asking nothing. Many were utterly unworthy objects; yet He was the exhibition of the giving God, and He gave freely.

So again the Lord says, that whereas it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy, 1 say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be (in character) the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. He makes no difference in these respects in

His favors. The evil despise His benefits, the unjust give Him no thanks, but His sun rises, His rain descends upon the most unworthy. So are we called to be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. The wicked borroweth and payeth not again, we are told, but the righteous showeth mercy and giveth, (Psa. 37:21), beautifully harmonizing with the God who is rich in mercy, who has shown us that mercy in quickening us who were dead in our sins. (Ephesians See also Luke 6:30-36.) Again, he that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again. (Prov. 19:17.)

Giving to the saints. But there is something even more precious than giving to the poor of this world, in the eyes of the Lord, and that is expressed in the words, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. (Matt. 25:40.) And again, The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always. (John 12:8.) This latter passage no doubt refers to the Lord Himself, but when linked on with other passages which show that His people are seen as Himself, it becomes a principle of much value to us as to giving. In giving to the least of the saints, I am giving to Christ Himself, and He was the real poor man, still poor as exhibited in His saints.

A principle of great value comes out, in regard to the way of using the means the Lord has given us, in Luke 16 There man, as I have shown before, is looked at as having utterly failed in his stewardship, and as having received the sentence that he should be no longer steward. The unjust steward of the parable then says, “What shall I do, for my lord taketh away my stewardship? I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of my stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.”

And so what does he do? Between the time of the sentence and the execution of it, in making up his lord's accounts, he makes friends with the lord's debtors; he so uses his lord's money that, when he is put out of his lord's house, these friendly debtors may receive him into their houses. And so man has been found unfaithful in his stewardship; he has lost his place on the earth (Israel had that place specially in the land of Canaan). Now the question is how to make the best use of the unrighteous mammon, so as to be received into heavenly habitations. Now I believe the debtors signify the Lord's people, all of whom are more or less in debt to Him: how many actually in their money affairs! The wise way of using my money, the unrighteous mammon, is so to make friends with it, that they might be my welcomers into the everlasting habitations in the glory. (See Luke 16:1-12.) But I think in reference to helping the Lord's saints, that there is a difference between them and the world. For instance, the Lord in paying down His life's blood on the cross for our sins, only paid the debts of those who in due time repent of their sins, and believe on Him for salvation.

So in helping God's saints who have got into actual debt through their fairy, I believe the way is not to help them without sincere repentance on their part, and a resolve to walk in the ways of the word in regard to those things, which says, Owe no man anything, but to love one another. (Rom. 13:8.) If I help a saint, for instance, encouraging him thereby to set up in business without capital to carry it out; I am only encouraging him in a path of dishonor to the Lord, in which the Lord can by no means go with me. Under the government of God I believe the principle is true as set forth in Psa. 37:25: “I have been young and now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging their bread.” God has promised food and raiment to His children (Matt. 6:24-34),

with the caution, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. The words, “Are ye not much better than the fowls? How much more shall he not clothe you, oh ye of little faith?” come in with unmistakable truth to faith wherever it is. Again, Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. See also Luke 12:22-31. Again, Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we can boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me. (Heb. 13:5-6.) All these sure promises ought to give confidence to the saints in the care of the Father, and prevent them from ever getting into debt, like other men. And indeed how can I give to others if I am in debt myself? I am then giving what is not my own, a terribly solemn thing when it is professedly done in the name of the Lord: I, am taking what ought to be in another man's pocket, and giving it to the Lord. Is not this hypocrisy?

But lastly the question comes in, How much are we to give to the Lord? Now, dear reader, this question would never come in, if you understood that you and all yours are entirely bought for the Lord. Israel's men, women, and children, and cattle, were all for Jehovah. All had to come out of Egypt. Moses would not hear of the compromise, that the men were to come out of Egypt, and the wives, children, and cattle to be left behind. Not a jot or tittle was to be left in Egypt or to be lavished on Egyptians. All was for Jehovah, and for the support of their families and other Israelites through the wilderness, but for nothing more. And so in a much higher sense all that the Christian possesses is the Lord's. The Lord says is to the principle of it in Luke 12:33, Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. On the day of Pentecost all was given up, and laid down at the apostles' feet, to be distributed equally amongst all. Truly this did not go on in the later times of the church. But the principle surely remains, and so in 1 Tim. 6 the rich are exhorted to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life. And such principles as are hewn in 2 Cor. 9:8-11, and Eph. 4:28, would surely be a check to saints who seek to get rich, as showing that the only purpose of laboring, and getting the blessings of God on it should be for the purpose of being an increased blessing to others, to abound in every good work, to have to give to him that needeth. As to usury, it, was absolutely forbidden between Jewish brethren: to the stranger they might lend on interest, but not to their brethren. If they took a pledge it was to be restored before evening, lest their poor brother should cry to God and He would hear him for He was gracious. Dreadful is it to hear of brethren who boast of their high standing and privileges in a heavenly Christ, yet lowering themselves below the level of the righteous Jew in their walk, leading their poor brethren into sin, in the matter of buying farms or land, which they cannot pay for, and then exacting interest, notes, and all kinds of things afterward, for the payment of it, thus becoming their oppressors. May the Lord lead His beloved saints to consider His principles in giving, and to abound individually in every good work!

In looking over then what has been said on the matter, we have found that the great source and motive power of giving is in the revelation of God Himself in the gospel. He is the Giver. He has given His Son. His Son has been to the cross, and paid the debt of every repentant and believing sinner; He has gone up to glory, as the accepted man, and by the communication of His own Spirit of life, believers are now connected with Himself in that place. Christ thus becomes the great

pattern and example of giving, and, the believer having been set in connection with Him in glory by the Holy Ghost come down, he is sent forth to exhibit Him in this world, and in principle to give up himself and all he has for the good of others. Then we have seen that giving his a two-fold sphere of action, namely, towards the world, and towards the church. Towards the world, the attitude is to give as the Father gives: He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good; He sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. Towards the saints, we have a special relation in regard to giving, they are members of the household of faith, and are one with Christ by the Holy Ghost. In giving to them, we do it unto Him. But here we are brought into the sphere of the direct government of the Lord; who never even at the beginning, in regard to His own, paid the debts of any but repentant sinners. Consequently, in giving to the saints, we are to act, wisely towards them for their good, so helping the Lord's debtors as that we may be received into everlasting habitations. The Father has conditions Himself of helping His children, and we are to be imitators of Him.

Lastly, I would allude to the principles of assembly giving. God, besides having saved believers by His Son's blood, and set them individually in connection with Him, has set up an assembly—in this world. It was formed consequent on the rejection of Messiah by Israel at the cross, by His exaltation to heaven, as man, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Saved by the cross, and connected individually with Christ raised from the dead, believers were on that day united to the glorified man by the Holy Ghost come down, baptized into one body, and builded together to be God's habitation by the Spirit.

Believers were thus formed on earth into a distinct assembly, separated from Jew and Gentile. They gave up everything; no one accounted anything that he had as his own. All was laid at the apostles' feet, and served for the common, need of all. (Acts 2:44, 45.) There was a daily ministration of the proceeds.

In due time murmurings arose amongst the disciples, the Greek proselytes supposing that the Jews were more favored in the administration. The apostles also found that the temporal care of the saints interfered with their primary work of preaching the gospel. Consequently seven men of honest report were chosen by the multitude, whom the apostles might appoint over this business, whilst they devoted themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word, The seven having been chosen, the apostles laid their hands on them, and they were appointed to look after the need of the poor saints. (Acts 6:1-7.) Afterward we see the local office reproduced amongst the Gentile churches in the deacons (see 1 Tim. 3), who had to have certain qualifications as to their character, to be set apart for the office. We see then by this that God has appointed a way for looking after His poor in the various local assemblies gathered to Christ's name. The money is put into the hands of these responsible qualified men, and it is their business to care for the need of the poor saints at each assembly.

So far then as to the order of the church set up at first, everything was simple. Each assembly had its local officers chosen by the assembly, and appointed by apostles. And thus the poor saints were looked after. Now the assembly is scattered in various sects and denominations, and only a few are gathered back to the name of the Lord Jesus on the original ground of the church of God. Perhaps in such an assembly there is not a single man with the necessary qualifications in it for such an office. What are the saints to do? Moreover, there are no apostles to lay hands on the men even if they were there.

The first thing to do is to confess the ruin of things and wait on the Lord; surely not to set about appointing deacons without qualification as set forth in the word, and without authority to appoint them. This would be to make the confusion worse, and to hide from the gathered saints the existing ruin. The great thing now for the saints to do is to abide strictly by the word, and to mark in their brethren the qualifications necessary for that place, and if there thankfully to own it. For instance, a deacon must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to ranch wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; and such were first to be proved. So their wives must be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. The deacons were to be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their houses well. If the gathered brethren discover such qualifications in their brethren, they should cheerfully and thankfully commit the money affairs of the assembly to such; and they would become responsible for the special need of the poor saints in that locality.

So far as to God's order and provision for the local poor in each assembly.

2nd. There may be a special need at a special time, in any given assembly, such as there was in the apostles' day amongst the poor saints at Jerusalem. We have already glanced at the way by which this need was met at first. After the great conference held at Jerusalem (as to whether the Gentiles were to be put under the law or not) was finished, the apostle Paul settled to remember the cause of the poor saints there amongst the Gentile churches. (Gal. 2:10.) In 1 Cor. 16:1-8, we see there was to be a special collection made for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The way it was to be collected was for every saint in each local assembly to lay by him in store as God had prospered him every first day of the week. Then when Paul came there would be no necessity for a special collection: The money would be all ready. In 2 Cor. 8 ix., we find that—the Macedonian assemblies had gone ahead of the Corinthians in their collection, so much so that the apostle took occasion to stir the Corinthian assembly up. Three great points were placed before them: 1st. Christ as the great motive power and example of giving (2 Cor. 8:9); 2nd. the gift of the manna and the way it was collected and distributed (chap. 5:14-15); 3rd. the governmental results in blessing as to giving. (2 Cor. 9:6-11.)

First then as to the motive. Christ who was rich, for their sakes became poor, that they through. His poverty might be made rich. Of course His example is an illustration of how saints should give their money in the same way as Christ had given Himself up to death to reap for them spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Himself. They had been set in connection with Christ by His grace, bought by His blood. All they were and all they had were His; and now, as made rich, it was their privilege to go forth as givers of Christ's bounty to others, and to supply their bodily need as their Lord had supplied their spiritual need.

Secondly, the principle and way of collecting the money is shown by the manna. God rained down the manna for the daily supply of the whole nation. Some Israelites gathered more and some gathered less, according to their eating. (Ex. 16:14-18.) It was then apparently all brought together, as the money on the day of Pentecost, and divided with an omer. (Compare Ex. 16:18 with Acts 2:44, 45; 4:34, 35.) Those that had gathered more thus supplied the need of those that had gathered less. So it was now the privilege of the richer assemblies amongst the Gentiles to supply the need of their poorer brethren at Jerusalem in this way (2 Cor. 8:13-15), on the ground that God's bounty was to all. Titus was sent by the apostle to stir up the Corinthians to this grace;

also another brother, whose praise was said to be in the gospel in all the assemblies, and who was also chosen by the assemblies to travel with the apostle in regard to this collection. (Ver. 16-24.) Another brother was also sent, who had been found diligent in all things. Certain men, approved also by each assembly, seem to have gone with Paul with this bounty to Jerusalem. So careful was the apostle that everything should be done above-board, and for the glory of the Lord. (See 1 Cor. 16:3; Acts 20:4 Cor. 8)

The governmental results of giving are shown in 2 Cor. 9 He that sowed sparingly should reap also sparingly, and he that sowed bountifully should reap also bountifully. God was able to make all grace abound towards the saints, so that they, having all sufficiency in all things, might abound in every good work, &c. These blessings were not given with the object of making the saints comfortable in this world, but that they might be enriched in everything unto all bountifulness; that they might have to give to him that needeth. (See vers. 5-11.)

May the Lord greatly stir up His assemblies in this grace, giving them opportunities of showing this grace to their brethren in other assemblies, and in perhaps distant lands!

But there is one point more in regard to assembly giving, which cannot be passed over, and that is the care of the laborers. The special gifts that Christ has given to the church to carry out the gospel to the world, and to build up and feed the saints, are the evangelists, pastors and teachers. (Eph. 4:11, 12.) Such passages as 1 Cor. 9:1-19; Gal. 6:6-10; Phil. 4:10-19, bring before the saints these as special objects of the Lord's care. In Israel's economy the Levite was to be specially cared for by the people giving their tithes to him. In the Christian economy there is no stated rule; only special principles are given to be carried out by the motive power of the love of Christ. These servants of Christ were figured as out on a warfare, planting a vineyard, feeding a flock. Did anyone go out on a warfare at his own charges? Did anyone plant a vineyard and not eat the fruit of it? Did anyone feed the flock and not drink the milk of it? Besides, as the law said, You must not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. Those who ministered at the altar ate of the things of the altar: so had the Lord ordained that they who preached the gospel should live of the gospel. For though the apostle glorified in preaching the gospel without charge, and that he might dive no occasion labored with his own hands, yet be thus puts the need of Christ's servants before the saints as objects for their care.

So, in Gal. 6:6: Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. In the Philippian Epistle we have a sweet instance of how an assembly cared for the apostle Paul from the very first. (Chap. iv. 15.) He had hardly left before he received at Thessalonica a love-gift to supply his need. And now they had been helping him again when a prisoner at Rome; and he writes to them full of love and thankfulness for their care. Epaphroditus to had been their messenger to carry the gift to the apostle, and in doing so he had apparently been sick nigh unto death. (See Phil. 2:29, 30.) Is not this a wonderful picture of reciprocal love between the assemblies in the apostles' days, and the laboring servants of the Lord? This was no cold formal putting so much into the money-box every week for unknown laborers, or giving so much into the ministers' fund; but the assembly had the need of the laborer on their heart, and their own messenger (perhaps going naturally to Paul at the time) conveyed it. Such a thing was an odor of a sweet smell, acceptable, well-pleasing to God. Thus we have three things specially connected with assembly—giving: lst. God's provision for the local poor in each place; 2nd. the

special need of poor saints in an assembly in another place; 3rd. the provision for the servants of God.

May the Lord graciously use this little paper to stir up His saints as to the principles of giving, both individually and in the assembly! It is, I believe, greatly needed. amongst the saints at the present time. Many of God's servants going about find that what is eating out the very life of many assemblies is covetousness on the one hand; then often, when God does not prosper saints in their ways of making money, and they get into debt, they plan all sorts of schemes of getting out of it, which are not of God. I believe the great corrective to this is to know God's principle, of giving, which, if carried out, would correct this evil tendency; and consequently health and blessing would flow in to the saints. It is remarkable that the very first sin which had to be, judged, after Israel entered the land of Canaan, was the sin at covetousness. Beloved readers, saints of God, have we considered this enough? But surely it is most significant. Covetousness, as defined by the Lord in Luke 12, is it not this?—man laying up “treasure for himself—and is not rich towards God.” A. P. C.

Chapter 164

Brief Sketch of Matthew

The aspect in which Christ is presented here is as the Emmanuel, Jehovah-Messiah, promised and prophesied of, presented to Israel but rejected, and thus rejected Israel making way for the assembly and the kingdom; but all in earthly or Jewish connection, from that point of view. Hence, as in John, the final scene is in Galilee, and there is no ascension.

Let us now go through its general structure as the evidence of special design—of a design which, has divine largeness of view and object. It begins with the roots of promise to come to the promised Seed—Abraham, David, Christ. There are none of the lovely details of the state of the poor and godly remnant in Israel which we find in Luke, but simply the accomplishment of prophecy in the miraculous birth of Jesus, whose name was to be the expression of the coming of Jehovah to save His people.

Next we have the false king seeking to thrust Him out, the Gentiles having come to own Him; God's wondrous testimony according to prophecy, and God providing, when once Jesus was thus owned, for the non-fulfillment of the blessing in legal Israel then, but a recommencing their history in His Son called out of Egypt. All this is in Bethlehem, according to prophecy. The result is, that He is cast out into Galilee among the poor of the flock, to be brought up as the separated One from among His people.

Next comes the voice foretold in the wilderness to announce the coming of Jehovah calling for repentance to meet Him, disowning right by birth from Abraham as sufficient. They must meet God. The fan was there to cleanse His floor (Israel), the ax already at the root of the trees. John recognizes the glory of the person of Jesus, but Jesus takes His place according to Psa. 16 among the poor in spirit, and godly ones among the people, the excellent of the earth. There He is owned as Son of God, and anointed and sealed with the Holy Ghost for His service in the earth. Then He is tempted and put to the test, and answers by passages from Deuteronomy, the book which contemplated Israel not in legal order but under a divine claim of obedience. John is cast into prison, and Jesus begins His ministry and carries it on the same footing among the people as John, and begins to gather disciples to Himself. The last three verses give a general account of all His services in Galilee, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom, and, by a display of power in goodness, drawing the attention of the whole country.

Thereupon, that there might be no mistake, He sits down and declares to His disciples, but in the audience of the crowd, who they were that would enter into the kingdom, and on what principles. This is the sermon on the mount. Israel was in the way with Jehovah to judgment. If he did not come to agreement, he would as to earthly government be cast into prison and remain till all was paid. Note, that rejection is supposed for the disciples. (Chap. 5:10, 11.) It is “the kingdom of heaven,” an expression peculiar to Matthew: that is, the rule of the kingdom is not on earth but in heaven, enlarged, when the fall result is seen (Matt. 13), into the Father's kingdom and the kingdom of the Son of man, a name which Christ takes on His rejection as the Christ, and always gives Himself, and which is the passage (from the prophecy of Him in Psa. 2, in which character

He was rejected and the kingdom not now set up) to His character in Psa. 8, in which He is Head over all things.

The special characteristics of the sermon on the mount are what is called the spirituality of the law, the claim of a sanctifying view and obedience, and the revelation of the Father's name. In a certain sense this part of the Gospel gives His whole position in Israel.

After the sermon on the mount we have details fully bringing out the display of Emmanuel, and the effect on Israel, and the opening the door to Gentiles. These we will go briefly through. We shall see that it passes withal directly on to dealing with the people in the last days in connection with what was then going on.

In cleansing the leper He shows Himself as exercising Jehovah's power in Israel, and yet subject to the law of Moses. In healing the centurion's servant with a word, we find Him owned as the divine disposer of all things; and He takes occasion by this faith, not found in Israel, to declare the bringing in of Gentiles to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the children of the kingdom of Israel after the flesh being shut out.

Time great principles being established, we have present condition—the blessed fulfiller of Isa. 53, and an outcast in Israel—the Son of man, but one for whom all must be given up.

Next, a picture of the result of being with Him—to man's eye, a storm which left no hope, at any rate they were in the same ship with Jesus; but He who seemed asleep (and was undisturbed by all), with a word commands all the elements, thus graciously rebuking their want of faith.

In the country of the Gergesenes His word dispels all the power of Satan; but occasion is given to display this power in the unclean, the swine (a figure, I have no doubt, of Israel's subsequent history). At any rate those who have seen this power in Him, when fully informed got rid of Him. Thus all His power, and Israel's and the Gentiles' history in connection with it, have been displayed.

Note herein the beautiful perfect display of the truth in the first case—Jehovah alone cleansed the leprosy. The leper saw His power, but doubted at least His goodness—could not reckon on it. Jesus, in words which God alone has a right to use, declares His grace, “I will.” Now if one touched a leper, he was unclean. But His holiness and nature were such that He could exercise His love to the uttermost in the midst of evil, undefiled and undefilable. And He touches him and says, “I will” —Jehovah (whom none could defile)—a man, to bring perfect love in power to the vilest.

In chapter 9, Christ is the Jehovah of Psa. 103. He forgives and heals at the same time. Next, He abounds in grace and calls the vilest; He comes as a physician to call sinners, not the righteous; nor can He put this new power of grace into the old bottles of Judaism. In the rest of the chapter—a picture, I do not doubt for a moment, of God's ways in Israel—He comes to intercept death. When there was individual faith in the crowd of Israel, power went out to heal; but really the object of His compassion was dead before He came. Resurrection must restore Israel. And so it will be with them. Owned as Son of David, He opens the blind eyes and the dumb mouth to praise God.

Such was His work in Israel; but the Pharisees, the nation in its legal pride, committed itself fatally, and ascribed the divine power to Satan. Awful word! But patient compassion was not exhausted,

and Jesus-Jehovah went healing everywhere, had compassion on the shepherdless multitudes, saw the harvest plenteous, and the laborers few, directing His disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest He would send out laborers. This He does in the next chapter (10.), but exclusively in Israel.

The twelve are sent out, but the terms of their mission extend, without taking the assembly into account at all, to the time of Christ's coming again. They are sent out in the midst of a hostile people, seeking the remnant, the worthy in Israel, and forbidden to go to Gentiles or Samaritans. But if rejected, judgment would come: He goes on to the time when the Spirit would be come, and till the time when the Son of man would be come. They had called the Master of the house Beelzebub (showing His estimate of the character Israel thus took), how much more His servants. But He encourages them by every promise, and especially the Spirit's help, and declares that all done to them would be considered as done to Him. This remarkable chapter shows the Lord, as we have seen the prophets before; passing over here from His first coming unbrokenly to the last days, leaving-out wholly the present period—for He forbids any gospel to Gentiles.

The patience of Christ continued to deal with Israel; but, in a certain sense, this was a closing testimony, I mean as to its character and nature. This is supposed to continue, as we have said, or rather not to be completed, till He came.

What follows in the Gospel discusses the moral character of His rejection, showing where rest was to be found, and afterward what would come in on His rejection. Thus, in chapter 11, on the inquiry by John, the character of His mission, and their reception of it, and of His own and their reception of that is unfolded, reproaching the cities with their unbelief, but shelving rest in Himself for the weary; and that the truth was, all was given to Him the Son; He alone knew the Father, and could reveal Him; and He was the Son: none at all could know Him but the Father Himself. But He did reveal the Father to those who came to Him.

He then shows the triumph of mercy over sacrifice—that a rejected David had eaten the shewbread, and that the priests profaned the sabbath in the temple; and a greater than the temple was there. The seal of Israel's covenant must give place to the Son of man. The same point is again insisted on with the Jews, and their whole system is judged. This was an all-important point. It was setting the whole system aside for grace. (Chap. 12.)

His silent and unobtrusive character is declared, but when the people own Him Son of David, the Pharisees repeat their blasphemy, and this leads to the formal judgment of the nation, and a prophecy of their last estate; that as the unclean spirit (of idolatry) had gone out, it would come back with seven worse ones to Israel. Then, on His mother and brethren (the links with Israel according to the flesh) coming, He will not own them, but only what is the fruit of His own word. This is fully unfolded in chapter 13.

There the Lord takes the character of a sower, one who does not seek fruit from what is already planted, but brings with Him what is to produce fruit. Then, in the six following parables, He propounds the character and forms the kingdom of heaven would take while the king was hidden, and had not taken to Him His great power and reigned: in three its outer aspect to the multitude; in three its inner to the disciples. Its character as kingdom of the Father and of the Son of man is given at the close. They are things new and old, the new unlooked-for character of what had been

told of in prophecy, which a scribe would already know.

In what follows we have the signs of the closing scene—John Baptist is beheaded, and the Lord retires. But, followed by the multitude, His companions still continue. He acts as the Jehovah of promise, and satisfies the poor with bread; but then retires even from His disciples, and returning to them, shows that He walks as on dry ground where they are tossed about, and can give power to faith to do it. All here depends on keeping the eye fixed on Jesus. Peter could have walked on a smooth sea no better than on a rough one. When they were in the ship, the wind ceased. Who with any sense can doubt this was significant? Israel dismissed; Christ alone on high; His disciples tossed about, yet taught to walk on the water to come to Him. When in the ship, all is peace, and, come to land (Gennesaret)—that world out of which He had been once expelled, they worship Him there. (Chap. 14.)

In chapter 15 we have the principles of the kingdom—truth in the inward parts contrasted with ordinances; man's heart evil, but grace going out to the vilest of an accursed race, where there was faith. The Lord again feeds the multitude, the fact having a distinct character, which for the present I pass by.

In chapter xvi., leaving the adulterous generation, the assembly is revealed, founded on His being the Son of the living God—as such He had never before been owned, it was proved in resurrection; and also the kingdom of heaven, whose administration was entrusted to Peter. This leads to the clear announcement to. His disciples that He must be rejected and die. At this moment, consequently, He charges them to say no more that He is the Christ, the character in which He is presented to Israel.

In chapter 17 the glory of the kingdom is revealed. But the disciples even could not profit by the blessing and power then present, and He was soon to leave that generation. He owns His disciples as with Him sons of the Great King, but, not to offend, submits as yet to the temple's demands.

In chapter 18: we have the spirit and flesh judging principles of the kingdom. The meek and lowly, and little children, are on His heart; for now it was, not Christ to Israel, but the Son of man come to save that which was lost: and the assembly, not the synagogue, became the place of which within and without could be said. Forgiveness characterized the kingdom, but judgment when grace was not owned; and so it happened to Israel.

We then get spiritual power, judging and holding flesh as dead, while the relations formed of God are fully maintained—the law, the way of life to the Jew, supposing it to be kept; but the state of the heart spiritually judged and Christ to be followed. (chap. 19.) All this is showing the effect of bringing in new power, applied to what the law treated of. In relationships, flesh not being judged, the law had gone below the original order of God, which was restored, but new power brought in to live wholly to God. The truth of life by law, on the other hand, abstractedly owned, but the state of the heart judged in respect of it (not merely outward conduct), and Christ the true test of this. All this is of vast importance at this moment of transition. Riches, instead of being a reward of righteousness in God's earthly government, were a snare to the heart as to its entrance into the kingdom of heaven; while giving up everything for Christ would surely not lose its reward: only man might judge amiss.

It was a new thing where (chap. 20.) all was grace, and fleshly claim of reward for so much ran athwart the ways of one giving in grace. The Lord then renews His announcement of His immediate rejection; and, James and John looking for a good place in Messiah's kingdom, the Lord shows them the Son of man was to suffer, giving His life a ransom, and they must take up the cross too: this was all He could give them, save as all was ordained of the Father. He that was least among them would be greatest. This closes the instruction.

The closing history commences here with the blind man at Jericho, as in all three Gospels—an additional evidence of a common plan, yet unquestionably not formed by the human authors—and Christ in the presence of Israel takes the character of Son of David. He then rides in on the ass, according to prophecy, and is celebrated as Son of David coming in the name of the Lord. (Chap. 21.) The fig-tree, the figure of Israel, is judged. And then, in succession, He judges virtually (each class coming up in succession to tempt Him) the chiefs of the nation, the whole nation being God's vineyard, who were at last rejecting the Son sent for fruit according to the old system. Here the kingdom of heaven according to grace is set forth (chap. 22.), on which He gathers the Gentiles, but judges when they are come in; then the Pharisees and Herodians as to their connection with the Gentile monarchies; then the Sadducees. Then He takes out of the law its divine and eternal essence, and by one question confounds the Pharisees as to how the Son of David could be David's Lord, and be taken up to God's right hand, which was just about to happen. This closes His intercourse with the nation. They had all passed in review before Him.

In chapter 23, however, He recognizes the seat of Moses still, and His disciples' connection with it, owning still existing Judaism; but then judges in the severest way its state, declaring that their last hypocritical excuse would be taken away from them; that prophets and scribes (so He calls the gospel witnesses here, as in connection with the people) would be sent to them, and thus the measure of their guilt be tilled up, and their house be left desolate till the last days, when the nation would own Him that came in the name of Jehovah.

In chapter 24 the disciples are told of the destruction of the temple, and then their ministry, on to the last days, is spoken of to verse 14; then the last half week of Daniel's seventy weeks is referred to, at the close of which the Son of man would come. The whole history of the Jews in Judea, and the scattered remnant, is given to verse 31; thence to chapter 25:31, we have practical warnings and parables as to the duty of the church and saints while He is away; thence to the end of chapter 20 the judgment of the nations in the earth when He shall be returned.

The historical close now comes—the attachment of Mary, the treachery of Judas, the closing of Christ's association with them (shown in not drinking of the wine then with them), till in a new way He drank it in His Father's kingdom, the millennial world to come. Kingdom of heaven and kingdom of my Father (the latter its character when He takes it in heavenly glory) are peculiar to this Gospel. Then we have fully the sorrows and sufferings of Gethsemane, but not what we found in John—only He could pray and ask His Father; but the scriptures must be fulfilled. He is in communion with the Father, but the suffering obedient man. So He answers when the high priest adjures Him, according to Lev. 5, but even here refers to His being, from this out, only known as Son of man sitting at the right hand of power as He is now, or coming again in that character. The people give up Christ, and desire a murderer, and say, His blood be on us and on our children—their true judgment to this day.

We have the details of His humiliation on the cross too, though no stupefying Himself with the offered potion, but obedience to the end. It is marked that it is not by weakness He expires, but crying with a loud voice. But His death closed the whole system publicly; the veil was rent, the very characteristic of the Jewish state, where man had no access to God; and the bodies of saints (Jews) arose. At the close it is only His connection with His disciples in Galilee, where He had connected Himself with the poor of the flock, that is noticed, and there is no ascension. Thus it fits into the renewal of a place with Israel on earth when the time comes. The mission supposes this, and sends the gospel out only to the nations: all power being His in heaven and in earth, they were to make disciples of them.

Now no one can doubt that the whole course of this Gospel is marked by a character wholly its own, the revelation of Christ to the Jews as theirs, but rejected by them; and thus the dispensational substitution of other things, the assembly and kingdom; while the connection of His disciples with Jewish things, only on a new footing, is distinctly marked and pursued to the last days, the assembly being overlooked in this part.

Chapter 165

Matthew 24-25

These chapters constitute the most distinct and definite portion of our Lord's service as a prophet. Strictly speaking, they only are the prophetic part of His ministry.

The previous part of the Lord's history was the presentation of Himself as the object of previous prophecy, to those who were responsible for His reception, as coming in by the door, according to that which those oracles of God had spoken concerning Him. This character and place of the Lord is particularly the subject of this Gospel, which bears in all its statements on the circumstances and condition in which the Jews were placed by previous scriptures. It closes in a very marked way in the previous chapter. The Lord had begun His ministry with the blessings of the character suited to His kingdom, revealed by the introduction of His Father's name. He closes, on the continued and willful rejection of Him by that people, by the woes justly denounced on them for their hypocrisy and iniquity. (Compare Matt. 5-7, and xxiii.) From one evil they claimed exemption, but in terms which showed their birthright in sin; they had not killed the prophets as their fathers had done. Jesus, assuming the character of Lord, hereon declares that He would send such unto them, and they should have an opportunity of showing the difference of their spirit and conduct; then they would treat them in the same way, and, the measure of iniquity being filled up to the brim, God would dash the cup out of their hand to fill it with His own wrath to be poured upon them. Then the Lord apostrophizes Jerusalem (for all this He speaks as Jehovah), His beloved Jerusalem given up for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, but still loved in itself and abstractedly in her children, and rejected with a “till,” and not cast away as not foreknown, “Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.”

Here came in the proper place of prophecy, this people and Jerusalem the special and immediate subject.

This will be more apparent if we see the character attached to prophecy, as originally given and brought forth to light. Previously, as His rejection of the Jewish people, and the glories of a better hope and a higher character began to dawn through the veil of their prejudiced hopes, and His humiliation. The Lord had given privately to His disciples the intimation of His rejection and deliverance to the Gentiles, and the resurrection which was to be the foundation of a future state of things, but they understood it not. Nor was it to be revealed till after His resurrection; it might be instruction to them, but was no general prophecy of what should happen concerning God's inheritance, though the center on which all those counsels hung. But here the Lord resumed the prophetic character; I say resumed, for so it was. Prophecy is not the law but the warning testimony of judgment when the law has been departed from, and the turning the eye of them that believe to better hopes and foreshown deliverance for the remnant. It supposes (though it may be in different form or extent) apostasy. Therefore we have, “beginning with Samuel and all the prophets,” for then Ichabod was written. The great divine presentation of the place, end, and character, of prophecy, is in Isa. 6 (however the world might be affected by it) as to the great object of the Lord's care—the vineyard of the Lord of hosts (for the nations He suffered to walk in

their own ways).

The whole head was sick and the whole heart faint, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot it was wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. As to the vineyard it brought forth wild grapes, its wall was to be broken down, it was to be laid waste. This was the state of things as to the righteousness of that people who formed the object of the Lord's care, the center of His earthly plans, the place of Messiah's visitation; but the Lord was unaltered in character and purpose; in character, and therefore He must throw down; in purpose, and therefore He would not cast away.

But His throne is now to be set up, as that from which prophecy was to flow, so it is, and His train fills the temple; and a man, though of unclean lips, is sent with lips purged by a coal from the altar, and then willing to go, but still dwelling among a people of unclean lips, having seen what the Lord was, the holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts. His soul filled with and affected by the contrast, but touched with the coal, it is— “Here am I: send me;” and He said, go; but what was His message? “Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed;” and this till the cities be waste without inhabitant; and there was a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But in it there shall be a tenth, the holy seed was to be the substance thereof.

Now the Lord had long patience—He sent prophets till there was no remedy: He smote and cut them short; He let them go captive and restored them again; so that the land was filled, and the temple built; still the word ran on, though the prophets did not live forever. The Lord had long patience till, having yet one Son, He said, “it may be they will reverence my Son;” round His head prophetic testimony and present blessing closed for a crown of glory and witness. The word of the Lord and the works of the Lord; the righteousness, and the patience, and the grace alike, with the Father's voice, testified who He was; but the awful knell of God's judgment still filled the unholy air of that favored country— “Make the heart of this people fat.” Now it was after long patience and marvelous love that it really came out; the sentence of God's judgment came to the earth, for all the patience of love had been tried, God had nothing more than His Son to be testified of. “How often would I have gathered!” was now the word of reluctantly departing loving-kindness and favor, but stored in a heart from which it could not be abstracted, which nothing could reach to alter. If sin could drive it in there and shut it up, there it dwelt untouched in its own blessed and essential perfectness, no sin or failure could enter there to mar its perfectness or diminish its power. Such is God—such must He be known to us in Christ.

If love and favor be driven back by sin, it is but to separate it into the power of His own essential and unmingled perfectness, and there retired to dwell on and delight in itself. Judgment shall make a way for it to break forth only in its own unhindered excellency, and unqualified and unparalyzed blessing. Such is God, and each is the Lord's way; but it was now only proved by His long patience, that well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias, the prophet, to their fathers (Acts 28:28), for in them was fulfilled his prophecy which said, “By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand.” (Matt. 13:14.) For the people's heart was waxed gross; and what Isaiah had prophetically pronounced when he saw His glory was now fulfilled, when He whose was the glory came. (John 12:40, 41.) This, known to the Lord, was parabolically communicated in Matt. 13, for then His patience had not had its perfect work. Now it had: and God's dereliction, His going and returning to

His place, was publicly announced, and their house left to desolation. Then, on this same footing again prophecy begins, whether the vineyard or in closer judgment the house itself left desolate; the broad foundation is the same; the remnant understand, believe and are comforted. Nothing can be more solemn than our blessed Master's word at the close of the previous chapter. How much does a little word from His mouth! What depth and terribleness the gentlest often convey! It was not in severest judgment— “Ye have made my father's house a house of merchandise,” He had left it. It was their house, what was it worth? Goodly stones, which a poor heathen would throw down. No self-exaltation—no harsh reproach—His heart, the Lord's heart, yearned over Jerusalem; but so, alas! it was. Terrible might be His judgment on the blessers of this people, who caused them to err, but of them, of the inhabitants of loved Jerusalem, He would only say in tenderness and sorrow—yet how terrible— “Your house is left unto you desolate, for” &c.

And He went out and departed from the temple. Thence came the prophecy. One's heart is little disposed to turn from the grace which filled the Lord's to the sad and needful sorrows and judgment which were the consequence of the rejection of that grace; but it was the Lord's portion and our path, the path in God's counsels, to make even that a small thing.

This temple, and the circumstances of it, were then discussed by the Lord. The previous observations will have shown how entirely Jewish in its character this discourse is; how Jewish the base on which it rests is. It is addressed to them, to whom all prophecy has its burden, the remnant who listened to the word, and here the Jewish remnant. They might obey the voice of His servant, but they were here walking in darkness, and seeing no light, for the Lord had left the house, and heavenly and resurrection glory was not yet brought in, nay, they understood none of these things, no—nor after the resurrection, till He opened their understandings, “they saw and believed, for as yet they understood not the scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead.”

This then is the position of those to whom this instruction or prophecy was addressed; the Jews in a rejected state, though not cast off—in the land—the house there, but their house not God's, disobeying and rejecting the Lord; a remnant ignorant of a resurrection Savior, entirely as to the truth, but obeying the voice of God's servant, but in the dark as to what such a state of things would be—when or how to look for His coming—what sign of it—where the end of this state of things should be, and Messiah in glory be on the earth, even amongst them and they in the midst of, and connected with, though separate from, the body of the Jewish nation, and they (I do not say all Israel as well as the remnant who were obedient) all in the land together.

This state of things is most important, I might say essential, to the right or any real understanding of these chapters; and to the close of them the prophetic word proceeds on this earthly basis, though it may superinduce other things. But it is the Lord Christ speaking as a prophet raised up from among His brethren, on and from earth, not, as afterward in Paul's Epistle to them and elsewhere, “from heaven,” “partakers of the heavenly calling.” It may leave room for other things, as old prophecy did for the gospel; these are not the ground of the prophecy. This it is which makes the prophecy, while it might apply to the then condition of the disciples, and direct their spirits in the details of present evil, have its force and weight, when the remnant should be in the condition which the disciples were then in, Christ only being gone. And here He spoke only as a prophet, so that it was the same thing, and that much more fully than when they were looking for heavenly things, seeing they were to put off their tabernacles, not to have “flesh saved,” but to

suffer in it, that they might be conformed to Him, and suffering, reign with Him, having a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was gone into heaven; the God of all grace having called them to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.

The Lord does not therefore immediately answer them as to the time, because it would afford direction in many details then; its accomplishment is yet future, for the end of the age is not yet come. The Jewish remnant were still in His mind, those with whom He had identified Himself in their earthly sorrow (though not with them only), of which the Psalms are so full and blessed a declaration. And as Isaiah's prophecy had its accomplishment in the foreseen coming of Messiah, though it had truth in principle then, so Messiah's prophecy has its accomplishment at the period of the second coming, and the trouble preceding, though it had truth of application, while Jerusalem lasted as to many of its principles then, and would have guided the saints aright at the time, though it could not have fulfilled the types it created.

The chapters are clearly divided into three portions, the Jewish, Christian, and Gentile advent of the Lord, or His advent as applied to these three classes, as the apostle designates them: the Jews, or Gentiles, or the Church of God. The first portion, which is strictly Jewish in all its parts and exclusively so, reaches down to verse 44 of chapter xxiv.; then the Christian part begins, which is continued in different characters to verses 25-30; in verses 31-46 are the Gentiles.

Let me briefly recapitulate the position of the prophecy. Prophecy is the testimony of God's character and purpose upon the departure of those set in relationship with Himself, from the standing in which they were originally placed by His revealed will and power. It condemns this departure, recalls to the original position, and gives the purpose, and therefore, object of hope, out of this state of ruin to the believing remnant, sorrowing over the evil: but it does this by showing future incoming of blessing and glory in a new principle of grace and purpose. It necessarily refers therefore to Christ's coming, for His is the glory, and by Him comes the grace; but it always therefore testifies of abiding apostasy, because His coming is the proof of all previous failure, whether He come in grace or judgment; and this comforts and sustains the remnant under the failure. Thus Isaiah's prophecy" make the heart of this people fat" —was on their departure from God: but it had, as we have seen (Matt. 13; John 12; Acts 28), its accomplishment in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord first comes as the presented object of hope to the nation, fulfilling prophecy and doing every attractive work of mercy, and speaking as man never spoke; but the heart of the people was fat. Then as Lord, for such He was, that Lord whose glory Isaiah had seen, and whence the word came, which glory was the judgment of their state, He gives them up, and though He often would have gathered them, their house is left desolate.

Here this prophecy met its accomplishment, and this generation stands the witness of its truth on the rejection of the Son, abidingly true has it proved the heart of the people was fat. The first coming of Christ, under the influence of which they still are, was its fulfillment, true as it always was. Our Lord then, on this state of things, takes up the prophetic character which is to have its consummation and fulfillment in His second coming; and hence, though there are many principles true in mediate application, just as the dullness and fatness of Israel's heart in the former prophecy, the prophecy treats of what is brought out in connection with the Lord's second coming, involving therefore not Jews only, but church and Gentile, but as to all at His second coming. We have nothing then to look for here as fulfillment, but what takes place then.

The relinquished temple is the thesis—the Mount of Olives, the place whence He was to depart, and where His feet were to stand on His return, the suited place where His communications to the remnant of what was to be expected are given. I shall only very briefly present, after this introduction, what the chapters themselves present, without framing any system. It appears to me far the most wholesome way of inquiry; “we know in part,” I have seen no system which I do not believe false or extremely deficient. I repeat we know ■κ μ■ρους and π■ντα. These two statements show the form of our knowledge. What precedes the coming of Christ is divided into two parts, general and particular, at verses 14, 15, verses 5, 6 standing by themselves as a warning—let no man deceive you—be not troubled—the end is not yet—there would be false Christs and wars and rumors of wars. Then, the instruction comes. We must remember Jews are the subjects of it, but Jews owning Christ as a prophet, listening to Christ as a prophet, after He has given up Jerusalem, as Messiah, as the Lord had ceased to present Himself as the present object of faith. Nation should rise up against nation. (Ver. 7.) These were the beginning of sorrows, by which name we may describe this period, ■ρχ■ ■δ■νων, not τ■λος. They were to be afflicted and delivered up to the Gentiles for His name's sake, and be killed. This is in the ■ρχ■ ■δ■νων, evil amongst many associated with, them apparently, treachery, coldness, false prophets, and many deceived, not yet false Christs: Antichrist being not yet distinctly revealed as a Jewish oppressor, and they (not he) should deliver up and kill them; the hatred was to be of the nations—Gentiles.

At the same time, whoever endured unto the end should be saved. Further, as a great general fact, this gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness to all the Gentiles; and the end of Jewish circumstances would not come till then, then it would. Now (whatever analogy of principle there may be in the Lord's dealings, and I think there is), I believe strictly this is put in contrast with what we call the gospel. The death and resurrection of Christ could not be preached as the gospel before He was crucified and risen (previous to that His death was man's sin, though it were God's purpose); in the resurrection it could, because God had received it as atonement: but even Peter preaches it as their sin, and speaks of His return on their repentance, until further things came in. Stephen's death was the point of change as to this; but this gospel of the kingdom was, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, that God was going to set up His kingdom, though from heaven, among the Jews, in the person of His Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ; and this was to be preached to the Gentiles before He did it, for this would be the end, and the Lord would, as He always does, send the testimony before He did the fact. It is this gospel of the kingdom, then, that is to be preached before the end comes of Jewish circumstances to Jewish disciples, and this to the nations. The cry of the virgins is, the personal approach of Christ, the Bridegroom of the bride.

Then, from verse 15, we have a much more precise scene, a local scene; we have the Holy place, and Daniel, and Judea, and definite local circumstances, and prescribed conduct, when the abomination of desolation was seen standing in the holy place. “He that readeth, let him understand.” Then those in Judea were to flee to the mountains, for then shall be great tribulation here when this idol dishonor is set up in the holy place; no more testimony, for they are the days of vengeance, in Jerusalem or Judea; they are to flee to the mountains; for the elect's sake, however, those days of tribulation shall be shortened. Isa. 65:9-22 will show who these elect are.

During this period, there will not only be false prophets, but false Christs, present promised deliverers from the great tribulation, “Jacob's trouble;” but the elect were told beforehand they were to pray, being Jews, that their flight might not be on the sabbath.

This was Jewish tribulation, from which the obedient remnant were exempt, by flying, and in which there was therefore no immediate testimony; not a period in which they were delivering up the remnant to the Gentiles; nothing now was to be done. After this (ver. 29) earthly power was to be put out in its imperial, derivative, and subordinate character, and the powers generally should be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of man would appear, and the tribes of the land (and indeed every eye) should see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, and next after this He would send and gather by His power and providence the scattered remnant of Israel yet abroad in the world.

These days of tribulation were shortened, that flesh might be saved, the only salvation spoken of in this part of the chapter, and the taking would be as the taking in the days of Noah in judgment; the left as Noah's family in mercy.

From verse 45 we have another scene, the place in which the then disciples were really going to be set, put on the ground of responsibility in which any would so stand who were in it, when the Lord came— “Who then is a faithful and wise servant? They were to be made rulers over his household. We are the household of God, the Son's house—meat was to be given—the effect of faithfulness in this, reigning with Christ when He comes. (Ver. 47.) He shall make him ruler over all His goods.

The apostasy of the church consists in saying in heart, as settling itself here, “my Lord delayeth his coming.” And so it did. The effect shown in ruling as lords over the fellow-servants (hierarchical or clerical assumption in the absence of Christ), beating instead of feeding, and intercourse and communion with the world—eating and drinking with the drunken—a portion with hypocrites (for they never lose the profession of servants) is adjudged to them, the Lord of that servant coming.

At this coming of the Lord the church will be viewed and brought into its real aspect as regards those that make profession.

It is like ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, the original character of the instruction is here maintained. The bride is not mentioned; the virgins are the church—the bride is earthly Jerusalem. The virgins are called to meet Him in His coming to the marriage. And the bride is entirely omitted and passed over, for as yet till the Lord came, the bride though loved, was nothing and nobody, hidden and lost as it were, save to Him who, though He tarried long, still loved her.

The virgins then, in whom we find therefore the similitude of the kingdom of heaven again introduced, present the professing church as to its character and position in grace, as the talents do its service and gifts; of this we have to note some simple but very important testimony.

First, the original character and calling of the church, “they went forth to meet the Bridegroom;” the condition they were found to be in, they all slumbered and slept. When the end was coming, the godly and ungodly were found mixed together. Nor was this all; the godly had as much lost sight of their calling and original character as the mere professor, they all slumbered and slept. The sense of the Bridegroom's immediate approach they had lost, they became insensible to this while the

Bridegroom tarried.

Christ the Bridegroom tarried in His return to earth. The church at large, gracious or merely professing, all lost the present sense of this as their calling. Next, that which awoke them—awoke the professing church—was the cry, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” The original call of the church they were aroused to, and in language that implied that, though not nominally, they had practically sunk into the world, out of which they had originally been called to meet Him: “Go ye out to meet him.” This then, and this only, is the cry which awakens the church to its original position.

In the next place, it finds all sleeping, and in a situation out of which they were to go to meet Him. Further, some time elapses before the Bridegroom comes after the cry, so as to prove who had grace and who had not; for the effect of putting them in this position was to try if they had grace which could alone sustain this awakened life-giving position. The separation of professors from the church who join with Him is revealed to be the effect of the cry before the Lord comes at all. The wise only are there to meet Him. There cannot be a more simple or more important parable than this, if the force of the words, by divine aid and teaching, be simply followed. I believe the words ■ν ■ ■ υ■■ς το■ ■νθρ■που ■ρχεται in chapter xxv. 13 should be omitted, “in which the Son of man cometh;” the term Son of man being properly always of His earthly or Jewish coming.

The next parable is not the position and character of Christendom tried as ready to meet Him, but the service done in His absence. The Lord called His own servants and gave them according to their several ability and took His journey. Grace, we shall see, made all the difference in character and acceptance, though gift might also meet according to divine appointment its appropriate reward, being exercised through grace. There are three things in this parable. First, the talents conferred by Christ on His own servants, which show that they are not natural faculties or worldly opportunities, but such as are peculiar to the servants of Christ, as such, given on His departure. Next, these are conferred according to the competency or fitness of the vessel. “A man is a chosen vessel” who receives the gifts, and there is the capacity of the vessel, as well as the extent and character of the gift. The use of it was a different thing, the one talent was given according to ability as well as the five; the giving according to ability proved the fitness of God's appointment, and responsibility it may be in him to whom it was given, but the just or any use of the talent did not depend upon this. The possession of the talent constituted the responsibility for its use, for even men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel. That which led to its use is another thing, not the recognition of man or appointment through man; on the contrary it is rested on something which is first framed to condemn and exclude that. The grace which used it is personal confidence in the character and acceptance of God, the grace is proved by, and rests for, its exhibition on that confidence in the Lord, which uses the talent by virtue of its personal acquaintance with, and trust in, His character. This is the thing characterizing the difference between the good and evil servants—he was a good servant who acted on his personal confidence in the Lord's character, a bad servant who did not. This absolutely and pointedly excludes human appointment or recognition as the ground of the use of the gift. However the gift may be clearly recognized (and will be by spiritual judgment after it is used), yet faithfulness consists in using it in confidence in the Lord's character; unfaithfulness in waiting for something else. It cannot be personal grace thus characterized if human appointment or any appointment by man be waited for. The points marked as the consequence on the Lord's return are two—First, there is a large reward given in

government; the faithful servant is made ruler over many things. Secondly, there is actual personal association with Christ in blessing, not being blessed under Him as ruled over, but “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” It does not seem that the energy and power of the Holy Ghost is taken away, though the scene of its exercise may be different (rule and joy instead of trading as a servant) save from the unprofitable servant, who is cast outside the light and glory of the kingdom. Let us remember that faithfulness consists in the use of a gift upon the ground of personal individual confidence in the character of the Lord as our master, and that this is the evidence of grace—waiting for anything else, of the want of it. The not using the talent when he had it flowed from positively false notions of God, thoughts of evil, the absence of grace, and a principle entirely condemned by the Lord as the proof of evil.

Lastly, we come to the Gentiles. Hitherto it has been instruction to a remnant on the earth, the Jews previous to His coming. Then how He would deal with the church upon His coming, they being caught up to meet Him, and going in with Him to the marriage, to wit, with Jerusalem and the Jews. Here we have what is consequent on His coming, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” This shall not be a passing act, but He shall then sit upon the throne of His glory, the glory of the Son of man, for now He is spoken of as coming as such to the earth; not till then shall He sit upon the throne of the Son of man's glory, though divine glory be ever His. Then He shall not only come in His glory, but He shall sit upon the throne of it, and the nations, the Gentiles (as before the Jews and the church) are brought before Him. As to them it is in elect purpose they are spared, the kingdom was prepared for them before the foundation of the world. They have life eternal, though as yet it is in earthly blessings, and the evidence of their condition was in the way they had treated His brethren, a distinct class from both sheep and goats, the former for that reason not being called children (that is, a title peculiar in its fullness to this dispensation, “then shall they be called the children of the living God"). Further we find that the judgment, to which the goats are subjected, is previous to, and only one as yet prepared for the devil and his angels.

There is no association here for the blessed with the Lord in His own joy and fellowship—the first-born among many brethren; but merely the enjoyment of the prepared kingdom by reason of the way in which they had treated certain other persons whom the Lord calls “brethren.”

This, then, is the session of the Son of man on the throne of His glory, all nations gathered before Him, and the one portion adjudged to blessing in the kingdom prepared for them, and possessing eternal life, treated according to the manner in which they had treated the brethren, the messengers of the kingdom; the rest to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. Thus the Jews, the church, the Gentiles, are judged as to the position in which the Lord finds them here, the church, however, actually meets Him in His return. The judgment is taken up at the close, and none of the statements in many of the details are specifically applicable to those found ready or unready then, but the principles would apply even according to that which we have seen at the outset concerning Isaiah's prophecy. It would always apply. It did so definitely for desolation on the rejection of Messiah; so here the principles will apply at any time. The time of real application and fulfillment is previous, at, and subsequent to, the personal coming of the Lord. Then the words directly lay hold, and the description simply applies; and as all those to whom it simply applies meet with present temporal judgment, so those to whom it applies in principle are reserved for the day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts. So was it with Isaiah's “make the heart of

this people fat;" in the case of the blessing, there is a difference, because all the saints are to be then brought into the blessing. There the long tarrying is mentioned, and the virgins are looked at as a corporate representation of the professing church during this tarrying, with the effects added not of the coming but of the cry, for they were indeed to meet Him, in rousing them for His approach.

The cry being here, and the immediate application therefore earthly, as to the rest, this special application at the close when the judgment actually reached, of what was true in principle all along, while judgment did not reach (but which shall take place as to them at the judgment, when God judges secrets), is nothing more than we find to be God's ordinary way of dealing. Thus the way, in which any whom Jesus is not ashamed to call brethren are treated, would be ground of judgment in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts; but it has an actual manifested accomplishment of the judgment of the quick upon earth, instruction too, and the object of faith. I mention this because it is often a difficulty, while this is the usage of God in His application of His word.

I have now gone through as simply as I could these passages, deriving merely from the passage, according to that given me, what the passage actually taught. Thus it seems to me most is really communicated, and most progress made, such as can be relied upon as sure: however our minds may work under the influence of the Spirit of God, and connect many passages together for our own profit. And I pray the Lord to bless it, simple as it is, to the edification of His people, and to teach them in heart to watch and wait for His appearing. Having heard Him announce, "Behold I come quickly," may they say in guileless truth by the Spirit, "Even so come Lord Jesus," separate in the power of the Holy Ghost, and longing beyond all thought or human wish for that; and if He who is να■ and ■μ■ν, of every promise says να■ ■ρχομαι ταχ■ ■μ■ν, answer in the power of the same Spirit, the echo of the Spirit in His heart from Him who says it να■ ■ρχου, and say Amen to grace as our only constant and true hope of being with Him. Amen.

Chapter 166

“Neutrality,” Its Value in the Things of God Briefly Tested and Examined by Scripture

“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. 5:21.

It is well for us to pause sometimes, amid the roar and bustle of this world, and consider the bearing and end of things wherein our day is cast, and amidst which it is God's will that for a time we shall walk. That the world, as a system, is drifting on swiftly to the hour of its judgment, is certain from all scripture testimony. The Christian has been called out of it, and is exhorted to walk in separation from it. (See John 15:19; Rom. 12:2; James 4:4, 1 John 2:15, &o.)

But, besides the world, there is what we may call its religious forms, what men speak of as “The Christian world,” and in these much is accepted as right, with but little examination of scripture. One of these is the assumption of neutrality by some, as a way of escape from the present sorrowful and confused state of the church on earth.

If you have never yet done so (I address all brethren and sisters in the Lord), look quietly around on all those who make a profession of Christianity to-day. Remember, amidst much that is unreal, that every true believer is a member of the body of Christ (Eph. 5:30, 31, 32), and a living stone in that one assembly on earth (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:22) and one also of that “Assembly of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15), in which God Himself dwells. (1 Cor. 3:16, 17.) Let me ask, Do you, as that individual member, find this assembly in her doctrine and practice to be identical with that description of her written in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles of the New Testament?

You will say, perhaps, that “Since times and customs have so changed, such reality is not to be expected now, for we have no living apostles.” But whatever may be your reply, I know that as a sober student of the word of God, and of what is written there of the church (more properly “assembly") if asked, Is she outwardly identical with all she was then, your answer in some form or other will be in substance, “No.”

Will you then allow me yet to ask you another question? Why do I find you habitually assembling with that certain company of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, and not with certain others in your locality, who are (as you believe,) equally the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, as you are? And this is the kind of answer I have received from some, “Oh, I believe from my little knowledge of scripture, that those with whom I meet are more correct and according to its teaching than those others you name, and you know that if we have not all the spirituality and energy of the church in her early days, nor all her divinely taught doctrines and practice, at least we have a measure of them, and we must get the nearest we can to the perfection of scripture; that is why I meet with them, and hold what I do.” I detect in this reply the refusal of neutrality as a principle—a refusal actuated by divine instinct. And none will deny that there is also in it the confession of the church's departure from the truth.

Will you not be frightened if I deny (as some) your right of conscience thus to judge? Will you not shrink with horror if I assert (as some do) that though you are a Christian, with an open bible in your hand, and the Holy Ghost as your teacher, neither you nor any other individual has ability to judge, and withdraw from what it condemns, but that you must go on with certain evils which its light has discovered to you, as existing and sanctioned in the professing church to-day rather than take God's ground and God's distance from the evil?—which place they as good as tell you it is impossible for you ever to reach! And though I have no intention to make such unholy assertions, yet I would humbly suggest that the word “neutrality” however attractive at first sight it may appear, means this, when traced to its legitimate end. For neutrality does not assert that everything in the professing church is right and scriptural; to say this would be to destroy itself, for then, wherefore neutrality? Nor therefore does it totally deny your right to separate yourself from evil, but it sets up a stopping-place for you in your path of separation, a place short of what God has set up. If it does not do this, it also destroys itself, and we are brought to ask again, “Wherefore neutrality?” We see then that it has a measure of the negative, but it has not reached the positive. It says, you may separate from evil, but only up to a certain point, at which point you must stop. It tells you that you may go a certain way outside the camp, provided you will be content without reaching Him—with whom can be no neutrality—who is to be found there. (Heb. 13:18.)

But mark—If I do not reach Him I have not attained to my goal in this scripture, nor to that power (His own presence) which follows only upon true separation. When the church is looked at as a light-bearer, and with evil there hindering the light, He becomes the faithful witness instead of her, as the only measure of holiness, separation, and troth. “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true.” (Rev. 3:7.) And what then is to be the measure of my individual separation? He is, and His company only: I must not stop having taken one step, I must reach Him, and in order to do this I may have to take many steps; for His distance from evil is my goal.

And here I desire to observe that liberty of conscience to separate from evil is taught, and more, is insisted on in scripture, whenever the Holy Ghost looks on to these present days. Separation from evil has been from early days always the Spirit's testimony and exhortation. (Josh. 24:24.) From His teaching I gather, too, that I must turn away from the corruption of what was once good, and that though Acts 2:42-47 once described the “assembly” —now generally called the “church” —yet the Holy Ghost teaches that the church (so called in professing Christendom in the last days) is not a reliable guide for any individual Christian; she must be tested and tried by the word of God.

A word more before we turn to scripture itself in proof of this.

I will take the Church of Rome as one specimen of the professing church on earth. You have tested her claims, her doctrine, and practice, by the word of God. At your conversion you were probably informed that this only (or some other religious community, for I only take this as an illustration) was the true church. But you found on examination that she had departed far, very far from the truth. Hence, as an authority, you rejected her pretensions and her doctrine, and you are not therefore what is called a “Roman Catholic.” But having examined one, other bodies of Christians invited you to join outwardly on earth in their communion. If you had any authority to test and reject one, you had the same authority for testing them all! It is right then here to ask—Has the church (so called) departed from the truth? Does scripture anticipate each a departure? Have we the same sanction (God's word) for declaring that the church in the last days is not a reliable guide

for any individual believer? Am I, as this individual, directed how to act?

To all of these questions scripture furnishes answers for the ear that desires instruction. “He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul.” (Prov. 15:32.) If there can be neutrality, we must find and shall find, that scripture teaches it. We will now turn to its testimony.

For an answer to the first question I read, “Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30.) These words were spoken by the Apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus in view of their seeing his face again more. Does this testimony as to what would exist in the assembly after his death indicate departure? If it does, and if it is not an encouraging one, What was his resource for the faithful? “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified?” He speaks not of the teaching of the church as a reliable guide, nor does he hint at “neutrality” as to the perverse things spoken; the word is to, test the whole, and to be the unfailing guide of the sheep, when those who ought to lead the flock go themselves astray.

In 2 Tim. 2 he brings before us the figure of a great house, in which there are vessels, “Some to honor, and some to dishonor.” Already he had spoken of all those in Asia having turned away from him, and at this early day in the church's history he had marked the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus, error eating into the assembly, he says, “as doth a canker.” And now, in view of all this, the partial fulfillment of his own words to the elders of Ephesus, what does he say? He exhorts the faithful one to purge himself from them, he does not—say take a middle (neutral) position, between the vessel to honor and that to dishonor, no, he says he must purge himself “from” these, and follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, “with” those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. We have a perfect path here, the negative and the positive both before us, marked out with unerring wisdom and divine accuracy.

Again he speaks of the last days and perilous times (2 Timothy when there is a forth of godliness, but the power thereof denied, and again he says to the faithful soul, “From these turn away.” Can words more plainly indicate departure from the truth? And it is not here the world in question, but those who have a form of godliness—religious professors. He speaks of a time when those who profess religion “shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” —while their ears are turned away from the truth. (2 Tim. 4) And again he says, “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions—for I am now ready to be offered.”

John speaks of, the last time as present then, when he wrote, the spirit of Antichrist being already there and at work. (1 John 2:18; compare also for the gradual corporate decline 2 John 8, 7-10 John 9-11.) Jude speaks of certain men who had, in his day, already crept in among them—“ungodly men,” to be dealt with in judgment by the Lord at His coming (Jude 4, 12, 14, 15, 17), commending them for guidance to “the words of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,” not to the church, nor to neutrality as a resource.

Rev. 2 and 3 bring before us the Lord Jesus. Himself occupied with the professing church on earth, there seen as set up in responsibility as a light-bearer to shine for Him until His own return. And the character in which He is revealed is that of judgment. If there is that in her, which (hindering her light) we can yet go on with, on the ground of neutrality, not so with Him. He must condemn it, exhort individuals to overcome it, and finally remove the true thing from the corrupt

mass, which has swamped a corporate testimony, and which consequently ceases to be a witness for Him on earth. (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 3:16; 18:1, 6, 16, &c.)

Now my Christian reader, whatever be the corporate failure and want of faithfulness, do you not desire to go on individually as a faithful light-bearer for Him? Can you then turn for guidance to the church or assembly on earth, when from the days of John, the writer of the Revelation, she has been declared by the Spirit to have been unfaithful? “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

Question 2 is therefore answered. Question 8 is also practically met. Nowhere in scripture is the individual believer told to turn to the church on earth, always to the word for guidance.

Now as to the last question, Am I, as an individual believer, directed how to act? I want to know not only what I have to refuse, but what I have to cleave to: without both we have not a perfect rule. Scripture gives both.

If we are believers, as remarked earlier, we are already members of the body of Christ, we have not to “join” any company of persons on earth in order to become so. God added to the assembly in the days of the apostles (Acts 2:47), and God adds still. As to our walk in fellowship with the Christians, it is as simple now as in the days of the apostles, if we will be guided by their word. Among their writings, the scripture of the New Testament, Eph. 4 and ii., Timothy ii. 22, are most important to regulate our walk together. Individually, Christ Himself is our only model (1 John 2:6; Phil. 2:4; 1 John 3:2, 8)—this last showing us our measure: “As he is pure.”

Is it expecting too much of Christians, that they should examine if these things be so, and all of them, nor countenance anything in the assembly on earth, which the word of God condemns? No, for it says, “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. (1 Thess. 5:21.) And what does neutrality say? It says you may prove some things, but not all things. Is it then of God?

But there is more definite language against it in scripture, for God does not cover up or deceive. Scripture declares that neutrality or indifferentism is even abominable in the sight of God.

For if Christians, let us look at God's word as to our relationship. “Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” (Eph. 5:25.) “They two shall be one flesh.” (Eph. 5:31.) Can you introduce “neutrality,” my beloved reader, here? Does anything touch the Bridegroom and the Bride remain indifferent, the Head, and are the members not to feel it? We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Eph. 5:30; 1 Cor. 12:26.) “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

To Laodicea, the last phase of the church on earth, He of,” Thou art neither cold nor hot, so then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (Rev. 3:16, 17.) That is, when the assembly becomes definitely “neutral,” it is nauseous and abominable to Him. But let other passages of scripture testify.

“He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” (Luke 11:23.) Here indifference and neutrality are excluded. “He that is not against us is for us.” (Luke 11:50.) “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” (Matt. 10:40.) In all these passages there is not the slightest hint of neutrality— “No man can serve two masters—ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt. 6:24.) Nay. We must be either against the

Lord or for Him, we must receive Him or reject Him, we must be either gathering with Him or scattering, nor is it left for us to choose to be neutral, as to anything that affects Him as Head. It is already settled by Him, “Ye cannot.”

Now neutrality is not complete ignorance, there is a measure of light in it; but while it is certain that God bears with ignorance, and instructs it— “The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa. 25), so surely will that which has a measure of light, yet light not acted upon, be presently judged by Him.

Neutrality is the Zoar, the little city, to which many a righteous Lot has fled for refuge since the days of Gen. 19 It is not Sodom, it is far removed from that wicked city, but it is not the “mountain” (see Gen. 19:17) God's place of safety. It is a place reached without much difficulty, for it is in the plain, and no toilsome mountain ascent lies before those who would reach it. It is a principle getting widely spread in our day, which unmasked speaks but plainly when it says, “Let us make the best of both worlds.” It is nevertheless (and so is every step from evil) a step in the right direction, but being a resting-place short of the goal, it becomes a snare, and will presently be the most subtle snare of the enemy, for it will be received far and wide. Neutrality is short of a living center, the person of Christ, awaits His judgment, and receives it in Laodicea. “That servant which know his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes.” (Luke 13) And it is Christendom that has taken the place of the servant.

Some say, while owning the existing confusion and evil, “Well, I thank God I belong to no church on earth.” Let me ask then, where are you? Have you, having left the camp, got to Him? To Him that is holy, Him that is true? Has His voice reached the inmost recesses of your heart, saying to you notwithstanding all the confusion, “I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it “? And having got to Him, is there the refusal of everything that He refuses, He the measure of your distance from evil—He the standard to be attained? And do you know of any others who have done these things, the little company contemplated in 2 Timothy ii. 32, and in Matt. 18:20? And should evil grow up and be sanctioned among these, and His presence thereby practically disowned, in faithfulness you and I must again go forth to Him who invites us by “the Spirit” to come. (Rev. 3:18, 22.) Leaving the evil we must go forth again to “him that is holy, him that is true,” contented that we are pleasing Him, though we have to suffer for it and to bear “His reproach.” (Heb. 11:26.)

Ah! yes, beloved reader, and then it is but a “little while” that we are left here for Him. Presently He will return (John 14:1-3; Heb. 10:3, 7) and it behooves each of us to see to our testimony. The responsibility is individual and is ours. It is a solemn thing and brings no true rest, to stop short of God's place for the soul, but there is a yet more solemn consideration than this, for it is the verge of Laodiceanism which is repulsive to the Lord. Where are you, as one in testimony for the Lord amidst all the present confusion? Neutrality will be the reigning characteristic of the professing church on earth in its last stage (Rev. 3:15) when the Lord will reject it as no longer a witness for Him. We are rapidly advancing to it. Principles of neutrality will increase with frightful rapidity, and become more clearly adopted later, and they will be received by the mass as right principles to glory in. (Rev. 3:17.)

Finally, I would ask, is it not a snare to rest satisfied with one step in the right direction, the goal not being attained? I believe it is and echo again those words of Gen. 19: “Look not behind thee

(Phil. 3:18), neither stay then in all the plain, escape to the mountain." We are cast upon the Lord for all these things (as says the apostle in Jude 14, 25) and in the same language as he used, beloved reader, who spoke in full view of the apostasy of these last days—days in which it is your lot to live, I would say, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." H. C. A.

Chapter 167

On the Greek Words for Eternity and Eternal

Dear Mr. Editor—I have thought that, as one of the forms in which infidelity circulates at present is Universalism, or the Restitution of all things, it might be well to put out clearly and simply some facts (for that is what they are), which may deprive its advocates of one main ground of their reasonings, and that without any reasoning on the general subject of a doctrine, which, when examined, sets aside the truth of Christianity. I refer to the meaning of α■■ν, and also of allince. We are told by Dr. Farrar, with much pretension to competency in affirming it, that “everlasting” or “eternal” ought not to be found in the Bible; by Mr. Cox that it means properly an “age” and “age-long,” and that it cannot be right to translate them eternal or everlasting. Mr. Jukes with a wild imagination takes the same ground. They simply echo one another. Now all I purpose to do here is to state some passages from other authors, which prove that (while used in other senses, some of which are not found at all in scripture,) it does mean “eternity” and “eternal.” I will afterward examine some of the passages in scripture in which it is found.

A■■ν, in Greek properly means “eternity.” I do not dispute here, whether we are to believe with Aristotle, that it is derived from ■ε■ ε■ναι; or with other modern writers from α■ω I breathe, whence it had the meaning in Homer, Euripides, and other authors, of life and breath; or possibly these may be two different words, one from ■ε■ ■ν, the other from as, ■ω, whence the two very different meanings. This is certain, that the word is distinctly used by Plato, Aristotle, and Philo; (and, according to the dictionaries, by Lycurgus, whom I have not the means of consulting) as “eternal,” in contrast with what is of time having beginning or ending, as its definite and proper meaning.

Plato (Timaeus, ed. Steph. III. 87, or ed. Baiter Orell et Winck. 712,) says, speaking of the universe: “When the father who begot it perceived that the image made by him of the eternal (■■δ■ων) gods moved and lived, he was delighted with his work; and, led by this delight, thought to make his work much more like that first exemplar.” Inasmuch therefore as it (the intelligible universe) is an eternal (■■διον) animal (living being), so he set about to make this (the sensible) universe such with all his power. The nature therefore of the animal (living being) was eternal (α■■νιος, before ■■διος), and this indeed it was impossible to adapt to what was produced (τ■ γεννητ■, to what had a beginning), he thinks to make a movable image of eternity (α■■νος), and in adoring the heavens he makes of the eternity permanent in unity a certain eternal image moving in number, that which in fact we call time; that is, days and nights, and months and years, which did not subsist before the heaven began to be, then with its being established he operates their birth” (beginning to be, γ■νεσιν α■τ■ν). And after unfolding this, he says (p. 88): “But these forms of time imitating eternity (α■■να), and rolling round according to number, have had a beginning (γ■γονεν)... Time therefore began with heaven, that they having begun with it may be dissolved with it, if there be indeed any dissolution of them, and according to the pattern of eternal (διαιων■ας, in some MSS, α■ων■ου -ας) nature that it might be as like as possible to it. For that pattern exists for all eternity (π■ντα α■■ν■ ■στιν ■ν), but on the other hand; that which is perpetual (δι■ τ■λους) throughout all time has had a beginning, and is, and will be.” And then he

goes on to speak of stars and planets, &c., as connected with what was created in time. It is impossible to conceive any more positive statement that aisle is distinct, and to be contrasted with what has a beginning and belongs to the flux of time. Α■■ν is what is properly eternal, in contrast with a divine imitation of it in ages of time, the result of the creative action of God which imitated the uncreate as nearly as He could in created ages. It is a careful opposition between eternity and ages; and α■■ν, and also α■■νιος mean the former in contrast with ages.

I now give Aristotle περ■ ο■ρανο■, I, 9 (ed. Bekker, I. 279): "Time," he says, "is the number of movement, but there is no movement without a physical body. But outside heaven it has been shown that there is not, nor possibly can come into existence, any body. It is evident then that there is neither place, nor void, nor time outside. Wherefore neither in place are things there formed by nature; nor dues time cause them to grow old; neither is there any change of anything of those things which are arranged beyond the outermost orbit; but unchangeable, and subject to no influence, having the best and most independent life, they continue for all eternity (α■■να). For this expression (name) has been divinely uttered by the ancients; for the completeness which embraces the time of the life of each outside which there is nothing, according to nature, is called the aisle of each. According to the same word (λ■γον) the completeness of the whole heaven, and the completeness which embraces all time and infinitude is α■■ν, having received this name front existing forever (■π■ το■ ■ε■ ε■ναι), immortal (■θ■νατος, undying), and divine." In 10 he goes on to show that that beginning to be (γεν■σθαι) involves the not existing always, which I refer to as showing what he means by α■■ν. He is proving the unchangeable eternity of the visible universe. That is no business of mine; but it shows what he means by eternity (α■■ν). It cannot be ■■διον and γεν■σθαι at the same time, when as in Plato, ■■διος is used as equivalent to α■■νιος. Aristotle has not the abstract thoughts of Plato as to ideas, and the παρ■δειγμα of what is visible, the latter being a produced image of the eternal παρ■δειγμα. He rests more in what is known by the senses; and makes this the eternal thing in itself. But the force of α■■ν for both is a settled point; and Aristotle's explanation of α■■ν as used for finite things, I have long held to be the true one; that is, the completeness of a thing's existence, so that according to its natural existence there is nothing outside or beyond it. It περι■χει the whole being of the thing.

As to Philo, the sentence is in De Mundo, § 7, ■ν α■■νι δ■ ο■τε παρελ■λυθεν ο■δ■ν, ο■τε γ■λλει, ■λλ■ μ■νον ■φ■στηκεν. Such a definition needs no explanation: in eternity nothing is passed, nothing is about to be, but only subsists. This has the importance of being of the date and Hellenistic Greek of the New Testament, as the others give the regular, and at the same time philosophical force of the word, α■■ν, α■■νιος. Eternity, unchangeable, with no was nor will be, is its proper force, that it can be applied to the whole existence of a thing, so that nothing of its nature was true before or after is true, τ■ τ■λος τ■ περι■χον. But its meaning is eternity, and eternal. To say that they do not mean it in Greek, as Jukes and Farrar and S. Cox, and those they quote, is a denial of the statements of the very best authorities we can have on the subject. If Plato and Aristotle and Philo knew Greek, what these others say is false. That this is the proper sense of α■■νιος in scripture, is as certain as it is evident. In 2 Cor. 4:18, we have τ■ γ■ρ βλεπ■μενα πρ■ςκαιρα, τ■ δ■ μ■ βλεπ■μενα α■■νια. That is, things that are for a time are put in express contrast with α■■νια, which are riot for a time, be it age or ages, but eternal. Nothing can be more decisive of its positive and specific meaning.

I will now quote various passages of scripture to show α■■ν or α■■νιος has the definite meaning of forever, or eternal, in English. No one who has examined its use in Greek questions that it is used for life, or the whole period of a man's existence till he breathes his last; nor that it may be used for ages or periods, looked at as a whole. The question is, Does it not properly mean eternal or forever, and that where age and age-long would have no sense? Thus Matt. 21:19, of the fig-tree: Let no fruit grow on thee ε■ς τ■ν α■■να. “For the age” has no sense. It never was to grow. So Mark 11:14. That eternity is not grasped by man as a definite idea is true, because definite is finite, and man, being finite, cannot grasp what is infinite. It is known only as that which is absolutely; or negatively as that to which end is denied.

Again Mark 3:29, ο■κ ■χει ■φεσιν ε■ς τ■ω α■■να. What age? It is not in the age, as some have fraudulently translated it, but “has not forgiveness ever.” It is not any particular age; the cis allows no such sense, and the τ■ν would require some particular age, which even so would leave no sense to dc. It can only mean here “forever.” There was a present age and age to come, ■ α■■ν ο■τος, and ■ α■■ν ■ μ■λλων, and well known to the Jews, the olem hazeh, and the olem havo; and an increased measure of forgiveness was looked for in Messiah's age. This sin could be forgiven in neither; no additional increase of forgiveness was looked for beyond Messiah; and each measure belonged to its own age; it was not a prolonged process, but what occurred in each as proper to it. But ε■ς τ■ν αν■■α, can only mean “forever,” though “forever” may be used metaphorically when there is no withdrawal of the gift or promise, and the effect cannot last longer than that to which it applies. The gift has no limit (it is, as Aristotle says, ■πειρ■α), the existence of that to which it applies may. I do not lend it, I give it forever; yet what I give, or the person to whom it is given, may cease to exist; but the gift is forever, without repentance, out and out.

So John 4:14, shall not thirst “for the age:” is that the meaning? or never? John 6:51, 58, “live forever;” John 10:28, not perish “to the age:” is that the sense? John 13:8, thou shalt not wash my feet “to the age!” A multitude more may be quoted to the same effect; some with the modified sense I have spoken of above of absolute gift and calling never to be retracted. But ε■ς τ■ν α■■να never means “to the age” in any case.

Take 1 Peter 1:23, 25, λ■γον ζ■ντος θεοπυ κα■ μ■νοντος ε■ς τ■ν α■■να. Does it last only “to the age” (applying it to the λ■γον, not to θεο■ as some do)? So verse 25, ■■μα μ■νει ε■ς τ■ν α■■να. So 2 John 2: the truth shall be with us “to the age!” So Jude 13, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness, ε■ς τ■ν α■■να. Here again “to the age” has no sense.

The case of α■■νιος is just as strong. It is used seventy-one times in the New Testament. Of these it is connected forty-four times with life, where “for an age” or “age-long” is just nonsense, as believers to have age-long life and shall not perish. It is in contrast with ever perishing. The knowledge of the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, is life for the age. Is that all? The words of Jesus were ■■ματα ζωπ■ς α■ων■ου, not τ■ς ζω■ς. It was that in its nature, not a specific period: indeed believers have it now. In Rom. 6:22, the end is everlasting life. So that the life of that age, though no particular one is ever spoken of, is the end of the matter. It is not merely dark beyond as to a Jew, but there is no object beyond. My object is not to argue the point, but to consider the words here; but I must say that, if anything could lower and degrade the hope and present joy of the Christian, it is this miserable notion that “eternal” does not mean eternal.

But, farther, Christ was that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us, 1 John 1:2. He is our life; he that hath the Son hath life. He is the true God and eternal life. Five, I may say, six times it is used of “eternal fire,” or “punishment.” The rest are various: glory, salvation, redemption, inheritance, Spirit, God Himself, but none of them is eternal! all belong to this wonderful unknown age, and no more. But the eternal weight of glory is that of which the Apostle speaks, when he says that the things are not for a time, πρ■ζκαιρα, but eternal, α■■νια, chapter v. 1 going on to say that he was looking for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We have the word used with χρ■νων (times) in plural for the times of God's active dispensations. Before anything was created, this life was given us in Christ; putting it in its nature out of time.

Read these passages, and say if (while no one denies that there are ages and dispensations in which God has wrought and works) it be so that eternity is excluded from the revelation given to the Christian, and from the rest of God (for the promise is left us of entering into Iris rest), and that eternal glory, the eternal God, only means a God that has to say to that age. That God having called us to His own kingdom and glory, specifically that as our calling, this means a temporary period, an age which characterizes Him, so that the eternal God is only the age-long God. That the life promised before the ages (χρ■νων α■ων■ων), and which Christ is in His person as with the Father, is only a life in one of these ages; and that when I read that the God of all grace has called us to His eternal glory by Jesus Christ, for which we may suffer a while, it is only a temporary glory of His for some special age, 1 Peter 5:10. That the glory of God for which we hope in contradistinction to the peace and favor we possess, is only a temporary thing, for I suppose His own glory is the glory we boast in Rom. 5. That language of exuberant apprehension is used, such as “ages of ages,” and all the “generations of the age,” or “eternity of ages,” we know. But this does not alter the meaning of the word: α■ων■ος is properly the opposite to πρ■ζκαιρος.

Chapter 168

The Oneness of the Church

Although Saul was called to preach the gospel to the nations, and was set apart to the mission by a special dispensation of God founded on a more perfect revelation, which left the Jews behind as sinners by nature as well as the Gentiles, and taught that there was no difference, since all had sinned, bringing in the new creation, and knowing Christ no more after the flesh; yet there were not to be two assemblies: the oneness of the church was to be maintained.

Peter is employed, after the conversion of Saul, to bring the first Gentile to the knowledge of Christ. But he never taught what the church was as the body of Christ: this is not revealed in the case of Cornelius. That the Gentiles should take their place among the Christians without becoming Jews, or being circumcised, was something that Peter and the other Jews had great difficulty in believing.

As to the progress of the gospel, let us see what is taught us in the sequel. We shall find that those who had been scattered, being Hellenists, or Jews who had lived in foreign countries, and were accustomed to maintain daily intercourse with the Gentiles, spoke with these: so that the free action of the Spirit also communicated by this means the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul had a new formal mission to every creature under heaven, and then he taught what the assembly was—a truth set forth by no other. (See Col. 1) And he himself was to be a member of the assembly, already founded and established on Christ, which was His body, the habitation of God through the Spirit, though He alone taught this doctrine.

It is not without importance to remark that the Romish system is founded on the authority of Peter, and draws all its pretensions from him; but the doctrine of the church was never confided to Peter. Peter was not the apostle of the uncircumcision, but of the circumcision (Gal. 2); full of power for the work among the Jews, he left that among the Gentiles entirely in the hands of Paul. Peter does not speak of the body of Christ, how we are Gentiles; and the instrument whom God adopted to establish the church among the Gentiles was Paul. (1 Cor. 3)

The foundation is one, that is, Christ; the gospel of salvation, one. (1 Cor. 15:2.) Moreover, God Himself founded the assembly on the day of Pentecost by the gift of the Holy Ghost: but, as a human builder, Paul it was whom God employed to establish the church among the Gentiles, and unfold what it was. The other apostles never speak of the body of Christ, nor of the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth. Peter then goes about continually, and the power of God manifests itself in him.

Chapter 169

Paul at Philippi

The apostle gathers that the Lord had sent him to Macedonia, and goes there. He stops at Philippi, the principal city of the country and a Roman colony. He commences, as he always does, with the Jews. It appears that there was not a synagogue there. It was the custom of the Jews to have their worship in such a case, as it is still, on the banks of the river—I believe, for the sake of purification. There were but a few women there: Paul contented himself with them, and spoke to them of Christ, and of salvation through Him. There was Lydia, a proselyte who worshipped the true God; she was among these women, had not the knowledge of Christ, but the piety which does not neglect the worship of the sabbath day in a far distant country, where it was not the natural occasion to observe it. The blessing is accorded at least to that one in whose heart this faithfulness is found. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken by Paul. She was a Gentile, but brought to the knowledge of the only true God; and she is another example of the difference between conversion and the knowledge of salvation in Christ.

There were many such worshippers—their souls were wearied with the folly and iniquity of paganism, which was insufficient to satisfy the needs of the soul, and through grace they were turned to the only true God, known among the Jews, and they frequented the Jewish worship, without being circumcised. They were called religious persons, persons who served God. They listened to the apostle more than the Jews, and were often the occasion of their jealousy; of this class was Lydia. See chapters 17:17; 13:16; where it is said, “and ye which fear God.” They are found without being named, in chapter 13: 1, and distinctly in verse 48, and also elsewhere.

Lydia is baptized with all her house: and Paul and his companions enter her house and dwell there. It may be said that now the assembly was founded at Philippi.

But the enemy is not satisfied to allow the work to make progress, without doing anything to oppose it. On the contrary he works with deceit; he does not assail the work openly. He has the appearance of helping it, certainly not recognizing Christ as Lord, because then he would no longer be Satan (the adversary), but flattering the apostle, in order to be able to mix himself up with the work of the Lord, to accredit himself with this union, and to spoil it at the same time. He acts thus with more finesse in order that Christians may be less wise to refute him. To be supported by the world (and Satan is the prince of it) will appear to be a great help to the progress of the gospel. The enemy disguises himself, makes himself the friend of the servants of God and of the work, transforms himself into an angel of light. The Gibeonites with deceit made themselves the friends of Israel, and in consequence they were never conquered, as our friends are not conquered. Thus, when the Christian or the assembly mixes itself with the world, the loss is always on the side of the Christian, because the world in its nature is always with its motives, but the flesh is always in the Christian. He may draw near to the world, but not the world to the Spirit. The testimony, however, is lost. Wine mixed with water is no longer pure wine, it has lost its taste. The friendship of the world is enmity against God.

The world seems amiable when it draws near to Christians and their testimony, but it draws near to Christians to spoil their testimony, and to put itself in esteem; but to Christ it cannot draw near.

The spirit of Python can flatter the servants of God in order to gain them; it can speak of God, of the most high God, even of the way of salvation, but not of Christ Lord and Savior, of the state of sin and guilt in which man is, in which he is lost. This would be to confess that he who says such things is lost; which is quite another story. When the world unites itself to Christians, their testimony is lost, and the fault is always that of the Christians. They accept the world, because they have already lost true spirituality, the love of Christ rejected by the world, the love of the holy glory of His cross in which His heavenly glory was exhibited in this world.

But the apostle does not seek to excite the enmity of Satan, he does not accept that testimony, he keeps himself ever separate, neither does he act so as to change it into open opposition. He continues quietly on his way. At last he can no longer bear the voice of the unclean spirit, it being so grievous to his heart that he associated himself with him; he casts him out by the power of the Holy Ghost. Suddenly the enmity of the natural heart under the influence of the world is revealed. And that influence is more fatal for man than the possession of the body and faculties.

The Lord drove out the legion with a word; but the world, frightened by the manifestation of divine power, cast out Jesus from its confines. Similarly here, the demon being cast out, the masters of the damsel, through human motives to which the demon lent himself, seeing that their gain was lost, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Silas.

What the servants of the most high God do is now of no consequence. Man's god is money, power, and human glory. Satan never wishes that the power of God should be cast out. To be recognized and accredited, to join himself to the excellency of the troth pleases him, because he knows well that true power is with God, and thus that which remains of the truth in effect increases his influence, for that is now only increased, not destroyed. He will speak sufficiently of the truth to deceive Christians if it were possible, in order that, such as he is as prince of the world, he may not the less be in light.

The pure light manifests him, and thus it is that Christianity, and Christians, less wise than the apostle, have mixed themselves with the world, and the result is that Christianity lies under the power of Satan. The apostle did not act thus; but now it is quite possible persecution will arise, and that is what came to pass here. If the enemy cannot accredit himself with the gospel, he will oppose it.

The motives were purely human, the influence that of Satan. The motives presented to the magistrates were nothing but false pretexts. They worked on the pride and the fear of the authorities, who desired peace, and that was disturbed by the enemies, not by the Christians. Besides the gospel did not oppose Roman dignity which possessed the city, it being a colony. The magistrates ask no more; they had stirred up a multitude which strove for its privileges. Rending their clothes, they command them to be beaten, and then send them to prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely. He, having received such a charge, thrusts them into the inner prison, making their feet fast in the stocks.

All then was tranquillized; but the magistrates thought nothing of justice, nor of paying costs for poor evangelists. But God has not forgotten them, and bears marked testimony to His servants.

He permits them to be punished unjustly, and it is their glory to make no resistance. It is a means by which still brighter testimony may be given to His word, and to His servants.

They are thrust then into the inner prison, and there sing praises to God, and the prisoners hear there. Suddenly there is a great earthquake, the doors of the prison are opened, and every one's bands are loosed. God intervenes for His own, and to bear testimony to His word. When persecution is allowed, the wickedness of man can do much, but he cannot hold against the power of God those who fall into his hands. The jailor wishes to kill himself; but Paul, crying out that they were all there, prevents him from doing so. Leading out Paul and Silas, he asks them what he must do to be saved. The answer is simply, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The word is then announced to him and his, and he is baptized with his house. He then cares for his prisoners, and washes their stripes, being filled with joy and peace with all his house.

Tranquility restored, the magistrates, believing that all trouble is thus ended, send word to the jailor to let Paul and Silas go. But it was a struggle between the testimony of God and the power of Satan; it was necessary tilt the unjust magistrates should own their fault, and the rights of the gospel of God. Paul did not wish to excite this struggle (an important warning to us), but to continue his work peacefully. The devil was seeking to mix himself up with the work, to associate himself, to the eyes of the world, with what was done by the servants of God. This provoked the apostle. It was necessary either to receive the testimony of the devil, and join his name to that of Christ, or to enter into a struggle. He casts out, therefore, the unclean spirit and open war is thus at once declared.

Satan is the prince of this world; and the world, stirred up by the present power of God in the work of the Spirit, is, unless kept down by God, stronger than His servants. Here God permits the world to manifest itself in violence and injustice, in the multitude as much as in the magistrates. The servants of God submit to this injustice, are beaten and cast into prison, their enemies being the guilty ones, as is nearly always the case. I say nearly, because it is possible for Christians to fail in wisdom, and to provoke a struggle without cause. They do not resist; but here the power of the Holy Ghost and the state of their souls show complete superiority to circumstances. Full of joy in prison and in the stocks, they can sing praises. Testimony is rendered even to the prisoners. As far as the body is concerned, the world is stronger than the Christian, if God allows it to act: but in soul, the Christian is always above circumstances, if he can realize the presence of God. His presence is the greatest of all circumstances, and overcomes the others. One can rejoice even in sufferings, as we see in Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:5.

Moreover, God makes use of the circumstances, and enters, so to speak, into the struggle Himself; the doors are opened, and the hands are loosed. In body man is powerless, unless God see fit to intervene; and often He does so by His providence, if not in a miraculous way. All were witnesses or convinced that God was victorious in the struggle—though some, in spite of themselves. The magistrates had taken part in the wrong with great injustice, and it was necessary, therefore, that they should own their fault. Now that all was calm, they sought, in the wisdom of the world, to let the affair blow over in silence. But when God works and shows Himself, He makes it plain that He has rights in this world.

Paul and Silas were in prison against all the rights of God and of men; and the magistrates are obliged by the firmness of Paul to own their fault, and to ask the servants of the Lord as a favor to depart. This, as it suited them, they do without delay; only, being perfectly free, they enter into the house of Lydia, see the brethren, comfort them, and depart.

When Paul sought to maim use of his rights as a Roman in order to arrest injustice, he lost his liberty, and was sent a prisoner to Rome, although the Lord had directed everything. But here he did not attempt to arrest injustice; he submitted, only taking advantage of this right afterward, when it was a question of the innocence of the gospel and of its conduct, and when it happened that the magistrates, and not he, were in the wrong.

But God has this peculiar work in the world, the blessings of grace; and makes sure of all this for the conversion of the jailor. He works as a man of the world at his post; but by this manifest intervention of God he is awakened, convinced of sin, and given to feel his need of salvation. Now that all call themselves Christians, one asks if a man is a good Christian, truly converted; but then all were heathens or Jews, and became Christians. And Christianity is salvation. The grace of God has brought salvation into the world in the Son of God; and by His work on the cross, it announced by the Holy Ghost. The need makes itself felt when the conscience is moved by the Holy Ghost. What it seeks for is salvation, as here does the jailor. The answer is simple and clear: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The object of faith is the person of the Lord Jesus, and the redemption accomplished by Him; and all believers, reaping the benefits of this work, are saved. Now one investigates and scrutinizes in order to know whether one has faith in the heart, and whether it be true faith. We all pass more or less through this state, but true peace is never to be found there. It is perhaps, however, useful in humbling us, and teaching us that in up dwells no good thing. Yet we are not called upon to believe in the faith which is in us, but to believe in Christ Jesus; and God declares that all believers are justified, and have eternal life. I do not examine my eyes to know whether I see, but look at the object before them, and know that I see. People quote the passage in 2 Cor. 13:6; but those who do so deceive themselves, leaving out the correct beginning of the passage, “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me,.... examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” The apostle stews them their folly in doubting his true apostleship. If Christ had not spoken by him, since they had received his word, how was it that he had been the means of their conversion? For the same reason he continues to inquire, “Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?” Christ therefore had spoken by his mouth. There were many proofs of his apostleship. Here he Anus them their stupidity, because, if he were not an apostle, they would not be Christians. Of their conversion they had no doubt. If we examine ourselves to know whether we walk as Christians, we do well; but if we do so to know whether we are Christians, it is not according to the word.

Faith looks towards Jesus, not towards self. The experience of the examination of the heart, in order to discover what passes there to make one believe, leads us to see that it is impossible thus to fled peace, or even victory, for we are looking at what is behind us; but when we are convinced of this, the answer of God is there—He has given salvation in Christ, and he who believes is justified. The Lord says, “Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee.” (Luke 7) The woman looked to Jesus, and believed His word, not thinking of the state of her own heart. The

state of her heart, the conviction that she could not find peace and salvation in herself, led her to look to Jesus, and in Him she found peace. The gospel gives the answer of God to the heart clearly and fully. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

I learn by experience that in me dwells no good thing, and that I have not the strength to conquer. I cease to look towards myself, as though I could become better. The flesh is always there the will may be good (in a converted man), but practice does not correspond to will. Not amendment, but salvation, is needful to us: and that we possess in Christ by faith, and in salvation, peace. Being enable to accomplish justice in ourselves, we submit to the justice of God. By the faith that Christ Himself is our justice, before God, we learn by experience what we are ourselves. This experience is itself the fruit of the work of the word by the Spirit in the heart; but by this we learn that we are lot, that, looking to Christ, we are saved. “Believe in Him, and thou shalt be saved.” Good works are what suit the position we then occupy. It is the same in the human relationships of children, wives, servants: it is necessary to be in the relationship, or the duties do not exist. When we are saved, we become the eons of God, and then we find the duty of sonship; but it cannot exist before we are sons. The duty of man as the creature of God existed; but on that ground we are lost.

Chapter 170

Pauline Greeting

We have now to inquire why in some of Paul's epistles the salutation is only in his name; some have merely, “Grace be with you,” and others a fuller form.

1 Timothy alone is individual, σο■. In Titus it is, “be with you all.” The general fact stands thus: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” or our Lord Jesus Christ, which last is more general (2 Corinthians adding, love of God and fellowship of the Holy Ghost), found in Rom. 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Phil. 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon; “Grace be with you,” or with you all, in Ephesians, Col. 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews, The former seems more elaborate and formal from one sitting down to address them as an apostle commissioned so to teach them from Christ, and speaking from Him in a didactic way; the latter, the personal expression of his own feeling, the wish of his heart. He had finished what he had to say, and then closes by wishing them grace, a natural feeling. The former was a formal part of the epistle, and which he added formally. In the latter he had finished what he had to say, and wishes them grace. In 1 and 2 Timothy this is natural, and in Titus.

There remain only Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews. In Eph. 6:24 it is clearly a distinct and personal wish of his heart, as is manifest from what precedes, and it closes according to the former character, and the objects which follow. So in Colossians it is expressly his personal salutation, written with his own hand. The same character is in Hebrews, which is in fact a treatise, not an epistle. What is epistolary, the last verses, is finished. Ephesians and Colossians are pretty much treatises too, but addressed formally to certain saints. Romans is in a great measure a treatise, but in an epistolary form, the last part fully so, and the salutation forms part of it.

Chapter 171

The Penalty Paid and Sins Forgiven

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:16, 17.)

None can deny to God that He was entitled to lay this or any other command upon the man He had created, and it carried with it an obligation to absolute obedience. Directly God prefers a demand we are thereby constituted debtors to Him, since we owe unquestioning, unqualified obedience; and directly we fail therein we become defaulters who have brought ourselves under the penalty attached to its breach, which penalty God was equally entitled to impose. We are, everyone, then, debtors to God, because in the exercise of His inherent and unimpeachable authority He has been pleased to lay upon us certain commands, and we have everyone of us incurred the penalty, because we have failed to discharge these admitted obligations.

Our relations to Him as intelligent creatures of His hand, to whom He has vouchsafed to make known His will, involve the obligation to render Him perfect, uniform, and unceasing obedience. This constitutes the debt we owe to Him, an inextinguishable debt which attaches to our existence and nature in common with other intelligences, as angels, who are equally bound to obey His behest and for the same reason.

The fulfilling His will is obedience, the exercise of our own independent will is lawlessness, which is sin. Every defaulting debtor to God is undoubtedly a sinner, and every sinner has put himself under the penalty attached to his sin. To speak precisely, a debt to God is not in its nature a sin, nor is a debtor to God necessarily a sinner, because, as before remarked, men and angels are thus debtors simply because God has given to them His commands, whether they be broken or fulfilled. A defaulted debt becomes a sin, and a defaulting debtor a sinner, when God is the Creditor. Being by nature and by practice hopelessly sinners and irretrievably guilty, we are lost.

At this point grace comes in. Man's state being at its worst, God does His best, making demonstration that in the same act in which Jewish, human, and Satanic enmity are respectively raging, His sovereign goodness is laying a mighty and impregnable foundation for its supreme and eternal display. He gave His Son and was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself: the world received Him not! The Son of man must then be lifted up (and Christ gave Himself that they might do with Him as they listed). This brought in the cross! The climax of man's wickedness and hatred of God and goodness, and the climax of God's love to the ruined and the lost, coalesced there in Christ's obedience unto death. The one in whom was His eternal good pleasure, God's Lamb, who knew no sin, became sin for us, and in order that He might take away the sin of the world. The One who had never sinned nor could, being essentially “the Holy,” had laid upon Him the iniquities of us all; He bare our sins Himself in His own body on the tree, being accounted guilty for us, and thus bore the penalty under which we lay on account of being defaulting debtors, sinners, guilty, lost! Whatever that penalty was He must have endured its equivalent on the cross, or God were not the holy God that He is, and we were not as believers the ransomed ones that we are. Never

yet has any sinner proved in his own person the full extent of the penalty of his sins, its experience being as yet restricted to Him who became our Substitute; never can any mere creature fathom what He endured under the infliction of God in righteousness. This however we do know, that the work done has finally discharged every claim of God against us on account of our sins, as effectually as it has glorified Himself to whom it was done, and every desire of whose heart has equally found eternal satisfaction in the blessed person of Him who was the doer of it.

The question now comes, What part has the love of God to us in this, and where does forgiveness come in? Forgiveness is the personal thing resulting from or consequent on our individual exercise of faith. Upon this God makes good to the soul the blessed and eternal consequences of the work done for us by another; as Paul says, “Who loved me and gave himself for me.”

The love of God was shown (1) in His embracing us in His eternal counsels as “vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory;” (2) in having provided a ransom, even His own Son, and given Him that we might be saved; (3) in accepting Him as a substitute for us when He might have insisted upon our endurance of the penalty individually in our own persons; and lastly, in producing faith in our hearts unto eternal life—for this faith is the gift of God, as much as was the gift of His Son.

Where then this faith is found (God seen to be “light,” therefore requiring atonement, but also “love” and therefore giving His Son to render it; the shiner owning his guilt and the awful penalty thereof, but cast upon God in mercy for individual salvation), He makes good to the heart as a distinct personal act of divine favor or grace, the efficacy and the value of the work of the cross. This is divine forgiveness.

Nor is it that we have one kind of forgiveness for debts and another for sins; indeed, speaking with exactness, it would be more correct to say that while sins are forgiven, DEBTS NEVER ARE, for God does not cancel our obligations to Him. Since these obligations constitute our debts to God, it is clear they can never be liquidated because in their very nature they are as continuous as our relations to Him as His creatures; and grace, so far from invalidating this, has only established it upon the higher and eternal basis of what we more emphatically and fully owe to Him as being sons to the Father. For the same reason our debts being looked at simply as current obligations to God, they cannot be forgiven, inasmuch as there is no guilt involved therein: on the contrary, obedience to God and dependence upon Him, constitute the very perfection of a creature.

It must be evident, therefore that when scripture speaks of our debts being forgiven (see Matt. 6:12; 18:23-35; Luke 7, &c.), the term is used in the more general way, as indeed uniformly in the word, namely, as defaulted debts, trespasses or sins which God forgives, as we have seen, because Christ has died and made atonement. Thus in the parables referred to we are seen not only as debtors, but as so thoroughly insolvent, so hopelessly bankrupt, that we have not a penny in the pound to offer. This is carefully noted in the words, “forasmuch as he had not to pay,” and again, “when they had nothing to pay.” Deliverance comes to us, then, not because God cancels the obligation, but because the penalty has been borne for us by the competent Substitute His own love had provided.

Here we may remark that we are never taught to forgive on the same theological principle as we are forgiven upon, but because we are forgiven, in like manner we are to forgive. Nothing is said

as to the measure or as to the method. Who, for instance, could ask God to forgive in the same measure as he had forgiven his fellow-men? But in like manner he could. And as to the method or principle, God's ground of forgiveness is the righteous satisfaction He has received in the endurance by another of the penalty we had incurred, while our ground of the forgiveness of others is simply that God has forgiven us.

Further, upon this principle, God is righteous on His part, and to all the claims of His character in holiness and truth, in forgiving sins, and “He is faithful and just” to Christ, and to those who are His, in giving to our hearts the blessed sense of this forgiveness due to the value of the satisfaction rendered by that adorable One to God.

Finally; if any question be asked as to debts which may be defaulted in the future, or since we believed, the answer is plain, when the penalty was borne for me by another, every one of my debts was future. That penalty has been borne “once for all,” and thereby every defaulted debt of the believer forever discharged. The obligation of obedience can never be liquidated so long as God is God, but thanks be to Him, the penalty of every breach of it has been so borne or paid by the God-provided Substitute, that God is glorified in forgiving our sins, and has blotted them out of His sight forever. By paying the penalty Himself, Christ has discharged for faith every defaulted debt, and delivered from his Creditor's judgment every defaulting debtor who has believed unto salvation; the knowledge of which brought home to the heart personally, in sovereign goodness and divine power, is what scripture means by the forgiveness of sins. R.

Chapter 172

Penalty Paid, Sins Forgiven, and the Debt Cancelled

Dear Mr. Editor,

I have just read a paper in the Bible Treasury for this month, entitled “The penalty paid and sins forgiven,” and from it turn to God's word, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17.)

There cannot be a more absolute statement of the difference between an unconverted sinner and a believer in Christ—a difference both as to position and condition. The believer is in Christ, a new position, and he is a new creation, old things are gone, all things are new. That is, both as to his person and to his circumstances, his condition is totally changed. With the old position are gone—else all the responsibilities belonging to it. If but one which belongs to the old creation still remained, it could not be true that all things are become new. Not that the believer in Christ, the new creation, has no responsibility, but that it is essentially and totally distinct from that of the old creation.

The obligation and responsibility of obedience to God attaches to every creature. In the paper before me I read, “Directly God prefers a demand we are constituted debtors to Him, since we owe unquestioning, unqualified obedience.” True, angels are debtors; Adam before he sinned was a debtor. Obedience is a debt which no payment liquidates. A debt never extinguished, constantly due, constantly to be paid. And one moment's omission constitutes sin and makes man a sinner. But if a sinner, another debt presses upon him: The debt of obedience is not canceled because he failed, but he has incurred the penalty of failure. So there are two distinct debts now resting upon the defaulter—that of obedience which remains in all its force, and the penalty or debt of disobedience. Adam while unfallen and innocent owed the former, but he owed it equally when he fell; he did not cease to owe obedience, because he makes himself incapable of paying it. His position, his condition, his whole moral being was changed from innocence to guilt, from wealth and happiness to toil and misery. But his liabilities remained. The original claim of the Creator is not relaxed, could not be, and ought not When to this debt of obedience which he cannot pay there is added the penalty of death for disobedience, then, indeed, man is irretrievably lost.

Grace has come into this frightful scene, and has appeared to all. Christ has been here. He has met both debts. He has paid the penalty of sin, He has Canceled our responsibilities as more creatures by taking us clean out of our old condition. We are in Him, and the responsibilities of “any man in Christ” can never be the same as of any man not in Christ. He, the blessed Lord, provided for both debts on the cross, and they are not the same. In paying the penalty He shed His blood for us in meeting our creature responsibility He died for us, and we died with Him. Therefore in virtue of that death we have died to sin, died to law. Law has now no claim upon us, we are outside its sphere, and beyond its reach—in Christ; if not, we are under its curse; either under the law's curse, or in Christ. Can there be any two positions more widely different? The debts we owe to God as being in Christ can never be identified with those which man owes as being out of. Christ. And scripture positively asserts it, for “old. things are passed away; behold, all things are

become new.”

Having died with Christ we are freed from sin. (Rom. 6) All our responsibilities to law, that is, as mere creatures to God, are gone; for we are married (or belong) to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, having died to that which formerly held us. (Rom. vii.) Debts are never forgiven, speaking accurately, but they cease with death.

There is one sentence in which I think an unscriptural word is used, and I am sure, inadvertently. Speaking of Christ, I read in this paper, “being accounted guilty for us.” He was made sin for us, and God dealt with Him as such; but God never accounted Him guilty. God made Him sin; but He was, and God accounted Him, holy, the Lamb without blemish. He was made a curse for us, but it is never said, guilty.

I have said that Adam's creature responsibility to God was the same, whether toiling for bread in the sweat of his face or amidst the delights of Eden. His sin and fall made no change in this respect. Whether inside or outside the gate of that garden, whether he had power or not, the obligations of obedience remain the same. But when a man believes in Christ, there is an immense, an infinite change. The whole debt is canceled, as well as the penalty of disobedience—death—paid. A debtor is a man alive in the world; how can we be debtors if we have died with Christ? How can old-creation debts subsist when we are a new creation in Christ? Rom. 6 and vii. are conclusive upon this point.

A little farther on I read, “that while sins are forgiven, DEBTS NEVER ARE, for God does not cancel our obligations to Him.” Here evidently the debts, as the sins, are those of the unconverted, and equally evident these old obligations are supposed to continue after we are in Christ. This I energetically deny. Else if “our” refers only to us as Christians, we reply, we do not wish them canceled, we pray to feel them more. We should lose great part of our joy if our obligation were canceled. To feel that we owe ourselves to Him, and that He deigns to accept us, is cause for boasting. But I say again, the obligations of believers are distinct from those of unbelievers, and to say that while our sins are forgiven, our debts are not forgiven, seems misleading, not to say mischievous. Certainly it is inaccurate (the paper says “not correct") to say debts are forgiven, but time thought is correct. That is, the right word may not be used, though no one can mistake the meaning. Strictly, the debtor is forgiven, the debt is canceled. And when God forgave us, all our creature debts were canceled; not liquidated, for that means payment, and we cannot pay. And this is what God has done by Christ's death and blood. The shed blood paid the penalty—His life for ours, and God righteously forgives. Christ not only gave His life for ours, but we have died with Him, and every obligation or responsibility that lay nylon us as creatures of the old creation is canceled, clean gone forever. We are created anew in Christ Jesus. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

So there is a, new obedience, a new obligation, a new debt. We are elect through sanctification of the Spirit to a Christ-like obedience. (1 Peter 1) The sprinkled blood creates the mew obligation and debt. And we by grace render obedience on a new ground, with new conditions, given to a new nature, from new and heavenly motives, and in a new sphere—in Christ.

Again I read, “Deliverance comes to us, then, not because God cancels the obligation, but because the penalty has been borne for us by the competent Substitute His own love had

provided.” This, coming in immediate connection with “When they had nothing to pay,” seems to say that because man had nothing to pay—his debt is not canceled. I should rather have thought that for this very reason the debt must be canceled. But in truth the parable referred to is not apposite to the question before us. It is parabolic instruction regarding forgiveness to each other. God's forgiveness of us is the grand motive and pattern set before us, and the next paragraph in the paper confirms this meaning, “In like manner.” True, we have deliverance because God in His love provided a Substitute. But how we are delivered from law and its righteous claims, and our debts not canceled, I fail to see. And what is of far more importance, it obscures the all-sufficiency, the complete perfectness of Christ's work upon the cross.

My only thought in sending you these few remarks is that simple souls may know their full deliverance through Christ. He has paid for us the uttermost farthing.

Oh what a debt I owe,

To Him who shed His blood,

And cleansed my soul, and gave me power,

To stand before His God

Yours truly in Christ,

B.

Chapter 173

The Penalty Paid, Sins Forgiven, and the Debt Cancelled

Dear Mr. Editor,

Your readers must determine whether your correspondent's strictures on my paper are scriptural or not; for myself I see no reason to depart from what I have advanced. As to responsibilities he says, “If but one which belongs to the old creation remained, it could not be true that all things are become new,” and almost immediately after, “The obligation and responsibility of obedience to God attaches to every creature.” I ask, Did not that belong to the old creation, and does it not equally obtain in the new, “constantly due, constantly to be paid"? Have I ceased, or shall I ever cease, to be a creature? And if not, how can my creature responsibilities have ceased? Shall I be told that God has forfeited or foregone His creatorial rights?

Brethren must judge for themselves, but for my own part I say once for all, as I have no intention of pursuing controversy, that I refuse such teaching as forms the staple of this critique. My moral sense revolts when I am told that my responsibilities to God as His creature are at an end. Your correspondent says he turns to scripture, but scripture nowhere teaches that “when God forgave us, all our creature debts were canceled.” It as much traverses scripture “thought” as scripture language.

Does not my obligation of obedience to God and dependence upon Him, which my paper specifically referred to, attaching to me from my birth, continuo forever, yea, without a moment's interruption or suspension? To say that after my conversion it is an element of the now creation while before it was of the old, is to import a line of truth which would have only obscured my subject, and equally so would have been the effect of introducing death to sin, the law, and the world, true as it all is, simply because it in no wise alters the fact that I (the entity, the creature) owe this to God, saved or unsaved, whether in the new creation or the old. Adam innocent or Adam fallen, or man in Christ (our present standing) or man in glory by and by, is equally and always under each obligations, though upon wonderfully dissimilar grounds. I might further ask as to the moral duties, natural relationships and their claims, honesty, uprightness, speaking truth with one's neighbor, subjection to authority and the like, whether these also were canceled at the cross, see Rom. 13, Eph. 6., &c. Surely they are the same obligations as I was always under, although set up anew upon grounds as much higher as more imperative. It is a serious and pernicious misuse of 2 Cor. 5:14-17, to argue from it that because we are in the new creation all the claims upon us of the old are abrogated. So much as is really scriptural in your correspondent's remarks on the new creation, my paper leaves ample room for in the words, “grace, so far from invalidating this, has only established it upon the higher and eternal basis of what we more emphatically and fully owe to Him as being sons to the Father.” The character of a son's obedience is incomparably higher than that of a servant's, but the principle of obedience is there in either case, as is evident. B. remarks, “a debtor is a man alive in the world; how can we be debtors if we have died with Christ?” As to the first part of this, I demur to his definition of a debtor; one “alive in the world” is certainly a debtor, but a debtor is not necessarily “alive in the world,” and

as to the latter part, is it not enough that scripture says, “Brethren, we are debtors"? (Rom. 8:12.) But again, in this epistle the Christian is looked at as alive in the world, and am I debarred from that line of truth, or that scriptural standpoint, when in character with my subject? He says (which I fully accept, nor have I written anything to the contrary), “there is a new obedience, a new obligation, a new debt;” then I suppose there is still a debtor, and notwithstanding death with Christ. There is much more that I might challenge, especially (what I am most concerned about) the general drift of his remarks, but I spare your readers. Any further difference between us, so far as it is relevant, resolves itself into this, that he speaks of what is “new,” while I have spoken of what is as old as creation and as enduring as the creature's relations to his Creator, and this because I was treating in an abstract way of the ever-existing obligations of a created being, whether those of an angel, an innocent or fallen man, or a man in Christ.

B. says, “strictly, the debt is forgiven, the debt is canceled.” I answer that it is traveling entirely beyond the record to affirm that the debt is canceled. On the contrary, the righteous penalty of its default has been borne by the divine Substitute, establishing thus the validity of the debt, but clearing the defaulting debtor. Not, however, clearing him of what he owes as a creature by terminating his obligations to God, but of the penal consequences attaching to him as a defaulter.

I submit, then, that your correspondent has not shown that the believers' debts to God (which I termed “our obligations to Him") are either canceled or forgiven; indeed he acknowledges that we do not wish them canceled, and should lose a great part of our joy if they were: as to the unbeliever, I should have thought it evident that his sins and debts alike are neither one nor the other. I repeat that debts regarded as current obligations are not forgiven, for they do not necessarily involve guilt, neither are they canceled, for as B. says, “the original claim of the Creator is not relaxed, could not be, and ought not"; defaulted they become sins and are blotted out only by the blood of Christ, in other words, by endurance of penalty in the person of our divine Substitute. May I also suggest that the all-sufficiency, &c., of Christ's work and the full deliverance flowing from it, to which B. refers, does not consist in, nor is it founded upon, or secured by, any cancellation whatever, but is by substitution under judicial penalty, in a word “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” in atonement? And the sure way to cloud these things (which, however, I am persuaded your correspondent does not wish to do) is to put them upon some other ground.

In conclusion, I frankly admit that “accounted guilty” is not scripture; is “accounted holy” scripture either? He was holy, as your correspondent says; “accounted” signifies He was not.

Affectionately yours in Christ,

R.

P.S.—B. says, “debts-speaking accurately—cease with death” (speaking accurately they cease with life, that is, at death), and he argues that inasmuch as we have died with Christ we are exempt from all the creature responsibilities. Very plausible, but stop a moment; have I died as a creature? This fallacy is at the bottom of all his reasoning. It is true that in the reckoning of faith I have died as a man in the flesh, but I deny in toto that I have died as a creature, either as a matter of fact or as a matter of faith. Faith says, I am not in the flesh; faith never says, I am not a creature. Otherwise how could it be said, “Doth not even nature itself teach you?” And I have not died to

creature responsibilities unless I have also died to nature. It is a reductio ad absurdum to use new-creation truth for denying as though obsolete what God has indisputably connected with nature and the creature. What I hold on new creation is found in your columns of June last. May I courteously suggest to your correspondent that he should peruse an article in “A Voice to the Faithful” for December last, entitled “Is Nature Dead?”

Dear Mr. Editor,

Having in my former paper clearly stated what I believe to be the truth, there is no need to go over that ground again, save just so far as R.'s reply necessitates. I stated (1) that man as a creature owes obedience to God; (2), that man having failed had incurred the additional debt or penalty of debt; (3), that man in this condition lies under the pressure of two debts, of obedience which he cannot pay, which the Creator never relaxes, and of death, the penalty of disobedience, or debt of sin; (4) that scripture calls this state of man the “old things;” (5) that Christ met both these debts upon the cross. In paying the penalty He shed His blood, in meeting our creature (or old creation) responsibility He died for us, and we died with Him. I referred particularly to one scripture; there are many, but one is amply sufficient. First, let me say, I would not willingly grieve, nor say one unbrotherly word to R., remembering we are members of Christ, and partakers of the one loaf.

We both agree as to the responsibility of the creature. Responsibility supposes relationship, and relationship implies duties. The question is, are these duties, relationships and responsibilities the same in the new creation as in the old? I affirm they are not. And 2 Cor. 5:17 declares it. R. asks, “Have I ceased or shall I ever cease to be a creature.” But is this the question? Is it not rather—Have I ceased to be of the old creation? Why such a question from R.? as if I had said that the believer ceased to be a creature. Nothing in my paper implies such a thought. Again, “And if not how can my creature responsibilities have ceased?” and after a few more words he says he is “not prepared to receive such teaching as forms the staple of this critique.” But as there is no such teaching in what I wrote, let it pass. He insists “that I (the man, the creature) owe this to God, saved or unsaved,” he. Who denies it? The old creation and the new owe obedience, but is it the same? It is altogether a new kind of obedience and obligation: the old is gone forever. Take only one point, the obedience demanded of the old creation was to obtain life. “This do and thou shalt live.” The obedience rendered by the new creation is because life is possessed, not sought for. Is not this an essential difference, completely changing the character and nature of the obedience, obligation, duty, or whatever other term we may use? And so for all else. The word says, “all things become new.”

“Adam innocent or Adam fallen, or man in Christ (our present standing) or man in glory by-and-by, is equally and always under such obligation; though upon wonderfully dissimilar grounds.” This is just what I contend for. So wonderfully dissimilar is it that scripture calls it a new creation—calls it death to sin, the law, and the world. Yet R. insists that the old debts continue! So then our having died with Christ makes no difference, and has not delivered us from the old indebtedness: consequently we are still under the curse of the law which says, that he who offends in one point is guilty of all! (James 2:10.) A little before R. asks, “Does not my obligation to God, and dependence upon Him, which my paper specifically referred to, continue?” &c., &c.” Certainly, obligation too, and dependence upon God not only continue, but are far greater. But when I turn to his former paper, I find the obligation, specifically referred to, is that, while sins are forgiven, “DEBTS NEVER

ARE.” If there be any meaning in words, and if their meaning is determined by the context, then it is here asserted that the debts incurred by the sinner are never canceled when he is converted. It is not here, in the part referred to, an abstract question of the creature's indebtedness, but a positive assertion that the old debts incurred while in an unconverted state remain upon the believer after he is converted. Now it is this that I deny. The word of God asserts the contrary of what It. says. This may be called strong language. So it is. I rather like plain words. And though I love and respect R. as an unknown brother, not merely as “your correspondent,” yet the truth takes precedence.

He says that “it is a misuse of 2 Cor. 5:14, 17, to argue from it that because we are in the new creation all the claims upon us of the old are abrogated.” A simple soul does not consider it a misuse to argue so, for the plain reason that God says, “old things are passed away” and “ALL things are become new.” But this comes immediately after the question whether moral duties and natural relationships were canceled at the cross. My paper never logically suggested that question. But I refer your readers to the “wonderfully dissimilar grounds,” and there they will find all the moral duties and natural relationships which belong to us, not canceled, but enforced with Christ as the motive power for their observance. I have said enough on this part.

The next paragraph begins with demurring to my definition of a debtor. It is not a definition, nor given as such, but a simple statement. I use “alive in the world” in the same sense as does Col. 2:20, in contrast with having died with Christ. The debtor is in my paper one not dead with Christ. The value of quoting as refutation of what I said, “Brethren, we are debtors,” let “your readers judge. But it would seem not to be without effect upon R.'s mind, for after saying with me, “there is a new obedience, a new obligation, a new debt” which I insisted on in my former paper, and of which new debt it is that I say, we believers do not wish it canceled, he pertinently adds,. “then I suppose there is still a debtor, and all I would ask is, was this new indebtedness canceled at the cross?” And this is called the general drift of my remarks, of which more might be said, but hiving compassion on your readers he says, “your correspondent has not shown that the believer's debts to God... are either canceled or forgiven;” and this in face of my words plainly and unmistakably given, and quoted by himself “that we do not wish them canceled!” I appeal to every reader with a sound and unbiassed judgment, whether my paper attempted to show the believer's debts canceled. I said our debts were those of grace, and we boasted in them. Our brother has kindly commended to my notice an article in “A Voice to the Faithful.” I with equal kindness ask him to read my paper again.

There is not a sentence in this last paragraph, from “I submit then,” but is open to comment. Let two suffice: “neither ate they canceled; for God does not forego His claims.” No, God does not, cannot, forego His claims: therefore we died with Christ; but for this very reason the old debts are canceled, because (we having died With Christ) they cease to be current obligations. Who talks of current obligations with a dead man? Another remark I must notice, “that the all-sufficiency of Christ's work and the full deliverance Sowing from it.... does not consist in, nor is it founded upon, or secured by, any cancellation whatever,” &c. This needs analyzing. The “cancellation” is part of the full deliverance which is founded upon the all-sufficiency of Christ's work, not His work upon the “cancellation” as the sentence seems to mean, nor (stranger still) secured by it. No, the all-sufficiency of Christ's work is the foundation—and security of our full deliverance, and “cancellation” is part and parcel of that deliverance. As to the word “accounted,” I used it because

R. did, but guarded it by saying, “He was holy.” But in truth the whole paragraph is beside the mark. And so is the postscript. No right-minded believer says he has died to nature; but as this is only postscript, I pass it by and “spare your readers.”

Sir, it has not been my sweetest occupation to go through R.'s reply, and I would fain have been spared. Only a few concluding observations let me make. In one part of his reply R. says that to have brought in death to sin, the law and the World, would have obscured his subject. Doubtless, for the continuance of old-creation debts, and death to sin and law, are incompatible. The obligation or the creature to the Creator may be spoken of in an abstract way (was it so in the former paper?). But when we speak of man's relation to God, of the wondrous redemption by Christ, does it convey a true, not to say Adequate, idea of the all-sufficiency of His work, to make no mention of the believer's death with Christ, and therefore as a necessary consequence death to sin and law, and this also for a further result, that having So died the believer is raised again, made alive, united to Christ, Married to another? Does not our death creation anew in Him occupy far more space in Paul's writings, than the fact of our sins forgiven? Not of course that it is more important, but harder to learn. But those results of the cross are so intimately connected that it is impossible for the instructed soul to hear of one without immediately thinking of the other. I repeat, the full deliverance which is founded upon the cross, not only consists of blotting out my sins and transgressions, but gives me to know that I am delivered from the body of this death, that my old man to which are attached all my old responsibilities is crucified with Christ. Therefore being told to put off the old man and all his belongings and so by faith having put him off, and put on the new, not only I, but every believer is now entitled to say, “The penalty is paid, sins are forgiven, and the whole debt canceled.”

Yours very truly in Christ,

B.

Chapter 174

Propitiation, Substitution, and Atonement

My Dear Brother,

Propitiation is properly for sins, as Heb. 2, and 1 John 2, and Rom. 3:25, 26 is to the same effect: only, Christ having taken the condemnation for sin, persons who do not search out words exactly may speak of the effect as for sin. Sin, as calling for it, was not properly known in the Old Testament. Lev. 1 does not, as far as I see, apply to this, except in a very general way. It was as a περ■ ■μαρτ■ας that God condemned sin in the flesh in Christ for us, so that there was no condemnation for us. In Lev. 1, though blood was shed and atonement made, all is sweet savor. Man's state is no doubt assumed, that is, sin; but the condemnation side is not what is in view, but acceptance. In the περ■ ■μαρτ■ας sin is properly in view. In propitiation sins are in view. Substitution is a human word, though a right one, but properly it is sins, that is, the scape-goat in contrast with the Lord's lot. Sin, as such, is never forgiven, God condemned sin in the flesh, but Christ took this place, was given περ■ ■μαρτ■ας—and knowing no sin, the condemnation of sin in the flesh took place, and that in death, and we are dead with Him for faith; it has ceased to exist: the condemnation of it gone. Death in Christ involves both. Guilt is from sins. We are dead to sin with Christ, but He has died for our sins. This last is what is properly atonement, and meets judgment. Death to sin is a question of state, not of guilt, though of exclusion from God. A question of defilement, not guilt, refers, and rightly, to what was done in the sanctuary, which was defiled (not guilty), which in full apprehension of the work has its importance.

The scape-goat had to do with personal guilt, the blood on the mercy-seat with approach to God, but the sanctuary was cleansed. The word “atonement” is very vague, and never used in the English New Testament but once, where it ought not to be. In the Old, λτψ “to make atonement” refers to the removal of positive guilt out of God's sight. And, as I have said, sin properly does not come into question in the Old Testament, though birth in it is recognized in one place (Psa. 51:5) only. Even where the sweet savor of Christ's acceptance is figured, man's sinful condition is recognized, and the work that is infinitely acceptable is in view of this. But this, though it assumes it, does not deal with sin in itself. Lost and guilt are different: one my state; the other, my responsibility and guilty failure. I believe I have said all I can at this moment.

I doubt whether you have got all the bearing of scripture as to sin. He appeared once in the consummation of ages ε■ς ■θ■τησιν ■μαρτ■ας by the sacrifice of Himself. It is not a question of guilt and imputation that is here. Judgment is according to works, but Christ was περ■ ■μαρτ■ας when God condemned sin in the flesh; further, as to sin of the world, we have α■ρων τ■ω ■μαρτ■αν το■ κ■σμου. We have had an innocent garden, then a sinful world, then a world wherein dwelleth righteousness. Of course there can be no sin in mare creation, but the status is one of sin, the bondage of corruption; defilement can be, if not guilt; hence the tabernacle, &c., were sprinkled with blood. True, because of Israel's sins but defilement attached to them; the heavens are not clean in His sight, and He who went into the lower parts of the earth, is gone above all heavens, that He might fill all things.

Sin in the flesh is not guilt, but it would defile, and not allow us to be with God, were it not condemned in the cross through His death who was made sin for us. The full effect will only be in the new heavens and new earth. Sin is not put away in the lost, I fully admit; but I could not say there was no suffering for sin in the abstract. It is never said sin is put away: I know the work is done, and am at rest. But the fact will not be accomplished as an effect till the new heavens and the new earth. If taking away be not a sacrificial expression, περ■ ■μαρτ■ας is, and the sacrifice of Himself is. I could not say there is no sin of the world except as regards guilt and responsibility. It does not recognize defilement by sin. Further, λτψ is applied to the holy place (Lev. 16:16-20); so it is to the burnt-offering (Lev. 1), where there was no actual sin committed.

The main effect of the burnt-offering is to show the perfect sweet savor of the sacrifice of Christ to God, but it was made in respect of sin, but not on account of actual sins committed. Man must come by blood because he is a sinner, and though we get Christ Himself here (not “of his own voluntary will,” for that is a mistake, though it was so, but for his acceptance), yet, as it is for us, the element of sin must be brought in. As to speaking of atonement, which, although acknowledged, he did not bring adequately into prominence, the reason for it is very simple, as you may see in reading Lev. 1:4, where it is especially said to be so in the usual (we may say, technical) word.

Matt. 22:14 seems clearly profession, or outward calling; the chosen, those owned in the wedding. As to Matt. 20 you must connect it with xix. There devotedness and self-sacrifice are made the ground of reward. Only the principles of law and grace are so different, that those great in one would be very little in the other. But lest there should be self and self-righteousness wrought by what preceded, the sovereign grace of chapter xx. is introduced, and the converse stated—many last first, and first last. Here it is grace as to service, only so much work for so much pay is utterly blown upon. The rest trusted the master for what they might get, and free grace acts consequently. God alone can judge what He should do in rewarding. Thus last are first, and first last. Many are called to serve, some chosen vessels, but all is grace.

In a general way we have God's book as a registry. But then you have specifically, in the New Testament, book of life. In one case it is said, Whose names are not written in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world. These God had written, and it was sure. But they are supposed true, unless shown to be otherwise—as one on the list of voters, unless proved to have no right.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

Psalm 105-106

Let me at this time make a single and simple remark on these two Psalms. Observe the different shape that the very same transactions with the same people have, when weighed either as a part of the dealings of God's grace, or as the ways of His government.

In Psa. 105 it is God reviewing His people as all, that they were and all that they had done before His eyes; and through the whole of that Psalm, no matter what He may have to say, grace triumphs.

In the next Psalm (cvi.) though the very same things may be alluded to, it is His government that is in question; and the consequence is, that however He may intervene and may cause in the end His goodness to prevail, righteousness takes its course. Hence instead of being all the dealings of pure mercy and grace, there are the solemn ways and judgments of the Lord.

Now we have to do with both; with this only difference, that we begin and go on, through the infinite goodness of God, with His grace; and this makes a mighty difference. Israel, alas! though God in bringing them out of Egypt, wrought in grace, chose to take at Sinai the ground of righteous government; and that is the reason why Israel, at this present moment, possess none of their blessings but are the monument of what it is to sin against God, and of presumptuous sin also. The consequence is that of all the peoples of the earth, none have ever passed through such fearful vicissitudes of trial. And we may add mire. We know from the word of God that they have not yet passed out of that fiery furnace. Far from it. We know that the bitterest part of Israel's tribulation is to come. Nevertheless they shall be delivered, everyone that is found written in the book. We ought not to need such dealings of God, for if they come, it is for sin. Christ suffered once for our sins, as we ought to suffer for righteousness, or His name's sake. It is all entirely from losing sight of the Lord. Where we slip into anything like Israel, a painful history, what do we begin with? With our pledging and promising as Israel did, to follow the Lord faithfully? We begin with a Savior, which they did not—with a Savior who has accomplished not a merely temporal, but an eternal redemption, followed by the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit in power. Hence therefore our hearts are entitled to full comfort in Christ, and joy in God, and we can look forward to the full confidence that whatever appearances may be, though sorrow may cloud the night, joy comes in the morning.

But there is more than that. All through the ways of our God's government, we are entitled to enjoy not the riches only, but the glory of His grace. Properly speaking, we are not now objects of government till we are saved by grace. By government is here meant God's righteous dealing with us day by day—and He governs us, because He loves us and cares for us—but at the same time He loves us too well to let us stray to His own dishonor. He is thus forming us after His own mind, His own ways, His own character. “Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

Chapter 176

The Rest of God

It is full of encouragement to the hearts of such as believe, that we have God in His word telling us of Christ, not only after He came, but so long before, and thus giving no to see the unity of His mind. What displays its unity is the constant reference, not to ourselves, nor anything that pertains to the church of God in itself, but to Christ. Undoubtedly God has purposes for the earth, as well as those heavenly counsels which necessarily have a nearer hold on our hearts, not so much because we have a part in them, but because it is where Christ Himself is most intimately known, where all that God feels, as well as all that He will do, comes out in unclouded light and glory; for the earth, after all, even in the day when the glory of Jehovah rises upon it, will still be a place not perfectly free from mist, if one may so say, though not of clouds; for it will be a morning without clouds; but even then there will not be that absolute perfection which God will have brought in for the heavenly saint before the day of eternity. On high will be our portion, but, above all, there will be Christ, as God will make Him known, as He knows Him Himself, and will bring us into His own delight in His Son. Even now it is our portion by faith.

Thus, then, it is not merely after Christ came, and redemption was accomplished, that God spake of Him, but here (Lev. 23), long before, in these early days of God's working with man on the earth, where His dealings were only provisional, where He was setting forth a great moral experiment, if I may so speak, in His ancient people; for the question was, whether anything good could be got out of man; even then God would let us know that Christ was ever before Him; for what would this chapter be without Christ? It would be to wrench the heart out of it, the center of all its movements, the attractive power to every saint of God. Accordingly we shall see how, everywhere, Christ is before God; but one may note, too, in this particular chapter, a peculiarity in the way the Holy Ghost discovers to us the Christ. There is a beautiful order in it, which it is helpful for the soul to discern and enjoy. My hope is to contribute somewhat in this respect to the simplest of those who know our Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all notice, that God does here what is often seen elsewhere, though not always with the same completeness which we find in this chapter. He introduces the sabbath, in what may be called a prefatory way, as well as exceptionally. Verse 2 treats it as one of the feasts; and so verse 3 describes it in due course. But verse 4 follows as a fresh beginning of the feasts of Jehovah, which are limited to the holy convocations, which occurred but once a year. Nor was it quite a new thing to have the sabbath. Again, it is observable, in the book of Exodus particularly, that, no matter what God does, the sabbath, somehow or other, is enacted in connection with it. So here with the feasts. If grace is being revealed, the sabbath appears; if the law is enforced, the sabbath has a central place. It matters not what comes out, God is never wearied of bringing in the sabbath', and for the good and plain reason, that the sabbath, in its full meaning, is the ultimate result of all God's ways. The sabbath may be, and in fact is, the first thing God Himself lays down when He gathers His people round, but it is the aim He has in view: whatever He may work, He works to this end—the rest of God; I do not say rest for God, as if He needed it, but it is His own rest; and not merely a rest that God will effect, and that will meet His mind and affections, but a

rest that He will share, in one way or another, with all that are His.

What a blessed result! above all the sorrows and difficulties, the trials and exercises, the suffering and tribulation, if we only look at that side; but what a blessed result for those who are now let into the enjoyment of God, and who know the obstacles that are found here below to that enjoyment. How many things flit across the heart, and how little, in the course of any day, one can speak of anything like uninterrupted enjoyment of His presence or His purpose!

Here it is among the feasts the first thoughts that God communicates what He is waiting for, and what He would have His people waiting for, and what He will assuredly accomplish in due time—the rest of God. “Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it.” Here man, Moses or any other, one cannot doubt would put it last, not first, as being the end of all the work. But it is the first thing God presents to His people—the sabbath—putting it in this peculiar manner to call the more attention to it, in order that it should have a place which no other feast has. It is the only one which periodically recurred at the end of every week. Thus Israel was habitually taught to look beyond daily present toil to the rest of God.

But let us turn elsewhere, as it may be a wholesome thing for us to distinguish between the various forms of rest as presented in the word of God.

Our Lord when here spoke of “rest,” but not “the rest of God.” God had hallowed the sabbath from the beginning, the type and pledge of His rest at the end; but Jesus invited all that labor to rest meanwhile in Himself. Never was there a prophet that did so, least of all did John the Baptist, the greatest of all; for he called the people of God to own their sins; it was no question of calling them to himself, but of pointing them from everything done to Jesus, as he did when he proclaimed Him as the Lamb of God, and the two disciples that heard John speak followed Jesus. But our Lord could say to the most heavily laden one, “Come unto me,” and this too when His work seemed to have been in vain, Himself rejected, despised, about to be slain and crucified, but His resurrection would prove that nothing was really fruitful for sinful man short of His death. His coming was even then shelving what God is, and not merely what man ought to be. He the rejected Messiah but the Son, Emmanuel, Jehovah, He was the first and only One who could say on earth, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” Yes, a present soul-rest, in the fullness of divine grace; a rest He was entitled to give to anyone, no matter how burdened or how laboring; no matter what, no matter who, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He was entitled to say so—He did say so—He loved to say so. No doubt there was more He had to say then, there was also the call to take His yoke on them and learn of Him and they should find rest to their souls. (Matt. 11:29, 30.) But I speak now, as the Lord does first, of the gift of rest in His own grace. (Ver. 28.) Then follows the government which He exercises, which never allows His sovereign grace to be slighted, so that for a season at least, some restive under His yoke find not rest but restlessness, even though He may have given them rest.

This is clearly a different thing from the sabbath, but I have referred to it, for the purpose of distinguishing between the two, and this brings us to another thing very often confounded, the use the Holy Ghost makes of “rest” in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Take for instance the well-known chapter iv. It is not merely true that the Lord has prepared a place of rest in heaven, and that the Epistle to the Ephesians declares us seated together in Him there even now; but we are actually going through the wilderness. Hence the great point urged in Hebrews is that we should not look

for present rest here below. It is not of course that any believers can be too full of the rest already found in Christ, or of that which He entitles us to know in union with Himself in heaven. There was a far different reason for the warning to the Hebrew Christians. They thought that because they had Christ now all difficulty must be over, and that there was no need for making up the mind to suffer as well as walk in dependence on God. Hence these are the consequences of the heavenly calling here insisted on; for it is no less true for the Christian than from Israel redeemed from Egypt, that this is the day of temptation in the wilderness. We are not in heaven yet, though Christ is. But we are marching through the desert-world, just like Abraham's seed of old. Consequently any attempt for the Christian to rest here below is perilous if not fatal. Now is the time for moving onward, at God's word, not settling down where Christ is not, but was refused. “Arise ye and depart; for this is not our rest.” It is polluted. We are brought to God, but only on our way to rest: we have not yet entered His rest. “We which have believed do enter into rest,” but we have not entered into what is here spoken of, for it is in glory. There is no such rest yet. God's rest is not. To seek it there is to court moral destruction. It is to dishonor Christ and to damage if not ruin our souls; again, this precisely is the apostle guarding them throughout; and hence he brings in the rest of God—not rest for the soul now, which last is not the point in Heb. 4. He shows now the time for fear and not ease, for labor and not rest. These saints were disposed to take things easy; they seemed to say, “Now Christ is come and the whole work is done, it is simply a question of our enjoying it.”

In this epistle Christ is shown very fully, not as the Head of a body, but as Apostle and High Priest—as Apostle speaking from God, and as Priest interceding for and bearing up the people of God. So we find the great object is to sustain them in their trials, to assure them of Christ's sympathy in all their suffering. Hence, too, we have believed only “enter” (not have entered) the rest of God. “There remaineth therefore a rest [or sabbath-keeping] for the people of God.” It is not yet come, it remains, it is a future thing. In the whole of Heb. 4 I do not know one word about present rest for the soul. It is exclusively the rest of God which the saints are to share in the day of glory.

We may now see why the sabbath is put first in the feasts, and why it also stands comparatively alone. It was essential that it should be continually before those who were so apt to forget it. The remainder of the chapter may be divided into two great parts, as setting forth the ways of God leading up into that rest: first, the accomplishment of that which alone could be the foundation of the rest of God; the second, what may be called the application of that mighty work. The first three feasts after the sabbath we may consider as answering to the accomplishment of the work in all its fullness, with a little earnest of the rest; whilst the latter feasts describe the application of Christ's work to His people.

Chapter 177

Thoughts on Revelation 11-12

We find ourselves here in the midst of Jewish circumstances, not earthquakes, horsemen, &o., as before, but the ark, the covenant, Moses and Elias testimony, &o. The reason is simple, namely, the government of the earth is connected with Israel. Israel is the center of Gentile blessing and judgment. The church is in heavenly places with Christ, but the object round which all God's ways on earth center is Israel. (See Deut. 32:8.) There we see the grand center round which He portioned out the nations at first. (See also ver. 15.) They forgot God, His anger is stirred, He scattered them among their enemies. Then, verse 36, the Lord turns His hand again upon them for good. He has mercy on His heritage, and then judges the Gentiles. (Read to ver. 43.)

To this point of the history we have now arrived; but the subject of Revelation is judgment upon the apostate part of the Gentiles, not the Gentiles generally. It is where the light shined and has been rejected. Here in the true sense of the word are adversaries, and we have to notice the rebellious character of this apostasy, and Jew, Gentile and church of God (so-called) are in open opposition to Him who has the right to reign.

The time will come when there will be only a passive testimony for God, in those who refuse to worship the beast; and as the iniquity ripens, there will be no testimony for God at all, when those who are in Judea will Rae to the mountains.

Let us turn and see in this chapter 11 the condition in which Israel will be in that day, then the Gentiles themselves, and the testimony of God to them then.

Verse 1. When God begins to measure in this way, there is something to measure, but there is something left out: God says, there is something I own as My portion.

1st. Those who are worshippers are taken account of, those who have a priestly character; they are not going with the multitude, but are within.

Verse 2. All this language is connected with Jews; the locality is the holy place, properly so called, and the people are those who own the true God, and all the i rest is given up to the Gentiles; the holy city is given up to be trodden down of the profane.

Verse 3. God has a witness. It is not the gospel, but His power over the earth. It is not the same testimony now, for He is gathering out a people to be to the praise of the glory of His grace. In these witnesses in verse 3 we see there are not only those in priestly character, but prophets, and they are in sorrow—they prophesy in sack-cloth: opposition is their portion, and it is for a limited period.

Dan. 9:24. Bear in mind that Israel were to be cast aside until he saw what the end would be. In Daniel we never find the blessing fully given. Daniel is in the place of remnant, and he sees the blessing just about to be brought in. Millennial blessedness is not yet come.

Here the thing closes at sixty-nine weeks, the last week is wanting. Afterward the prince comes, not Messiah, but the anti-messiah for the overspreading, &o. He will make alliance with the Jews (the first half-week), and in the midst will be the overspreading of desolation, utter desolation comes in because of this idolatry or abomination in Israel. Idolatry will come in to Israel (Isa. 66:17), sanctifying themselves behind one tree in the midst.

There is an interval, how long we know not (“it is not for you to know the times and the seasons") between the rejection of Christ and His coming again. (Dan. 11) Desolations are determined, the history of the evil is narrated, the ships of Chittim and in verse 33 of that chapter. The expression “days” alludes to the present—it is a picture of what is going, and we are now in the unlimited period signified by the expression “days.” The week, which remains to be fulfilled after the interval, is taken up in the Revelation.

The mission of two witnesses (Rev. 11)is not to preach the gospel, but they come with the testimony that Christ is Lord of the earth. There is a God that judgeth in the earth. It is true that God's eternal righteousness is connected with the Man in heaven, for the only righteous One has been rejected from earth and accepted in heaven, and now the angels are learning the manifold wisdom of God through the church, His body, down here; but then He will turn round and show that He has a right on the earth, and He will not give it up. Then He says to His people as in Isaiah, “Come ye into your chambers,” &c.

This claim the men of the earth will not hear, and as soon as God gives His two witnesses leave, they devour them with fire. (Ver. 5.) There is an allusion to Zechariah in the account of these two witnesses. Zechariah shows how this is all set up in order in Israel (Zech. 4): the candlestick of gold and a bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon, and everything is in its place. The source of the two olive trees is shown—Christ in Melchisedec order, ministering the oil; showing that Jehovah takes the name of God over all the earth, maintaining the brilliancy, of the testimony, and the Jewish people as the candle of God's government. In Revelation we do not get the establishment of them on the earth, and therefore there is opposition. It is the time which precedes their establishment. We find that the character of the testimony of these two witnesses is judgment: if grace is shown to the wicked., yet will he not learn righteousness—(out of the month of two shall every word be established). Verse 5, there is present, living, manifest power against the people that oppose them.

Elijah-power is first, and what was that? Testimony of Gad in an apostate people. Moses power is last; turning everything into death. As the Mosaic plagues characterized the testimony in the midst of an oppressed Israel, so when they are captive amongst the Gentiles in the last days, there will be the same kind of testimony. Then as soon as the Lord has given an adequate testimony, they are given over to believe a lie—there is power from beneath permitted to influence them. The beast comes out with Satanic power.

All power comes down from heaven. “The powers that be are ordained of God.” Magistrates, &c., even Pilate's power to crucify Jesus was of God, as the Lord said, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” But the question is, what use did he make of it? But in the day that is coming, after the witnesses are removed, the power will come from beneath, from the devil. The judgment then becomes alarming, and after the Spirit of God has raised up the witnesses, and they have ascended to heaven, the remnant being affrighted (not

converted) give glory to the God of heaven. But it is too late.

No wonder the Lord says of that time, it is such as never was, except those days be shortened. These prophets torment them that dwell on earth; the “remnant are affrighted.” There is alarm at the judgments disclosed, but no reception of the testimony. There is a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. The Jews had this before, and how did they show it? By killing the disciples and thinking they were doing God service, because they knew neither the Father nor the Son. There was nothing but the fruit of alarm in them, as in Judas when he went and hanged himself. They give glory to the God of heaven, but they should have given glory to Him as God of the earth.

We see in the chapter a very special definite form of evil and also of good, and the center is Jerusalem. In the seventh trumpet nothing is entered into, because it is the opening of the seven vials. Faith anticipates the blessing coming—no woe here. He is going positively to reign, and have things His own way. Would God have such a world as this is now, if He had taken to Himself His great power and reigned His patient grace is being exercised, but not His right to reign asserted. The nations are angry, and that is what His coming produces. “Thy wrath is come.” They see the whole result of God's taking all into His own hand. If the wrath is come, who are the objects of it. (Ver. 18.)

The last verse of this chapter is connected with chapter 12 and in it we get two things: the ark of His covenant symbolical of God's faithfulness to Israel; and earthquakes and judgments on the earth.

The outline of chapter 12 shows the same thing as we have noticed in others. God's purpose of bringing in the first-begotten into the world. We must know the value of the symbols to be able to understand the language at all. Sun always means supreme power—the woman is clothed with sovereign power. Christ is to be born of her—clearly cannot be born of the church. The church is the woman out of the man, but Christ is the man out of the woman. The church is the Eve, the woman taken out of the man. Here we have the man born of the woman, and it is a far more blessed thing to be in the position of the church than of this woman. But Christ was born of Israel. The moon is seen under her feet. All the passing phases which have been her glory are all done with—Judaism in its old form is gone completely. The twelve stars, are all its administrative power in perfection, subordinate power.

Verse 8 has in it the principle of strength out of weakness. It is the Roman Empire historically, but literally Satan's power. It has ten horns, not seven, and not the human administrative perfection of twelve. The child that is to rule does nothing at all, being caught up to God, and the woman who is to be the center of God's power is hidden in the wilderness.

The church is included in the Man, all through the Old Testament. (Isa. 1 &c.) Satan's being deprived of place in heaven, causes him to stir up war on earth. (Ver. 12.)

1st. There is war in heaven, and then Satan is cast out and makes war on earth. Connect Dan. 12 and Matt. 24 with this account.

While Satan is in the heavenly place, whatever God has done in goodness man has spoiled in wickedness. This terrible power that man is not able to cope with (that the saints cannot is their

own fault, it is true), which so hinders God's testimony on the earth, will be cast down, and he can then rage against heaven, but he cannot corrupt from heaven. Christ anticipated this when He said, I saw Satan fall like lightning—the accuser is cast down. This is the last woe to the earth, Satan rages on it.

Verse 15. A flood issues from his mouth. He tries to overwhelm Israel, but God will not suffer it. The subject of the chapter is the dramatis persona, as men say, of the great flood of evil coming on in that day. The testimony of Jesus is the character of the whole book—not preaching the gospel; as in 1 Peter 1 we see the preaching of the prophets, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. So here it is not the Holy Ghost sent down and making you see with unveiled face the glory, &c., but the testimony of Christ is of a different kind, the testimony of power, not of grace.

The cherished place is to be above and see the thunderstorm rolling beneath.

Chapter 178

Thoughts on Revelation 13

In this chapter we have the history of these two beasts, and they are something distinct from Babylon. One point must be remembered, that beasts are great temporal powers or empires; instead of being in subjection to God's authority, they are ravenous and exacting.

Nebuchadnezzar was the first and Babylonish power; and all the four great empires have taken the same character. They rose out of the sea, unformed peoples, and became great corporate powers, ruling the world.

Notice that it is not only the ravenous character of the beast, but here the dragon gives it its power.

Being cast out of heaven, Satan rouses the earthly people in rebellion against the Lord and His saints in heaven. This character of the beast exclusively belongs to him for the last half-week. In speaking of this beast or empire, the beginning of its history is given. Its origin we have in verse 1. The form of the boast is the same as the dragon in many respects. It has seven heads and ten horns. Chapter 12:3 and 13:1 compare together.

The Roman Empire is divided into ten kingdoms—the world acknowledges it as the rightful power. The crowns are on the horns, and on the heads the names of blasphemy. The heads are characterized by blasphemy, not power. Dan. 7:7 is identical with this in Rev. 13.

Satanic power characterizes this last empire. Satan resists Christ, and the Roman world in the beginning, by the power which was vested in the person of Pilate was that which rejected, condemned and crucified God's king, the King of the Jews, and stamped its own condemnation upon the act, by writing over them, “This is the king of the Jews.” Thus it was not done in ignorance, but “Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews, was written there distinctly and with authority.” As soon as Satan is cast out of heaven, he gives his power to the beast which had the character of beast before—he is the open opponent of a Christ in power as he had been of a Christ in weakness. Seven heads imply Satanic wisdom, and the expression is blasphemy. All the characters of power are associated with the beast here. He is wounded to death and healed. The same power, imperial power, revived. This power had been lost, but it revives and gathers up to itself all that the ten horns wield. They worship the dragon. There is direct thorough adoration of this power which is opposed to Christ; the giving up, the earnestness, and the energy of the soul to all this, not actual bowing down to Satan.

He boasts as man and blasphemes God. The tongue is a little member and boasts great things, a world of iniquity, as James says. Men are just preparing for this great wondering after the beast. Society is worn out; and wants something new—some energizing center, something they can follow, for old things are broken up. All the old things were broken up at the old French Revolution, and they have never been repaired. Whatever has been set up has been only breaking and breaking ever since, but this great power that is to come will just supply the lack. He blasphemes the name of God and His tabernacle and theirs that dwell in heaven. Satan can blaspheme the saints in heaven, but he cannot hurt them, they are in the heavenly Jerusalem of which the Lord

God is the temple. Satan can never get back to heaven when once cast out; when loosed from the bottomless pit, he will not get beyond the earth. He will make war with those on the earth, but he cannot touch those in heaven; and we are associated with Christ there, and can sit in as much composure and peace above the devil's blasphemy, for we are with God, as while the “lightnings and thunderings and voices” were proceeding from the throne. It is a blessed thing to be so identified with God in being thus the objects of Satan's blasphemies.

We want to get our hearts filled with the sense of this connection with God in the heavenlies, and it is this which is always in contrast with the dwellers upon earth; but just as far as we are mixed up with the dwellers upon earth, we lose the sense of our identification with Him.

“It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.” There are some killed, for example, the two witnesses. This could never have been before—God never allowed them to be overcome.

All that dwell on the earth are swayed by this power except those who were elected from before the foundation of the world. These do not worship the beast, the vessel of Satan's authority. There are four things specially to be remembered: let, the dragon is worshipped; 2nd, those are blasphemed who dwell in heaven; 3rd; those on earth are overcome; 4th, all the characteristics of the four beasts are to be found in this one. “If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear.”

Now we find ourselves, as in chapter 11:19, in Jewish circumstances. Verse 11 of this chapter introduces us to a sovereign power in his way, and he assumes to have Christ's power. He has horns like a lamb, and yet if you really hear what he says, you find it is a power in opposition to Christ; though pretending to be Christ, he has a mouth like a dragon, he has the devil's energy against Christ, and pretends to be the Messiah. Christ was a prophet when down here, and He will be a king when He comes again, and both these this second beast takes to himself, so that he is the antichrist (Herod being a figure of him). We find in him the pretension to Christ's royalty, and His prophetical character, but the priesthood of Christ he cannot claim.

In the three great powers in action at this time, the dragon, the first beast and the second beast, we find a mimicry of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit. “He maketh fire come down out of heaven.” This miracle resembles that of Elijah's with Baal. The very thing that was done to prove Jehovah God is done here to prove Satan's power. He mimics that which proved Jehovah to be God, and he will also mimic those which proved Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ of God. Thus we see that idolatry will be again set up in the earth, for man after all, infidel as he may be, cannot get on without religion, because he must have something that is above and greater than himself, for his thoughts to rest on. Man by nature in every act is infamous, and he is not only blasphemous in heart, but idolatrous in ways. The character of idolatry is to consecrate what is in man's heart already will or lust absolute subjection—as much will as you please—may be allowed, provided it be consecrated to this beast.

Chapter 19:20 refers to these two beasts of this chapter. It becomes quite Jewish at the end; but the character of evil working now we see from 2 Thess. 2. The expressions used in verse 9 of that chapter in reference to Satan's powers are just the same as those applied to Christ in Acts 2; 22. The words in Greek are identical—miracles, wonders and signs. All the pride now rolling around, and the intellect setting itself up, wasting itself for want of an object, will here find its focus. All the

pride of man will be as a mere puppet show for Satan to stand behind and pull the strings.

What painstaking care was given the apostle to warn us of these buddings of evil! We have more than buddings now—Judaism attached to Christianity, ordinances added to the work of Christ, instead of the Holy Ghost recognized as uniting the members to the Head in heaven, with nothing between. They who hold such things deny that the members on earth are Himself; but He says of them “I am Jesus.” They have begun in the Spirit and end in the flesh. The stamp and character of apostasy is upon it—denying the Master that bought them, going back to days and months, and times and years, and this with the Galatians was going back to the heathenism they had given up. The flesh makes an effort to accredit itself with what God accredits Christ with. But if we take Heb. 10 as our stay, we shall be glad to part with all this as a mere lie—believing God's word from verse 19-23, it will all be gone like a mere fog (the mere form of godliness). The energy of Satan is now being exercised in the mystery of “iniquity,” and this will continue so long as Satan is in heaven, from whence he corrupts all the truth God has ever given the church. Therefore in 2 Thess. 2 we get the link between the mystery of iniquity which is now working, and the man of sin; before the false Christianity which now exists, and the false Christ which will then appear. False Christianity is now deceiving the Gentiles; but when it takes its ripened form under a false Christ, then it will be connected with the Jews. Those who have not the love of the truth, God says, shall love a lie. There are even now plenty of lovers of religion, and but few who love the truth. This is a sad and solemn truth, to believe and witness. May the Lord give us to be very plain in our testimony, and to have our souls entirely separated from a form of godliness without the power thereof, for when it becomes a mere form it is the direct power of Satan. Do not let us be violent in our efforts; for if we are convinced of the truth of it, we can be quiet, and let God work in His own way; and as to persons, treat them graciously, taking all things quietly. May we so experimentally know what a saint is, as united to Him, as to be following Him, and not denying His name, for the contrary would be blaspheming it.

Chapter 179

Thoughts on Revelation 14-16

BEFORE the judgments are poured forth, not before tribulation, you get the redeemed from earth hid—their place marked out; not delivered, but sheltered, before the Lord appears, The moment they see Him, it will be the defeat of the anti-Christian action. Those who obey the word of prophecy will not be exposed in the last three and a half years. This chapter 14 stands alone. Whether in testimony or in judgment, it contains the Lord's dealings while this evil is going on.

(1.) Zion is royal grace, after failure at Sinai; Zion in Heb. 12 is earthly. The passage takes in the millennium up and down—church blessings and earthly blessings. Zion is of great importance in scripture. “Ichabod” was pronounced by the faithful on Israel, the ark being taken into captivity; there is a thorough break up, and then comes in a new thing by the divine interference of David, and the ark is then placed on Zion. Those who had faith went to the ark in David's time. All was confusion in David's reign. The ark was brought back, but the ark and the altar are never united again; the ark never set up again in the tabernacle. The priest walked before God's anointed; but now it was before God where the ark was. A believer would say, I go to the altar and there is the priest; but I find no ark, no cherubim, and the faithful would connect themselves with David, and then get the ark of the covenant. The high place was at Gibeon, and then God did visit his people, as Solomon: to faith the Solomon-reign was inferior to the David. This is the state of things now. “Ichabod” is written on the whole system of things; Christ is the ark. These 140,000 are not the same as those sealed in chapter vii. They are Judah, and do not include the ten tribes; the saved remnant of those who pass through the tribulation three and half years— “continuing with me in my temptations.” It is “the” (not “a") lamb as in common editions. (Verse 1.) The remnant are in an analogous position to Christ (and now His body), only on earth; and not united to the Son of man in heaven. Therefore they are learning the song from the church in heaven, and in principle like Christ, suffering from the evil around.

There are two points distinct in repentance. Two kinds we get in the Psalms and also often in our own hearts.

1st. Deliverance by power, and this answering to the ark on Mount Zion.

2nd. When delivered, they see their horrible sin against Christ who has delivered them. It is worship on Mount Moriah. “Cleanse me from blood-guiltiness,” &c., also Isa. 53 is an expression of it. We have done it. This is what is now called evangelical repentance; not merely the cry of fear, “Who shall deliver me?” “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee.”

“First-fruits” has always the same general meaning, gathering out from the old into the new thing. These have nearness to heaven. This scone is the Lord beginning with the earth. The character of salvation we get all through Revelation is coming from the throne of God—not the Father's house.

(2.) God is setting things to rights on the earth. This same gospel was given in Eden, not the gospel of the glory in heaven as now—the peculiar gospel given to Paul. Gospel means good news in all ages.

Eph. 3 “Every family,” not “the whole family.” See Amos 3:2. Every being who comes into connection with God, angels, Jews, Gentiles, the church come under the name of the Father of Jesus, not Jehovah.

The everlasting gospel—good news to the earth—is that which will bruise Satan's head, and set up the kingdom. It is the same as the gospel of the kingdom, and there is nothing to hinder that being extended over the whole world. It goes on through all the tribulation. (Matt. 24) Psa. 96 is the expression of it. There is a cluster of Psalms all connected with the setting up of the kingdom: Psa. 93-100 -consequences; Psa. 94-100 -cry for vengeance from the remnant; Psalm 95.-Jews called to come up; Psa. 96 -for example; Psa. 97-He is coming; Psalm 98-He is come: Psa. 99-sitting between the cherubim; Psa. 100-all in order. They are worshipping; Jesus is Jehovah the Savior, Jah, the Savior, Joshua, Jesus. This gives the character to His people. (Matt. 1:21.)

Psa. 32 is just the character of verse 5: that the kingdom-character of the gospel; this the creator character. Here is all the difference.

(3 and 4.) This chapter gives us an epitome of God's dealings. Babylon falls first, then the beast. Revelation tells the end of the thing. There are many lames leading into the great thoroughfare of judgment. The spirit of Babylon is one. Well then I say I shall not go through that lane.

The book of Revelation will be of special use to those living at that time. We have to do with the book: but the book will have to do with them.

There are two principles of evil at work. In the beast there is the principle of association, or despotic, power. This we see in France. Babylon is a weaker system—commercial in its character, but also papal idolatry. This we have in spirit in England, everything to quiet the conscience, and anything done for the sake of peace to carry on her commerce; and so there is the setting in of rill evil. Commerce destroys principle, but it promotes civilization; they will not scalp people, but goodness depends on paying bills.

Verse 10. It is fear, and not the blessed attraction of grace, as we have it. The fear of God is put in contrast with the feat of the beast. The fear of the beast is no doubt great, but the fear of God is to be greater. (Ver. 7.)

Here is the patience of the saints to be tried, and of those who keep the faith of Jesus. There is belief in the promises—confidence in Him, which enables them to walk as He walked, looking for deliverance from

(5.) Verse 18. “Blessed are the dead.” God is coming in judgment and in power. The dead will get their full blessedness at once without waiting longer” dead” are those who have been slain, not those who are going to die, but those who have died.

(6, 7.) Verse 14-17. Two judgments, one distinguishing, the other crushing. The harvest applies to what is good; not so the vintage, all is crushed in that: when reaping, some may remain untouched. Vine of the earth takes in the Jews and Antichrist. Babylon is degenerate Christendom, Israel is called a vine.

John 15 is not the church, because we never get the church, till the day of Pentecost. We find all through scripture Christ supplanting Israel. (See Is. lxix.) I suppose it is in Edom that the Jews are

judged: see Isa. 63 The Mahometans and Jews with all their corruptions hold a personal Antichrist. Some suppose the reference is to the length of the land of Palestine, but it is tremendous slaughter.

Attention is here drawn to a second great wonder. There was one great wonder (or literally sign) in chapter 12 and in this chapter 15 there is another.

In verse 2 we have a second set of martyrs, not those under the altar, who have been beheaded in an ordinary way, but those who have been under the beast and refused to worship him. They are distinguished in chapter 20:4.

The seven last plagues give us the wrath of God, not of the Lamb. Here God is dealing with those on the earth; nor yet the destruction of the beast, when the Lamb comes forth, but the filling up of the preparatory judgments after the woes. The wrath is filled up when the Lamb comes forth.

These martyrs on the sea of glass are singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Moses and the Lamb are connected. There are those who understand His ways by going through the same with Him; and others understand His works by His judgments on the enemies. Some “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

In verse 8 the marginal reading for “saints” is nations, the same persons as are mentioned in chapter v. There the celebration is about them, here by them. He who had the lowly place there of the Lamb slain is here celebrated as King of nations.

The” sea of glass;” it is not merely water, purity, but glass, stability. It is not only water to wash defiled feet, as in the tabernacle service, but here it is solid purity to walk upon, and mingled with fire. They had passed through the fire of tribulation in the judgments. Two things have brought them. there: it is not like the elders who are seen in heaven, as in their natural place, but they have got there, so to speak, through the judgments—saved so as by fire. They have not got clear of these dwellers upon earth, and they have to escape for their lives, like Lot. How came they down in the tribulation at all? They were doubtless faithful when in it, but, like Lot, who would never have been in Sodom if he had not liked the plain of Sodom. They have liked the comfort of the world while they could get it. To Philadelphia the promise was to be kept “from the hour of tribulation,” but here they are not kept from it, but taken through it. They were truly a testimony in the tribulation, but it was inactive testimony, “not worshipping the beast.” In chapter 20 there are two classes, of martyrs spoken of—those beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and those who have not worshipped the beast. In chapter 6 we see those who have been beheaded for the witness of Jesus. This is the positive actual testimony of the faithful three and a half years. In this chapter is no testimony, but a negative one—they had not worshipped, &c.

We see in both that they had not been faithful as the church, or they would never have been in the tribulation. Better to be like Abraham on the top of the mountain, than like Lot in the plain of Sodom, vexing his righteous soul from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked. God has sometimes to pass us through a kind of trial on our own account, as well as in testimony, which would not have been necessary if we had been more faithful.

Dan. 11 relates to Antiochus Epiphanes, even be yond the mention of the “abomination of desolation.” In verse 33, “many days,” and that following, reach on to the time yet to be fulfilled, the

time of the willful king. The prophecy leaps over the present time, and brings in what is to come in future.

The song we learn in tribulation we sing in glory (ver. 4). So with Christ. So here with the remnant. The manifestation of the judgment of God was their salvation. These nations had been oppressing them, and now they will be brought into subjection. There is not historical order pursued here, for it is anticipative, as are all these scenes with the elders now. This remnant have to go through the tribulation to get at what is here presented. God has come in in the way of deliverance. Enemies now begin to make His footstool. Satan has to be cast out of heaven. He does not yet role with a rod of iron. He has taken His friends to Himself, and the first thing is to cast Satan down. As soon as this is done, Satan begins to stir up the earth against Christ. The woman then flees: the half-week. The twenty-four elders probably include all who have part in the first resurrection. If these two sets of martyrs were not mentioned as having part in resurrection, we should be left to infer they neither had heaven or earth. As they did not go up with the church, and were cut off for their faithfulness, so that they could not have earth, if they had not resurrection, they would have been shut out from both, without getting a reward for their faithfulness.

The vials are direct judgments here. The temple is taken possession of in judgment.

These preliminary judgments prove of no use, and then these positive judgments are filled up in wrath. The former were in the character of chastening, but we do not talk of chastening when wrath is to be filled up. Heaven in Revelation becomes the scene of judgment, and the time is between the church being speed out, and the Lamb coming forth in chapter 19. The witness does not come out on earth until then.

Verse 3. “Marvelous are thy ways,” &c. This was the original title in the book. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Then the Lamb's song, “King of nations,” all anticipative of the double judgments of God and the Lamb.

Verse 5. Remark “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven.” (See chap. xi.) All this is an earthly thing in connection with God's covenant, Testimony is not the gospel, but according to law-Jewish ground being merely secured in the covenant.

The temple is the house (naos)—the place of approach (pro-naos) is the house and the sanctuary. In Acts 7 is the tabernacle of witness-tent within—God there—opened for man to see what had been God's ways within. These angels in their clothing give us the figures of human righteousness (white clothing), and divine righteousness (golden girdles).

They were vials, of the sanctuary that the angels threw out upon the earth. Bowls are more simple than “vials,” but there is no difference—vessels of God's house: the idea is golden bowls, divine righteousness, wrath from the inner place; or divine righteousness, looked at in its judicial character, within. Blood was on the outside of the mercy-seat, signifying divine righteousness had to be satisfied.

We have got into the house, as it were, and here is one of the things given from the throne by one who is there: “Him who liveth forever and ever.” This stamps eternity on the wrath, as well as its being the moral nature of God.

“The temple is filled with smoke.” Man is excluded from the temple which is filled with wrath, and they cannot get in. So Sinai was all of a smoke. “Smoke went out of his nostrils.” It is constantly a figure used—consuming fire, in opposition to grace “clearing transgressions,” &c.

“No man” merely means no one—it often does not mean man at all. Here none could enter in, priests, angels, or any God alone fills the house with His glory, as in the Solomon reign in type. Even the angels have come out. “God chargeth his angels with folly.” None can be there when the house is filled with His glory.

Chapter 16:1. It is between God and man now—the wrath of God with man on the earth. The temple in heaven is shut up. There is a glory of God “no man hath seen, or can see,” but there is where the devil goes near. See Job and Zechariah for different characters of His dwelling-place.

There has been an analogous course going on a long time. The system of the earth is going on—Babylon, and other evils, even many antichrists, and God is taking things into His own hand now. The character of His dealings is like those through Moses in Egypt, quite different from the description in chapters xii.-xiv. It is another sign, and quite distinct, “grievous sores” and “boils breaking out.” All those giving themselves up to the influence of civil power will get some terrible judgment, and men will see it—a “ mark,” a sign upon them, of being a slave—what we should call a brand, a Taw, as in Ezekiel, for service and worship—as people mark cattle now—entire possession of and authority over. It is a terrible thing to be marked by the devil. Paul suffered for Christ, having been faithful to Him, and he was branded for it. It is the same thought.

Verse 3. “Sea” is the unsettled mass of nations. The difficulty here is that every man died in it. The springs that should have been life became death—everything is polluted, deathful. Everything which should have been death bringing to life is life bringing death—every principle in the world turns to death. Any remnant will be kept clear of this.

The “earth” is that part brought out into connection with God. There are certain floating, unformed nations besides, and these represented by the “sea.” They have been inflicting death, and now they are drinking in death. Gentile apostasy is centered up in Jerusalem.

The temple is still the place from which the judgments proceed. None can enter into it while all this is going on. In the previous chapter we had the things prepared; in this it is the pouring out of wrath.

Now it is not the testimony or dealings with saints, but we see God's dealings with the Jews as a people, something the same as the last verse of chapter 11, but there is a difference. Here it is more in the way of government, the throne; in chapter 11, faithfulness to His promises; therefore the ark of the covenant is mentioned. See also the allusions to God's covenant-dealings with them in the next chapter; the figures are connected with the Jews as God's covenant people.

Verse 8. Glory filled the temple, not leading to worship, as in Solomon's time, but it is filled with wrath. It is all Sinai character, only it is in heaven, instead of on earth.

In the pouring out of these vials, we see the usual division of four and three.

The first four are poured out upon the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the sun: and the fifth upon the beast, and the “sore” upon those who have the mark of the beast.

The rivers of waters are symbolical of classes of popular principles, masses of people moved along by a certain class of principles, for example, the French Revolution. The sea is the great mass; the river the floating population, a particular local influence. The king of Egypt said, “My river is mine own.” All they had to drink was the power of death—the water turned into blood.

Restitution in Acts 3 begins as soon as Satan is cast out of heaven, but is not accomplished until after the millennium.

The “sun” means public authorities, “great heat.” Tyranny becomes intolerable when fire is poured out. The principle of the thing was seen in France, where you used to have a padlock on your lips, if they did not know what kind of a person you were. “Men scorched,” this shows the effect of judgment when the heart is not changed.

Why is the term “beast” used? Because of the ravaging power of this king. A beast's heart was given to Nebuchadnezzar. Man's heart looks upwards to God; a beast's heart looks down and ravages others. A beast is a wild ravenous creature, which devours all below it.

They give not glory to the God of heaven: but faith would have owned Him as the God of the earth as well as heaven. “They blasphemed the God of heaven.” They ascribe their pains and sores to Him.

Verses 12-14. “Kings from the east” are connected with the same subject. The barrier of the Empire will be broken. The seven heads on the beast denote forms of government: the ten horns, its division into ten kingdoms. What is meant by the miracles wrought by the spirits of demons? They are those which are so beyond the power of natural science to interpret, that they cannot be understood in the age in which they are worked. A more advanced age might be able to understand them. The devil has uncommon knowledge of the resources of nature and science; they may be beyond the power of man to effect, but such a combination of natural things as to be within the reach of Satan. There are things very like miracles performed now through electro-biology and animal magnetism. The brain is a voltaic battery, the nerves, the wires, &c., but the question is, who is to fire the battery? They could not make an animal move itself, and they could not make the animal.

In chapter 13: 15 it should be “breath,” not life, given to the image of the beast. It is life to man's eye, but not really so.

The three unclean spirits are—

1st. The dragon: this is infidelity, war against Christ;

2nd. The beast: pretensions to imperial power, given by the devil;

3rd. The false prophet: anti-Christian Judaism.

The saints are endangered, and therefore exhorted to keep their garments. “Garments” in scripture mean our daily habits or daily life. How needful it is to keep oneself in death, while walking through the world I A man’s nature should be so dead as to live as he dies; the nature dead. As it has been said, “A man wants but one text to die well, but every portion of the word to live well.” The only question with a dying man is what his soul is with God, not at all what it is with

man. A man may be very disagreeable, troubling saints all his life; but when he comes to his deathbed, his soul is happy with God on the right ground of grace.

We must keep nature dead. If I am ardent, and you lazy, my ardor and your laziness may carry something rather than Christ to another. The great thing is to keep nature dead.

“Keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” “I die daily,” Paul said. “When I am weak, then I am strong.” When God's mind or God Himself comes in, natural joy would be confusion and disgrace.

Babylon is idolatry; commerce too and worldly power connected with civilization. The things men are judged in are not always those they are judged for. Here men are judged in wealth, because of the abominable heart which sought the wealth apart from God. So was the merchant city of Chaldea, whose cry was in the ships. The thing judged is the idolatry, but the judgment reached their commerce. When you get the abomination for which God strikes her, she is spoiled of her comfort.

The “great city” means the civil association; the “great Babylon” is its record character, idolatry.

Verse 16. When both Hebrew and Greek are named as in chapter 9:11, there is connection between Hebrew and Greek power; but when Hebrew is alone, it is solely Jewish.

One thing in connection with the church is important: we have need to distinguish between the Spirit's work, and Christ's headship—one in us, the other over us; one is grace in me, the other is Christ above me.

Isa. 32 it was that taught me about the new dispensation. I saw there would be a David reign, and did not know whether the church might not be removed before forty years' time. At that time I was ill with my knee. It gave me peace to see what the church was. I saw that I, poor, wretched, and sinful J. N. D., knowing too much yet not enough about myself, was left behind, and let go, but I was united to Christ in heaven. Then what was I waiting for? J. G. B. came up and said they were teaching some new thing in England. “I have it!” I said.

Thoughts on Revelation 14-16

The declaration that the Word was God (and many such like) is a declaration which has authority over my soul. I make God a liar, as John speaks, if I do not believe it: and so I can use it with others. God has declared it. He that believes not has made God a liar; because he has not believed the record which God has given concerning His Son. He that believes has the witness in himself. And all these traits, which clothe, or rather reveal, the beloved person of Him who was humbled for us, are ineffably sweet: but the positive declaration is of all importance too.

Chapter 180

Thoughts on Revelation 1:5-6

The ways in which the gospel may be preached and reach the heart are so many, that one has to look to the Lord to direct one, that it may be brought so as to comfort the saint and awaken the sinner. The moment the word is revealed to the soul in grace, the point is gained. There may be a thousand thoughts on men's minds, but there is enough in this blessed word to meet these thoughts, and to bring everyone of them into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He is the Lord of all; and in His person all truth centers. He is the substance of all truth—the ground and center of truth to the soul. As we know Him, we get comfort, peace, and joy; as we walk with Him, we have power to overcome. In verse 5 we have Christ presented in a threefold character. He is the one most drawn out by the Spirit of God. Alas! it is not always so drawn out in our heart. The answer character to that in the spirit of grace is, “To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” In verse 7 is an application to the world—it will be a day of mourning to them. The Jews behold Him whom they have pierced, and the nations wail because of Him.

Let us especially consider the way in which Christ is presented to the soul. First, we have grace and peace in a peculiar form from God, that is, Jehovah; and the seven Spirits, His spiritual perfectness; not the Father speaking to His children, but the Eternal, and the seven spirits, the Holy Ghost exercising the varied power of the throne. Christ is brought near as connected with the earth; the faithful witness when He was here below. This is what our souls need to remember—faithful testimony to what God is; for without this we have no certainty, whether as saints or sinners. A holy man cannot know God without the witness, nor whether the witness would suffice to meet a holy God. When I know God, I get sure ground to go upon, I shall know where I am—a terrible thing if I am walking in sin; but there is only uncertainty out of Christ, for He is the light.

There are sufficient traces of power in creation to serve as a witness of the eternal power and Godhead—enough of misery around us to see ruin—enough in conscience to learn that we have sinned; but we cannot learn God in providence, for we know not why He does this, or refrains from doing that. Providence is a depth out of our reach; we are not able to find out and judge the ways of God, nor indeed of the thoughts of a man's mind very often. There is another, the law, which appears to be a clear witness for God against sin. It is true that this is a witness of God's claim on man. We ought to love God with all our hearts, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, but it reveals nothing of God's thoughts to us, and if this were the only witness, we should be reined forever. The object of the law is not love, but righteousness—God's everlasting claim of righteousness. But the law cannot meet what we want, for it says,” Thou shalt not covet,” and there was never a man since the days of Adam that did not covet. If you do not satisfy God's claims, there is a curse upon you. Thus the law is man's letter of death. We turn to Christ, the faithful Witness, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for over” —the Witness down here amid the same circumstances in which we are placed, and dealing with men in all the feelings of life.

Jesus Christ was not as a king shut up in His palace, but in the midst of all man's wants, passions, propensities, and desires. The first grand comfort is when I see Christ, the faithful Witness, in the same circumstances as I am: our hearts can say what God is to us. When I look at Christ down here, I see the faithful Witness, and I am brought into certain ground as to what I should meet in God. Jesus did not come claiming from man what he ought to be, but showing out Himself in all the circumstances of man—showing us what God is.

Whatever character I meet, Christ is the faithful Witness—the life and the light of man. This faithful Witness owns no goodness but in God. When the young man came to Him, Jesus does not tell him that He Himself is God, for that was not the time to do this. The young man was very lovely, and he thought by adding something to what he had already done he should go to heaven. He came to seek teaching of Jesus, and be gets Him as the end of the law. The faithful Witness touched him. All was laid bare, and the young man's heart was found given to mammon. With the Pharisees the faithful Witness sheaved that their righteousness was only adding the sin of hypocrisy, as all outward show is. He knocked down men's righteousness with a terrible band. What was the company that Christ came to? He was the friend of publicans and sinners. This upset the whole standard of man's righteousness. How came this? Because all pretenses to righteousness were found to be false. This is a terrible thing for those who are building their hopes of heaven on their character. The world is constantly presenting their character at the expense of their conscience.

On the other hand we see that Jesus did not want a character from man, but from God. John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness, and le went into the desert, and was company for no man. He came in the way of righteousness, not in grace. It is commonly said, a man is known by the company he keeps; and this is true, in a certain sense, of Jesus. How? He who in His own nature was holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners, was the companion of publicans and sinners, the faithful Witness to them of grace that God is love. Jesus would make no allowance for man's claim to righteousness. He had compassion for sinners—He was always grace.

Whatever your state, come to Jesus, and you will find that He is always gracious, that He has always grace. The disciples would send some away when they brought young children to Jesus. They thought Him a great doctor, and that He must not be approached. Jesus took them up in His arms, and blessed them. The disciples had no sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of Jesus; yet He spoke to them as if they had sustained Him. “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptation.” “They all forsook him, and fled” (Matt. 28:5, 6), Peter even denying that He knew Him.

If I find difficulty in the way of the sheep, Jesus goes before them. In everything He had gone before us. Do I fear death? Jesus set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, knowing that He should there be crucified. In this faithful Witness we find the activity of love. He came to seek and to save those that were lost, to bring them to Himself. The moment I find Christ I find a true God and Savior. I may have been walking in all sin, but when I find Christ, I find One who was such to such as I am—to sinners. If I take God's witness of Himself, and give up reasoning, I know what God actually is—He is seeking sinners—and have no uncertainty at all. I may think I may get better, and may put off coming to God; the God has come down first in Christ; or I should never repent at all. God, who so rich in mercy to come down into all my loneliness, He has come down

as the faithful Witness to make such as me—He could be the friend of publicans and sinners—He was despised for it; faithful in love going through all the scene of man, because He was the faithful Witness. The grace may come to me when I am ashamed to be seen of men: then Christ comes to seek me out, determined to be the Faithful Witness of God, who is rich in mercy. It is not that God has given a good character of Himself up in heaven; but it is goodness come down to earth, to identify Himself with all the misery of man. The One above all, our Savior, is God, and God is love, and Christ came to be a faithful Witness of this. You cannot be in any condition that Christ did not come into. He plunged into the very sea of men's misery to help you out. It is a comfort to get man's sympathy, but he often cannot help us. What is it to get God's sympathy, which has power in it? This was the accepted time, from the time of Jesus, coming into the world, to His coming again in the day of grace.

What a comfort to the saint to meet the faithful Witness, who never reproached the disciples' negligence, but said in the tenderest manner, “Could ye not have watched one hour?” He waits upon all our circumstances—upon all our anxieties. As our High Priest He bears us always on His breast—the accomplishment of God's love to saints, as well as to sinners.

The conscience makes even a saint afraid of God; he finds an evil will in himself, and the devil often gets an advantage over a sincere saint, and keeps him away from God; but the comfort is, Christ met the enemy in all His power, and He is presented to me as the First-begotten from the dead, the One who has put Himself under all the consequences of my sin, and now in His new character I find Him “the faithful Witness” —One who has borne all my sins—not now under them. The Father in righteousness was obliged to raise Him from the dead, and I can say, as a believer in Him, that I have no guilt—He sees all washed away. This is beholding Christ as the First-begotten from the dead. I see One who has blotted out my sins before Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and I get true and settled peace, not a cold, hard-hearted way of saying I have peace; but I look to Jesus as my Savior, and this re-kindles love, and impels me to keep His commandments.

We are by nature under Satan's power, the end of which is death; but the Lord Jesus overcame through death him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and through this I have not only victory over Satan in Christ, but I may say all things are mine, whether life or death, &c. Satan could not deal with the heirs of salvation, unless he had foiled the Captain, and Jesus submitted Himself to the power of Satan, but in the resurrection that power was broken forever. Liberty and joy are ours; not freedom from conflict, but deliverance from Satan.

Now the way that Satan gets power over us is by his wiles, persuading us to receive him as a friend, instead of treating him as a friend— “Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you.” It is not said, Overcome him, for this Jesus did before. Jesus was the expression of grace and truth, the blest Son of God before; put now in resurrection, He presents us with a new character to God, such as man never had before—a Man who had put Himself under the power of death, risen to absolute dominion. A new thing—man without God, in the very presence of God, and the very pattern of God's mind and delight! Sin is done with in Christ, and our standing in Him is quite a new thing— “Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.” There is no past history of this, no experience, not any old thing; all is done away, there is an entirely new Headship in the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Is this my place? Yes; but we find difficulty in apprehending this, because of the

weakness of the flesh, for the moment I look at myself, I have another man full of failure; but my standing before God is in Christ the new Man, not in Myself that I have to struggle against, but the new Man, the Lord Jesus Himself I am one with, who bore my sins and put them away forever. “Beloved; now are we the sons of God,” &c. (1 John 3:16), but it is not by being in glory that I shall be justified, but that is by faith now. Now justification is from two causes; first, that Christ bore my sins; secondly, that He is before God without sin.

“Prince of the kings of the earth.” I would say a few words on this point, together with the response from the heart of the saints. We see not here the dominion of Christ over the kings of the earth, but we shall shortly. As to the response of the church, when God enables me to believe the testimony of the Son, He gives me the Holy Ghost, He pots the Spirit into man's heart as a seal, and earnest of glory. What is the effect in this verse 5? It gives power to say us— “To him that loveth us,” no uncertainty. The Holy Ghost always says us, not them (1 Peter 2:12), that we shall be loved, but He does love us—no doubt, but the fruits of the Spirit, consequent on the Holy Ghost's dwelling in me, we see in the Old Testament saints. Things were not so ministered to them, though they may be its holy. Christ has come, was dead, has accomplished righteousness, has sat down, so now the answer to all His titles is, “To him that loved us and washed us,” &c. All the promises of God are in Him, Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us. (2 Cor. 1:20.) God path anointed us, hath sealed us. Do I doubt? What do I doubt? That the Father sent the Son for poor sinners? If you believe this, you cannot doubt that you are saved. Your salvation is based upon the unchangeable revelation of God; and what a tide of affection flows from knowing this! God, through Christ, has saved not me alone, but the whole body of saints. What a difference does it make to me, in thinking of the joy and blessedness, whether I am going alone, or in looking at many of you, and being able to say, “He has made us kings and priests!” Just exactly what He is Himself—the highest in authority, and the nearest to God. Can you all; dear friends, say this according to the Spirit, “To him that loveth us?” —so settled in the consciousness of it, that the heart can only go out in fullness of praise If it is not so with you, dear friends, it is because you have not received the testimony of the faithful Witness, who was grace, and the Messenger of God's grace to us. The Lord give us to give place to the Holy Ghost in His thankful testimony to His love, and grant us to walk nearer to Him, in the conscious power of it.

Chapter 181

Righteousness and Peace: Part 1

Rom. 3:19-28; 4:23; 5:1-11

It is very blessed to preach the fullness of the grace of God, as we were seeking to present it last night—all things of God, all things ready, all finished; God's own precious grace flowing like a river, the river of the water of life, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, to a barren world, and for every thirsty soul. But I never yet found that a soul got really established in peace by hearing only of the Love of God. The riches of His grace must be unfolded, but also the absolute perfection of His righteousness, His righteousness in justifying the sinner. Until a soul gets thoroughly grounded in righteousness, if it knows only of the grace of God, it will fail to have settled peace. I will give you an illustration, which may help to put the matter more clearly before you. A young man was arrested in London for a grave offense (on a charge of forgery); and it so happened that his father was a friend of the Lord Mayor; so that, when the young man was brought into his presence as his judge, and saw the face of his father's friend, of one who had often nursed him on his knee, he was convulsed with emotion. When he saw the tears began to trickle down the Lord Mayor's face—tears of love and compassion—he covered his face with his handkerchief, and sobbed as if his heart would break. What was it made him weep? What added to the acuteness of his sufferings? The consciousness of the love that he knew was in the mayor's heart. But here was the difficulty; no amount of love on the part of the judge could justify that young man, for he was a criminal; and how could love justify a criminal, or make him feel at ease? Indeed the sense of love only made him more unhappy, only deepened the intensity of his sufferings as he stood there.

Now such exactly is the condition of many a soul that knows the love of God. The more you think of the love of God, the more intense is your suffering and self-condemnation. How can a criminal stand before a judge, and look for justification, when he is guilty? With man this is impossible; and it is far from easy to open up satisfactorily how God can justify a guilty person. It was a great difficulty in days of old, e.g., in Job's ease. Bildad asks (Job 25:4), “How can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” How can a sinner be justified with God? This is the point. Job's friends could have shown well enough how an innocent man can be justified with God; it would be an easy matter then; but he is guilty; and how then? The law will justify him who keeps it; and if there be one here who has kept it, I tell him “the law will justify you at once.” Law is extremely profitable for you in that case; but if you break it, what can it do for you? And where is the person who has not broken it? Show me the man, and Job's friends would justify him at once; but they could not justify the guilty. If your little girl did something naughty (stole a piece of sugar, say,) her mother could not justify her, though she be her mother; and suppose she grew up to be a thief, her mother could say and do nothing to justify. There is a lady who belongs to one of the highest families, not only of England but of Europe, who from a child sank step by step into the deepest degradation, and may now be found haunting the lowest gambling places of the continent. Could her mother justify her, however her heart might bleed for her? Of course not. Suppose your child—God forbid it—grew up to be a thief, whatever amount of love you may have to your child, it will not lead you to justify the child. What! justify a thief, or thieving! Love alone

neither can, nor will, justify the guilty; indeed it rather adds to the condemnation. I never yet met with a magistrate who could justify one guilty of the most trifling offense. You cannot justify either the sin or the sinner. That Lord Mayor loved the young man, his heart was breaking to see his friend's son stand before him in such a position, and proved guilty. What a dreadful thought and word and reality “guilty” is! But do you think he could have taken that young man up in his carriage, and say, “I will drive him to the Exchange, and proclaim to every one that he is innocent?” He could not. It would have been untrue and unjust.

Thus it is easy enough for any one to justify another if innocent; the difficulty is to justify him who is guilty, and has been proved to be so. You see the difficulty that is before us, and how God can be righteous, and justify the sinner. And I very much question if the righteousness of God has ever once been duly put before many here now. It is a thing scantily and rarely touched on in the sermons you are in the habit of hearing. A few words are taken from the scriptures, on which man's thoughts are told out. Such is an ordinary discourse, One would desire to deal differently with God's word.

I know there are many here who have never been pulled up about this question of righteousness, and that it is well they should be pulled up. Be God's love what it may, He is and must remain righteous, and in righteousness what is He going to do with such a man as you? It is no use trying to make as good a case for yourself as possible before God; for He knows all about you—far more than you do yourself. He knows the source of that iniquity which has shown itself more than once, in overt acts of transgression.

The occasion of the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians, was that Jews or Judaizing teachers had come down from Jerusalem, and were trying to seduce the believers from Christ, or rather to add something on to Christ, to substitute something for Him in part. They must be circumcised, not exactly in the place of faith; but after believing, circumcision was brought in in some way to get righteousness by; it was something added to the work of Christ. This might seem a small matter, but the apostle never wrote so vehemently as he did on this subject. The different gospel that was not another was, that it was insufficient for a man to have Christ without circumcision and the law. And this is the gospel (if so it can be called), of the present day; the gospel in which we have been bred. Even Peter got infected by it, when certain came from James, not before. Before he took the ground, that to have Christ is to have everything, he did eat with Gentiles; but when those Judaizing teachers came down, he no longer felt free to eat alike with those who had only Christ (Gentile saints), and those who had circumcision, and the law besides Christ; and he withdrew, fearing those of the circumcision. This opposition to God's grace originated at Jerusalem where lived great numbers of believing Jews; so that the entire system, city and all, had to be destroyed, and the people scattered, in order to break it up.

These teachers who came down from Jerusalem were zealous of the law, just exactly as they are in some parts of Christendom. People are far more religious than Christians now-a-days. Peter feared them, dissimulation followed, and they ceased to walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. The believing Jew had got Christ and the law; the Gentile only Christ. Peter, when thus astray, admitted practically that the law added something to Christ; and it was to correct this that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. He saw that it destroyed the whole character of the gospel. It was the question of righteousness: “You must be saved by Christ,” said they, “and then keep the

law for righteousness." You will see in this epistle how very simply the subject is introduced to us. (Chap. 2:21.) "For if righteousness Come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." So he goes on to say (chap. 3:10), that as many as put themselves on the principle of law, no matter who they are, they are under the curse. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." And we know that no one has kept or can keep the law. This is the doctrinal statement in Galatians, which is fully unfolded in the Romans. Why was the law given? It was added for the sake of transgressions, not surely to produce sin. For two thousand years before the law, sin was in the world; and the law came in by the bye, that the offense might abound, that is, that sin might be manifested in open transgression, so as to prove what fallen man is, to show his sinful and lost condition, and the need of a Savior who could meet his case. Then he goes on to show the importance of standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.

The Epistle to the Romans opens up this whole subject in detail. The beginning is characteristic of the whole. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." In "the gospel of God" we have the key-note of the entire epistle. Its great theme is the glad-tidings of God in contrast with the legalism, which others sought to introduce, the system which man has brought in, and in which we have all been brought up. The apostle was separated unto the gospel of God. What I would preach to you now, is entirely from God to man, not from man to God. It comes down from Him, instead of going up to Him. It is not of man, neither is it by man, nor yet about man, but about His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. God is the Author of His own good news, His Son the burthen of it. The object of faith is the Son of God, and this is important to notice, for unless I bring before you the person and character of the Son of God, you will surely mistake and undervalue His work. We must believe in His personal glory before we can appreciate His sacrifice. There must be one competent to go into the holiest before the sprinkling of the blood; the blood must be carried in there to make atonement, but something else must come first, and what was that? The high priest with the golden censer and its incense, symbolizing the sweet savor of the holy uncreate divine person of the Son of God, concerning which we have no account of its formation. And the golden censer was full of incense, the holy fragrance of His person. When the cloud of that incense enveloped. the mercy-seat, then the blood was to be brought and sprinkled. God must have His only Son presented first, His work afterward. It is the value of the person that infinitely enhances the work.

To see the importance of apprehending aright the person of Christ, turn to John 4:9: "His only begotten Son" (ver. 10), "and sent his Son" (ver. 14); again "the Son" (chap. 5:9); "This is the witness of God which he hath testified concerning his Son." The gospel is not concerning your feelings and doings, or the church's in any shape, but concerning His Son; so that." he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." I hope you see the importance of really owning the true, eternal, divine person of the Son, by whom the heavens and the earth were made, for "all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

After thus dwelling for a moment on the key-note of the epistle, read one or two verses in the same chapter (1.), as to what the gospel is. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel ['of Christ' is an interpolation], for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Ver. 16.) God is the source, and His righteousness the subject of the gospel; and this is its effect for the

believer—it is the power of God unto salvation. And now comes the question of righteousness. If a magistrate cannot possibly lower the dignity of the law in order to justify a theft or thief, surely God has not lowered His righteousness by slurring over sins. On the contrary, we read in verse 17, “Therein [that is, in the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed.” There is the solemn background in verse 18: “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.” This looks like a difficulty, does it not?

On what principle then can God be righteous in justifying the ungodly? This is the question, and I want you to look it fairly in the face. Man always tries to make his case a little better or more hopeful than it is. “A little more prayer, a little more religion, a little more reading of my Bible, and by-and-by I shall be good enough for God to justify.” The Epistle opens with the truth which reverses all this. Here we have the apostle opening up what man is at his worst and vilest condition; showing first the shameless idolatry, and shocking moral corruption, into which the Gentiles had sunk: as afterward he proves from the Old Testament that the Jews were not a bit better.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 182

Righteousness and Peace: Part 2

Rom. 3:19-28; 4:23; 5:1-11

If you plant a tree in your garden, and want to know what it is, you wait and see what kind of fruit it bears. What then was the fruit produced by man? The latter half of Rom. 1 to the first half of chapter 3 is the answer. Read first that awful category of evil, which blackens the page of ancient history, for these are historical facts, and facts, I may add, that live to this moment. Who but God knows the sin and the misery in this town the groanings of those poor brokenhearted wives and children, the wickedness which is crushing hearts into the dust, even here and now? Will you say that some were better than that? The apostle answers by going on to show, that there were those who were in the schools of philosophy and the seats of government, moralists, magistrates, and the like, who assumed to judge of right and wrong, but then the very things which they condemned they practiced themselves. Then he proceeds to prove that the chosen people, the Jews, were no better. They might have God's law, but they broke it before all the world. Is not this terrible, that professors are no better than the world which makes no profession at all? If a man kept the law it would be excellent, but what good is it if not kept except to condemn the man who is under it? He then quotes in chapter iii. the Jewish scriptures, to prove that they were as bad as, and so more guilty than the Gentiles. The aim and the object of all this must inevitably be, not to improve man's case, but to demonstrate what it is. Yet the fact that man has no righteousness whatever, no strength, that he is the slave of sin and of Satan, utterly dead to everything that is good before God, his heart and his ways as well, yet the very badness of his condition commends the righteousness of God. The greatest sinner that bows to God is welcome to the Lord Jesus, because he is the Savior of the lost.

Still, how can a righteous Judge justify a sinner? how get over from his sins righteously? How is God righteous in justifying the believer? What then is righteousness? Righteousness is what one does consistently with relationship. Holiness is what one is according to God's nature. If the righteousness of man is what he does, the righteousness of God is what God does, or has done. Now man is found to have no righteousness at all, nor is there anything but sin in him, and the law brings it out evidently in transgression; so that, as you know, the more a man tries to keep the law, the more he finds himself breaking it. Nay, I will go farther, and assert that when you come and question a man converted if not delivered you will find the same principle true. As I, the other day, asked of a lady elsewhere, How can God say to us, “There is therefore now no condemnation?” “This,” she said, “is just my difficulty, for the longer I live the more I condemn myself.” Look at a Christian or at an unconverted person, the difficulty remains. How can you as a man stand before God and say that there is nothing in you that He can condemn when you are every day condemning yourself? Did you ever abhor yourself so much as to say, “Oh! that I had never been born?” As you walked along the streets, did you wish to sink into the earth from the gaze of men? If this was your judgment of yourself, what, think you, will God say to you, who knows the very thoughts of the heart, and every sin, infinitely better than you? God who cannot look on sin with the least allowance? Does He say of you, “I do not see anything in that person that I can

condemn?”

Let us see how this can be, this wonderful non-imputation. But we shall have to take it bit by bit, “line upon line, and precept upon precept.” How can God justify the very worst sinner before Him here? It will not do to try to mend your case, so as to make it look as well as possible, for God knows all about it far better than you do yourself.

I will illustrate my meaning by an anecdote, which may help you to see this a little more plainly. A German prince was visiting the prisons at Toulon, and, in honor of the presence of so great a personage, the governor gave him liberty to pardon one prisoner. “Well,” said the prince, “you must give me time to go round the prisoners, that I may select my man; I do not want to act at random, but must see who is fit for it.” Permission was given to visit and examine the criminals; and, as he went round, he asked each one of his case. “What brought you here?” “Oh!” said the first prisoner, “my offense was not a very bad one, only a trifle, but the jury and the judge were against me, and they made my case out much worse than it really was; I did not deserve nearly so heavy a punishment as I got.” “This will not do,” said the prince. Number 2 made his case look still better, and Number 3 said he was not guilty at all; he had been arrested and convicted on a fable charge! At last he came to a poor broken-hearted-looking fellow; and on asking, “Well, what brought you here?” “Oh!” said the poor man, in anguish, “I was the greatest wretch that ever lived, and my punishment has not been half so great as it ought to be; I deserve to be broken to pieces on the wheel. You do not know how wicked I have been, and it is a mercy I am here at all.” “That is the man for the pardon,” said the prince. Why? Because he was honest and upright, not like the rest trying to make their ease look as well as possible, but confessing the truth. The upright man is the man who owns the truth, and he is the man to be pardoned.

We see this distinctly in Job 33:27: “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” “I have sinned:” this is uprightness. A sinner's uprightness consists in owning his condition. God says he is a sinner, and his uprightness is to own it. This is the way God is going to aim some at this time. The truth must be out, and owned, as to what you are. God will not, as it were, electro-plate you over, and make you look like silver, when you are nothing but dross. The very first step in the conversion of a soul is the owning of his sins before God, not to your fellow-man, not to a priest, but to God. Sin confessed is sin forgiven. Do you say, “I never thought that before; I thought I had to become better in order to be fit to be forgiven?” You have been occupied with your own thoughts about yourself, with self-righteousness; but what we have to bring before you is God's gospel about His Son, and God's righteousness revealed in it. If you put yourself under law to obtain righteousness, and God deals with you on the ground you take, He must curse you. Now where is the man who will take this position under law, when God has already been at such pains to show how bad we are, and how utterly powerless to keep it? The world stands already guilty before God; how can it be anything else? It has murdered the Son of God. Man cannot be more guilty.

Measured thus, can he do worse than he had done? He has been tried in every way, and shown to be entirely worthless in all. What further trial is necessary or conceivable? He cannot be made worse, nor can he do worse than is already done. Hence, when I hear of dreadful crimes committed by men, through allowing their evil passions to flow over, I am not in the least surprised;

for my heart turns to a still worse exhibition of human evil—to the cross of Christ. And the guilt is as bad, or worse, of disbelieving it. Every rejecter of Christ is morally judged already, just because he is not subject to the Son. (John 3:36.) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” If you are not justified by God on His principle of faith, then you must be condemned by the righteousness of God, which will by-and-by judge those whom it does not justify now. God must act in consistency with all His attributes, and every person stands justified or judged morally—one of the two.

Now God is absolutely consistent in what He has done. He has given the Son, His Son, the Creator of heaven and earth; He has set Him forth as a mercy-seat. There was in the mercy-seat wood and gold, symbols of the humanity and the divinity of Christ; and the boards rested on sockets of silver, made from the redemption-money. Redemption is the basis of all. The blood was shed, and sprinkled on the gold of the mercy-seat, and before it. There was thus a place where God could righteously remit sins and pardon sinners. The blood of the Son of God has been shed, and accepted; and God now sends out the gospel in virtue of the infinite sacrifice of His Son, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to every creature on earth; He is perfectly righteous in proclaiming forgiveness of sins to every soul that believes, and He put on every believer the whole value of the person and work of Christ. Thus does He accept the believer, not according to what he is, but according to what Christ is and has done.

God comes out now, and deals with men on the ground of the death of the Lord Jesus. This death shows how God forbore to judge, and could justify, saints of old, the Abrahams and the Davids, on the ground of what was to come. But if Abraham could look forward in faith to what God would do, we have to declare unto you; what is still more blessed, what God has done. If we believe on Him who raised Jesus from the dead, righteousness is reckoned to us. Believing God about His Son, in virtue of the death and the resurrection of Christ, we stand righteous in the presence of God. Such is the efficacy of Christ and His work. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1.)

The last time I was in Glasgow, a lady said to me after the preaching, “I do not understand it; but I have been seeking peace with God for many months, indeed for some years, and I cannot find it.” My answer was simply, “Peace with God is a thing that you will never find in yourself: God never produces it in any human heart.” “I do not know quite what you mean,” she said. “Well, suppose you had a garden,” I said, “and in that garden an old dead tree, and you tried to produce apples on that old tree; you could not. Impossible to get any fruit from a dead tree. But suppose a friend brings a basket of apples from a living tree, and gives them to you, it is a very different thing, is it not? In fact peace is a thing you cannot grow in your garden; it is not produced in our hearts, but given by God to you.” And the poor woman said, “Why, then, I must go home and pray for it?” “No,” said I, “peace is preached to you, not prayed for; God gives it to faith as distinctly as a person gives you a basket of apples.” Peace is not something grown in the heart, but made by the blood of Christ's cross, and given to the believer. Are you without spot in the presence of God? And are you quite sure there never can be a cloud nor a spot upon you there Unless you have got Christ thus, you have not peace solidly. Can this be found in man's heart?

But I must ask you for a few moments to drop your religious life, or anything concerning yourself. Let not self occupy you in the least, but let every eye be fixed now on Another. Turn to two

scriptures that are well known, probably, to all here; for I wish to read to you things that you know, that you may get to know things that you do not know. In Isa. 53 we have the death of Christ distinctly foretold. “He was wounded for our transgressions.” See also Zech. 13, where we find that in the latter days the Jews are to ask, “What are those wounds?” and He replies that He received them in the house of His friends. This will be the discovery to the Jews in those days, as I pray it may be also to many a soul here now. But fix your eye on the person of the Lord Jesus. I do not dwell on the sorrows of His life, as given in the opening verses, but come at once to the great point—His death—in Isa. 53:5. Now, do you really believe that the Lord was judged, condemned, bruised, put to death for our sins “He was delivered for our offenses.” Not the Jews did so, save instrumentally, but God really. Do we believe that? Forget yourselves altogether, and look at the Son of God under divine judgment on the Cross. Did He not cry from the center of that darkness which foil at least on the land, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Whatever needed to be judged in me has been judged and condemned to the uttermost, beneath the stroke of unsparing judgment, in the adorable Substitute. Read Isa. 50:6-8. Did God help Him? Did He not justify Him? Not, of course, from aught His own—sins He had none. “He who knew no sin was made sin for us.” The very sin of our nature was judged on Him. For this the holy, the infinite, Son of God bowed His head in death, and His body was laid in the grave among the dead, Aaron's rod, you remember, was laid among the other rods, but it alone budded. So with Christ: He was laid down among the dead, but lies He there yet? Is He condemned yet? Is He bearing sins still? Far be the thought. God raised Him from the dead. The King of Righteousness arose, the everlasting gates opened, the King of Glory ascended, entered, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. But not this only: “He was raised from the dead for our justification.” The Man that was condemned to the cross, that bare our sins, that cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” the Lord of glory, has finished the work given Him to do, and God has raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand. Was it not “for us?” Tell me, do you think He has peace with God? Look not at yourselves, but at Him. What do you mean by peace with God? There is One seated in the unclouded presence of God, where a cloud or shadow can never come, that One, the beginning and head of a new creation, crowned once with thorns, now with glory, and this, too, after bearing in His own body our sins. He is seated in the unclouded presence of God. Can sin and death have any more to say to Him? Do not you think he has peace? Assuredly; and more than that, if I turn to Eph. 2:14 I find something still more blessed: “He is our peace.” And if He is our peace, the peace that He has in the presence of God is ours, not as a thing apart from Himself, but His very Person in glory is the believer's peace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Chapter 183

Righteousness and Peace: Part 3

Again, He said (John 14), “My peace I give unto you.” Ah 1 this is an apple brought from the new creation garden, not something produced in me; it is mine, but it comes from Him. He has made peace; I have not to make it, as you hear people speak of making their peace with God. “He is my peace,” but I cannot enjoy this till Christ gives me light. Unless the table with the twelve loaves was placed before the lamp, the light could not fall on the loaves. If you make an imitation table (as Jeroboam did), and place it somewhere else, away from the presence of God, the light cannot shine upon it, you can never there enjoy the peace of God in its perfection. But the first thing to be ascertained is—what is our peace?—to see the foundation on which it rests. When I, a sinner, could not be justified, what could be done with me? I might be condemned, and this I have been, but God has done it in the person of His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. Everything in me that was not in Him, everything offensive to God, had the sentence of condemnation executed on it in the cross of Christ. And now I bring you back to that lady's question. “Now just tell me,” I said, “if God has condemned all that He could detect in you, if He has laid the whole of the sins, and the sin, on the person of His Son, and if everything that God could see wrong in you has been already condemned in His cross, how can there be anything left to condemn in you?” “Now,” she said, “I see it: I never did so before.”

I ask you, can any man stand up, and say that God was not righteous in raising Christ from the dead? Did He finish the work, or not? Did He glorify God for sin on the cross? Could the Infinite offer a finite sacrifice? Could the eternal Son fail in the work He was engaged in for you? No; He glorified God perfectly; He put away sin completely; He is now crowned with glory, and God is righteous in so crowning Him. And He is your peace. He was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Christ is all, and in all that believe. And if God has crowned Him with glory, He will crown me with glory too. His glory is ours. (John 17)

“Well, if that is the case, as a believer I am justified!” Of course you are; God says so. “Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things.” (Acts 13:38, 39.) Christ is the propitiation for the whole world. Jehovah's lot, you remember (Lev. 16), was offered and slain, and its blood carried in; but there was no laying of hands on it, no identification of the people with it. There was no substitution in this case. Christ is not the substitute for the whole world, for then the whole world would be saved. He is the ransom for all. (1 Timothy Scripture nowhere speaks of Christ being the propitiation for the sins of, but simply for, the whole world. When you come to the scape-goat, then you have substitution; the people were identified with it, and their sins confessed upon its head—faith is the hand on the head of the sacrifice. And thus you see how immensely important is the principle of faith, because otherwise you have no part in the thing. If you read Lev. 16, you will see that on Jehovah's goat, which was for all the people, there was no hand laid. The propitiation is for the whole world, so that mercy and pardon may be proclaimed unto the world, but none are pardoned and justified, save those who believe. Faith alone gives you a part in the thing. It is only where the soul believes God, and says, “I believe that God sent His Son, and that He died for sinners, and

that He was raised again, If this is enough for God, it is enough for me.”

This is faith, and the soul is identified with all that Christ is. I ask not if you feel at peace, but if He who suffered for sins, Just for unjust, made and is peace. Joyfully you will answer that since the cross no cloud can come between God and the Son of man, who glorified Him. I believe, and am sure; I know, and enjoy it. The peace the Lord Jesus has with God the Father is my peace, and there is no other, for the peace He has with God is the peace He made for us, and gives to us. As to the past, we have perfect peace; as to the present, we have absolute favor; and as to the future, nothing short of the glory of God to hope for, and even now boast in.

The apostle never reasons from man up to God (which is what men are constantly doing), but from God to man. I once asked a young preacher what that verse meant, “the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.” He immediately commenced to reason upward, as he had been accustomed to do, from himself to God, and, after thinking some time, replied, “Well, I suppose it means that, the more we love God, the more He will love us.” He put himself first, and God second. Now, as to our loving God—supposing I do—but I walk along the street, and look into a shop window, and something attracts me that I would like to have, where is my love to God? How soon I forget God! My love is not to be depended on; but does God's love vary, or ever change? Thus the Holy Ghost puts God first, and man second. If I know that He loves me, then I love Him who first loved me. It is not by trying that we love God. Who ever knew such a thing, even in human affections? Who ever heard of a mother trying to love her child? I never heard of a man who tried to love his wife but one—who would give a straw for his love? And as to the mother loving her child, why, she cannot help doing so. But in our case with God, it was when we were enemies, when there was distrust and dislike in our hearts to God, that He loved us. “If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we, shall be saved by his life.” (Rom. 5:10.) If God only loved us as we love Him, He never would have loved us at all. I know that many dear Christians doubt this. They think that God does love them because they love Him, and that if they feel cold toward God He will cease to love them.

“My dear friend, do you not know that God's love is an everlasting love? that it does not change when you change, or cease when you fail to deserve it, and that all these twenty years He has been loving you, whilst you did not know it?” So said I once to a poor man who, although a converted soul, had been going about for twenty years with the idea that God hated him. The relationship of a child is permanent; the Father will chasten the child. He cannot wink at sin; but He does not make me a servant only if I am a child. Whatever my failure, I do not cease to be a child. The one offering of Jesus Christ has forever perfected all them that are sanctified before God. C. S.

(Concluded from page 61.)

Chapter 184

Difference of Romans 12 and Ephesians 5

The beginnings of Rom. 12 and of Eph. 5 are evidently different, and the difference is not only interesting, but according to the tenor of the epistles.

In Romans the Spirit looks for an entire separation to God as men on earth, the giving up of self in consecration to Him as a living sacrifice. I am a man here, and am to be as one offered up to God. But love, as going out, does not come in here. We living men give ourselves by grace up to God.

In Ephesians we are sitting in heavenly places, and come out from God as Christ did, and that in love. And this is the direct connection, we forgiving and forbearing, as God in Christ did. Do you therefore, says the apostle, be imitators of God, and walk in love, as Christ did, giving Himself for us.

Hence in Romans we are responsible men, giving ourselves up to God as in the world. In Ephesians we are children of God, dear children, who are to imitate Him according to the great pattern, Christ, the Son of God, come out from the Father, giving Himself for us, which is love, only to God as a sacrifice, which maintains absolute perfection as the One in view in doing so. The new creation had been brought out before, after God, in righteousness and true holiness. Here, when the Spirit of God is brought in, love, according to the divine nature, is to display itself, and does so in a remarkable character and place, Christ being the absolutely perfect model of it. Romans puts us on the ground of proving His will, Ephesians of displaying His character, going forth in love as Christ, though always with a view of pleasing God, which makes the motive perfect.

Chapter 185

Ruth: Part 1

“If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.” —Lev. 25:25.

Redemption, as one has said, was no afterthought with our God; it was His purpose from the beginning. By the work of redemption He prepares the richest glory for His own blessed name, and the fullest joy for His creatures. “The morning stars sang together,” it is true, “and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” when the foundations of the earth were laid; but the shootings of grace, when the new creation is finished by the bringing forth of the Head Stone, will be louder still. Never were such music and dancing in the house before, as when the poor prodigal had returned, and been received as one alive from the dead. Never had such affections been awakened within him before. Never had the father's treasures been brought forth till then: till then the fatted calf, the ring, and the best robe had been laid up; and never had the father himself so full a joy in his child as when he fell on his neck and kissed him. And so it is in the wondrous ways of our God. Creation brought forth the resources of His love, and wisdom, and power, and heaven on high was glad through all its order; and earth smiled beneath, the fair witness of his handy-work; but redemption has drawn forth still greater treasures that were lying hid in God; it has awakened still more adoring joy and praise “in the presence of the angels;” and it has given new and diviner affections to the children of men.

And nothing now hinders us from sharing in. these joys of the Father's house but refusal to take the character and place of returned prodigals. “Thou never gavest me a kid,” said one who trusted in himself. He had never tasted of real gladness; no feast of fat things had ever been spread for him, for he drew upon himself as though he were something; for “these many years do I serve thee,” said he in his own sufficiency, “neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments.” He was of those who “trusted in themselves.” And then, and then only, is our joy hindered, when in this pride and vain conceit of our own sufficiency we come not to God as received prodigals. For to come as such is the decreed way of the whole family of God, and so their only spring of joy and triumph. So it is written, “And every creature which is in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

Everything is to stand in grace. Love was of old, because God is love; and love was therefore made known in the work of creation, and that by communicating goodness and blessing. But love has found a fuller scope for expressing itself in the work of redemption, in bringing grace and sheaving mercy; and this is its new character. (See 1 John 2:8.) Grace, the source and power of redemption, is “the glory that excelleth;” the light that shined from heaven in converting grace and power round Saul of Tarsus, was “above the brightness of the sun at mid-day.” Grace is the fullest, and indeed the only worthy, expression of the unsearchable riches of divine love. The heavens will rejoice in grace (Rev. 5:11, 12), and Israel, as representing the joy of the earth, will in the end triumph in it also. (Isa. 40; 1; 61:10; Zeph. 3:14, 15.)

Among the witnesses to this final security and joy of Israel, in the grace of God their Redeemer, the book of Ruth appears to me to have a very distinguished place, presenting as it does an illustration of the duties of the Goel, or Kinsman Redeemer (see Lev. 25:25; Num. 35:19; Deut. 25:5); and thus we shall find furnishing the type of Israel in their sorrows and captivities, down to the time when the Lord their Redeemer will, through the riches of His grace, delight in them again, and their land shall be married.

But in order the better to apprehend this typical character of the book of Ruth, we must use a little diligence in tracing the ways of God with Israel previously to the times of Ruth, and the distinct character of some of the books which introduces us to it.

Deuteronomy exhibits to us the perfecting of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel. After Moses had rehearsed their ways, delivered to them ordinances and commandments again, and warned and encouraged them, he stands before the people of Israel, and says (Deut. 26:16-19), “This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he has promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments, and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.” This was a formal binding of the Lord and the people in covenant together: and thus the compact is solemnly and duly witnessed by the book of Deuteronomy.

The book of Joshua which follows shows the wonders of Jehovah's outstretched arm in the sight of the nations, and in the behalf of His people: His leading them in triumph from city to city, and subduing kings before them; till Joshua, their captain, had taken the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said unto Moses. For thus is it written (Josh. 11:23): “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes, and the land rested from war.” And again (chap. 21:45), “There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel—all came to pass.” And again, Joshua, when about to go the way of all the earth, could stand before Israel, and say, “Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, not one thing hath failed thereof.” (Chap. 23:14.) And thus the book of Joshua abundantly asserts the truth of the Lord and His covenant faithfulness.

The book of Judges follows; and, as the preceding book had been the witness for the Lord that He had fulfilled all His covenant with Israel, so does this book witness against Israel that they had utterly broken their covenant with the Lord. It is true that Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that. He had done for Israel. But that generation were gathered to their fathers; and as we read that “there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph,” but became unmindful of all the kindness which the Lord had shown for his nation by Joseph, and was turned to be the adversary of Joseph's brethren, so we see another generation now risen in Israel, who, with uncircumcised Egyptian heart, knew not the Lord who had visited and redeemed their fathers.

Throughout these times of the Judges we see their repeated backslidings, and the Lord again and again correcting them by judgments, and turning in mercy to forgive their iniquities, and heal their diseases. Often as a hen gathereth her chickens would he have gathered His erring people; but the closing testimony of this book against them is, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judg. 21:25.)

Thus we have in Deuteronomy the covenant solemnity settled and entered into; in Joshua the Lord's accomplishment of all His mercies engaged to Israel under that covenant; and in Judges, Israel's utter breach of all their vowed and pledged allegiance. This was the righteous forfeiture of all their blessings. So that the time had now come when the Lord must decide either to lay on judgment, or to bring mercy. He now might swear in His wrath that Israel should not enter His rest; they had been assayed, and were found “reprobate silver.” “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,” might now be the lamentation over them; but the Lord was about to reply, “-but in me is thine help,” for Jehovah is God and not man: He who in righteousness might now have eased Him of His adversaries, and avenged Him of His enemies, prepares mercies for them, allows mercy to rejoice against judgment, and says, as at this time, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee, Israel, how shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim!” And therefore in the history of Ruth, the Moabitess, which immediately follows the book of Judges, He gives them a sample, not of final severity for their sins, but of the grace by which they shall be gathered, and the glory into which they shall be brought in the latter day.

The constant respect that is had in scripture to the histories of the people of God in older times, for the illustration of His further and still future ways, either in such an artless and passing manner as may at first be unperceived, or in the more full and distinct interpretation of them as types or allegories, gives us great authority for considering the book of God generally as being of a prophetical character. The scenes in paradise, Cain, Abel, the deluge, and the ruins of Sodom, the times of the patriarchs, the Exodus, Joshua, David, and Solomon, the sufferings and the acts of the prophets—these, with others, are all taken up and treated as typical; and how distinctly does the Spirit give this character to the scripture histories in Psa. 78, where, after announcing that He is about to open His mouth “in a parable,” and to “utter dark sayings,” he details simply the ways of Israel's rebellions and perverseness, and Jehovah's judgments and mercies; thus giving us to know that all this history was a parable also. In like manner when, in 1 Cor. 10, the apostle had traced the manners of Israel in the wilderness, and the consequent judgments of the Lord, he says, “Now all these things happened unto, them for ensamples.” The history of Sarah and Hagar, with their children, is more distinctly announced to be an allegory; Cain, Balaam, and Korah are pointed out as the sign of Christendom's offenses and judgment; and Babylon is revived in spirit, though the name and remnant, and son and nephew, have been cut off from it, and it has itself been swept with the besom of destruction. And I doubt not that the history of Ruth, beautiful and attractive as it is, is designed of the Spirit to be something more than a help to discover the genealogy of the Lord (Matt. 1:5), or than a pleasing moral and affecting scene in domestic life; but that we may also read in it, and vindicate by it, the ways of the Lord of hosts with His loved and still remembered Israel.

I know that the watching of the imagination, that we offend not by it, may be much needed here; but the comfort and edification of the saint in the unfoldings of the ways of God by means of such allegories will witness for them; and, as it is again and again promised, “to him that hath shall more

be given," our delight in the holy oracles, and godly use of them, will enable us, like instructed scribes, to bring forth further treasures. May the Spirit of truth make us such

The book of Ruth opens with a simple scene of domestic sorrow. The family of Elimelech, of Bethlehem, in Judah, is forced by stress of famine to seek a livelihood in the country of Moab. Here he dies; and his two sons form alliances with the daughters of that strange people, and in process of time none was left of this family but the widowed, childless Naomi. "Woe is me for my hurt;" in the words of the daughter of Zion, by the prophet, might she then say, "My wound is grievous; but I said, Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it: my tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken, my children have gone forth of me, and they are not, there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains."

Now here we have at once something to arrest our thoughts. Behold famine in that land which the Lord Jehovah had promised should flow with milk and honey for His chosen people! But this was the sure testimony that that chosen people had been unfaithful; and therefore all this evil estate (the sorrows of the land and the captivity of her children) exhibits Israel as they now are, suffering for their unfaithfulness under the righteous displeasure of the Lord. Their cities are wasted, without inhabitant now, as then partially in the days of Naomi, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed her children far away, and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Famine then was what dispersion is now; for the transgressions of the people must account for both; one reason, and only one, can be given for their sorrows in all periods; the voice in every calamity of Israel is the same— "My God will cast thee away, because they did not hearken unto him."

The marriages of Mahlon and Chilion, sons of Israel, with the daughters of Moab, show us Israel's present utter loss of their sacred Nazarite character, that the "holy flesh had passed from them," that they are no longer sanctified and separated unto God, but are mingled with the nations, have learned their works, and are become defiled as sinners of the Gentiles. And Naomi, left of her two sons and her husband, exhibits their destitution, and loss of everything that could wear a trace of their former estate; for though reserved of God as a people to meet the purposes of His future mercy, yet their special character is for the present utterly lost and gone; they have become, in God's judgment, as one of the nations, and "Lo-ammi" is written on them.

But the Lord, as we learn from this history, in due time returned in mercy to Israel; for His constant word to them is, that "he will not contend with them forever." Though He make a full end of the nations, yet will He not make. a full end of them. He visited and redeemed His people in giving them bread again; and the earliest tidings of this awakens all Naomi's recollections of Israel. As soon as she heard that the land might be dwelt in again, she arose and went forth out of the place where she was; and, though naked and afflicted, and needing everything, she traces her way back to Bethlehem-Judah.

What a mother in Israel is here! She would yield up her daughters-in-law, loving and faithful as they had been to her, and at once surrender all the alliances which she had formed among the Gentiles, and the sources of relief and comfort which had been opened for her there, and return as Mara, empty and afflicted, rather than be any longer a stranger to the land of her fathers! She appears before us as a true Rachel, who now refuses, as we know, to be comforted, and will refuse till her "children shall come again to their own border." (Jer. 31:15-17.) For such is the heart of the children of Israel. Gladly would they come forth from all the advantages and comforts which

have been made theirs in the places where they have been scattered, and return, Mara like, to their own land. Let the tidings but reach them which reached Naomi at this time, that the land is open to them, and the ways to Zion which now mourn, and all her gates which are desolate shall rejoice, and speedily again be full of people.

And here the character of Ruth fully and at once develops itself. She is fixed upon being one with Naomi, her mother-in-law. She will forget kindred and father's house. She is tempted, on the one hand by the dreary prospects which Naomi presented as awaiting her if she would still go forward; and she is tempted, on the other, by Orpah's revolt, and return to the more profitable promises of Moab; but all this serves but to manifest and approve her—she stood in the evil day. Like Elisha, in such a case, whom neither the voice of his master, on the one hand, nor the taunts of the sons of the prophets, on the other, could move him to change that word," As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." (2 Kings 11:4.) "Entreat me not," says she to Naomi, "to leave thee," or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God." She would leave behind her all recollections of Moab and her people; she would be one with Naomi, though in widowhood and destitution. No longer a daughter of Moab, she was steadily minded to be only of Israel, one with the people of the Lord. Thus is this sinner of the Gentiles found among the children of the kingdom; and from this moment Israel becomes represented in Ruth: therefore, as we shall find, Ruth takes up after Naomi the wondrous tale of God's ways with His people. Their fortunes now become typically set for in hers, for the chosen Israel of God in the latter days will be as this sinner of the Gentiles; Israel shall then be accepted through the same riches of grace that now saves the church, the fullness of the Gentiles, as says the apostle, speaking to the Gentiles, "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these also not now believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy, for God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom. 11)

It is on this principle I rest assured that the present call of the Gentiles has no place in the typical history of Ruth. She was, it is true, a Gentile, and this has led some to misinterpret the mystery. But Israel is now as the Gentiles, and as Gentiles will be finally accepted. For as we who are sinners of the Gentiles, and as such were "no people," but have, through grace, become the people of God; so will Israel, who are now "no people," be made the people of God in the latter days. Israel shall hereafter be made the vessel of mercy for the making known of the riches of glory, as the church has now been made (see Hos. 1-3; Rom. 9:28-26); and thus the Gentile birth of Ruth was needed to set her forth a fair and perfect type of Israel, who are treated now as strangers, but to be finally gathered with the same mercy as is now gathering us, who were strangers indeed. Blindness in part has now happened to them; but in the day of their covenant their sin shall be taken away.

This suggests (and I would here turn aside to speak of it a little) the very striking exhibition of the dealings of the Lord with Israel, which is mad in the prophet Hosea, and which is similar to that made in Ruth, the Moabitess.

Hosea is presented to us, as under orders to take a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, and he does so. He takes Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and by her he has a son, whom he is commanded to call Jezreel; then a daughter, whom, as in like manner commanded, he

calls Lo-Ruhamah; and then another son, whom he names, still at the bidding of the Lord, Lo-ammi. The first of these children's names signifies the dispersion of Israel; the second, mercy denied to Israel; the third, the Lord's rejection of Israel as His people.

In this action Hosea might say, in the words of another prophet, “Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel,” for in all this the apostasy and judgments of Israel are clearly set forth. The marriage of the prophet with the wife of whoredoms is Jehovah's covenant with faithless Israel, yielding therefore as its fruit judgment upon judgment, till the children of Israel were found, as they now are, reprobate silver, a “Loammi,” a people disclaimed of their God.

But this marriage of the prophet, typical as it was of the sin and judgment of Israel, is grounded on a fact in their history, to which he consequently alludes. Hosea prophesied, as we read, in the days. of Jeroboam, who was of the house of Jehu: and the circumstance that brought that family into the honor of the kingdom, that is, “the blood of Jezreel,” is the sin which called forth the typical marriage of the prophet, and is taken up by him as the pattern of Israel's transgression; and thus the ground of God's dealings with them. We will open the scene to which he thus makes allusion, and we shall find that like Ruth it illustrates the duty of the Goel.

The times of Ahab were corrupt in the extreme. There were none like him whom Jezebel, his queen, stirred up to sell himself to work wickedness and do very abominably in following idols, But in those times Naboth of Jezreel stood as the righteous one in the land. Though it were to please the king, he would not depart from the law of the Lord, and sell his inheritance. He knew that it was the decree of the God of Israel that inheritances were not to remove from tribe to tribe, but that everyone in Israel should keep himself to the inheritance of his fathers. (Num. 36:9.) But for his righteousness' sake he is called to suffer. Through the subtlety of Jezebel, and by the hand of certain sons of Beliel, his blood is shed in Jezreel (1 Kings 21:13), and his inheritance, the inheritance of his fathers, is usurped by Ahab. For this deed the Lord by His prophet denounces judgment on Ahab and his house; and accordingly, by stroke upon stroke, be makes a full end of them, and the blood of Ahab, and the blood of Joram his son, and the blood of Jezebel, are shed in the portion of Jezreel. Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, is called forth to finish this judgment, to be the avenger of blood, and to cleanse the land that had been thus polluted with it (Num. 35:33); and as his reward, the throne of Israel is secured to his family for four generations. (2 Kings 10:30.)

But Jehu in all this had himself in view; and while pretending zeal for the Lord, he was really satisfying his own lust. As Ahab had coveted the vineyard of Naboth which was in Jezreel, hard by his palace, and for the sake of it had shed the blood of the righteous, so Jehu loved dominion, and for the sake of it, and not in the spirit of service to Jehovah, did he execute the judgment of God upon the house of Ahab. And therefore in his turn, like Ahab, he is made to answer for the blood of Jezreel; as says the Lord by Hoses, “I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Ahab.” But the prophet adds, “and I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel, and it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.” (Hos. 1:4.) Thus upon this sin, that is, the blood-shedding at Jezreel, the prophet suspends the final judgment and excision of Israel; and justly so, for the sin of Israel, as I will now show, was as the sin of Ahab, or as the sin of Jehu.

Our blessed Lord was the righteous One of Israel in His day, as Naboth had been. He was properly the heir of all the nation's greatness. He was the Son of David, and claimed to be received as such. (Matt. 21) The vineyard, the inheritance, was His; but the wicked husbandmen, though allowing His title, refused Him possession, and said, “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” And they did so; they desired that the vineyard might be their own; they loved their “place and nation” under the Romans, and in the spirit of Ahab and of Jehu they caught the Heir, and cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him. His blood at this moment thus stains their land, it is upon them and upon their children, as the blood of Jezreel, the blood of Naboth, the Jezreelite, was upon the house of Ahab; and for this they are now in the character of the prophet's children, scattered as “Jezreel,” denied mercy at “Lo-Ruhamah,” and disowned of their Lord as “Lo-ammi.” And as Jehovah said of Naboth vineyard, “Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, and I will requite thee [Ahab] in this plot;” so are the wicked husbandmen still to answer blood for blood, that the land may be cleansed (Num. 35:33); and that that which is now the Aceldama may become the portion of the righteous again—the vineyard of the Lord of hosts: (Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8; Matt. 4:1.)

Jehu acted in this as the avenger of blood, the kinsman of Israel, and was rewarded, as we have seen, with the kingdom for four generations. And so the true kinsman and avenger of Israel, the blessed and glorified Son of man, shall fall on the rebellious, and grind them to powder, and be brought near before the Ancient of days; and receive dominion and glory, and a kingdom to possess it forever and ever.

But how should we be warned by this, and remember Naboth's vineyard, as we are graciously taught to remember Lot's wife? It was “the stuff in the house” that was lasted after, and has made both of them, as it were, “pillars of salt,” perpetual witnesses to us, that “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Jehu would be religious too, he would be zealous for the Lord, if that could serve himself. The interests of Baal and his worshippers were not one with his; he rather was served by the judgment of Jehovah upon them, and therefore he could break down the image of Baal, and make his house a draft-house unto this day. But it was himself be was serving all the time; he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord. Oh, brethren, the friendship of the world is enmity with God, nor is it less so though it may clothe itself with zeal for the Lord.

But in the prophet Hosea, as in the type of Ruth (as we shall in the end see), mercy is made to rejoice against judgment. The “woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress,” is received again after many days. (Hos. 3) Jezreel, the dispersed, is gathered; Lo-Ruhamah, who had not obtained mercy, does obtain mercy; the Lo-ammi, who were no people, become again the people of God. For thus saith the Lord by His prophet, “It shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God: then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel.” (Hos. 1:10, 11.) Then shall Jezreel, the whole land and people, be the witness of grace, as it is now of judgment; for as the Lord saith, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion” (Joel 3:21.) The portion in Jezreel shall become the portion of the righteous again, the vineyard and inheritance of the Lord shall be given to a nation (in the latter days) bringing forth the fruits thereof. And so in the kindred types of our Ruth. She that was a

sinner of the Gentiles, who came from among the Lo-ammi, is made, as we shall find, the wife of “the mighty man of wealth,” and the mother of a new and honored race in Israel, the fair and perfect pledge of Jehovah's everlasting love. And this typical character of Ruth is indeed afterward distinctly acknowledged, for it is said to her, “The Lord make thee like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel;” which leaves us no liberty to doubt that we read a parable in her history, and that Israel is represented in her. (Ruth 4:2.)

Chapter 186

Ruth: Part 2

To resume the history, then, we may here notice that we have Naomi and Ruth in the land of promise, the place of all desired blessing, the appointed scene of glory and the land of the living. But they are there at first empty and afflicted, though the land is fruitful again, and the harvest is gathering. But so will the Lord's remnant be found when the nation has returned. As says the Lord by His prophet, “I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.” (Zeph. 3:12.)

But Ruth and Naomi are not wholly unblest, they are at least at home; and though in scanty measure, living on the gleanings of another's field, and waiting for the crumbs that fall from another's table, yet kindness is shown to them of one who was “a mighty man of wealth.” (Chap. 2: 8-13.) And so will the kindness of a mightier and more generous one than Boaz be seen, when tending again “the poor of the flock, the flock of slaughter;” for then bread shall be given them, and waters shall be sure. (Isa. 33:16.) And so will the poor of the flock trust in Him, and wait upon His hand, as their shepherd in the cloudy and dark day; so will they enter the pavilion of His presence, and hide themselves, while that day passes by, and, remembering the days of their fathers, they will humble themselves, like Ruth, as less than the handmaids of the Lord.

But Ruth ere long was destined to look on this “mighty man of wealth” as her kinsman and husband, sharing with her—gladly sharing with her—the treasures of those fields, where now she gleaned a scanty living; as will his poor and afflicted remnant that shall trust in him for bread and water, soon see their Kinsman, “the King in his beauty,” and their Zion “a quiet habitation never to be removed.”

Israel of old had been taught to love the stranger as one born among them, for they had themselves known the heart of a stranger; and in the mercifulness of Him whose they were, and who feedeth the young ravens that cry unto Him, and openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness, they had been thus commanded: “When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger.” (Lev. 19:9, 10.)

As a true son of Israel, Boaz, the Bethlehemite, remembers this word of the God of Israel, and does even more than was commanded. This poor stranger from Moab, as we read in the story, is well reported of to him by the reapers; he salutes her kind and condescending favor, and she accepts his grace with thankfullness, satisfied with what her toil could gather, while he exceeds all her desire, serving her with his own hands, and giving a place among his sheaves. Sweet expression of our Lord's ways with His waiting poor ones now, and of His feeding His remnant in the land hereafter! And we here observe how this kindness of the “mighty man of wealth” encourages the faith of those afflicted daughters of Israel. Ruth repeats the story of his kindness to her mother-in-law; and then the recollection, which appears till now to have slumbered, that this mighty one was of their kindred, is awakened in Naomi, and she is stirred up to lay hold on his

strength, and expect a still larger blessing at his hand. “It is good, my daughter,” said she to Ruth, “that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.”

Further encouragement from Boaz, we may presume, and other tokens of favor shown unremittingly till the end of the harvest, at length bring Naomi's faith to exercise itself in his full and perfect favor. From his very gifts she seems to draw a plea for her hopes of further and greater, till the heart is enlarged to the full measure of his utmost bountifulness, and she speaks in confidence of this to her daughter, saying, “Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? and now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou west? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing-floor; wash thyself, therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down, to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man until be shell have done eating and drinking; and it shell be, when he lieth down, that then shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in end uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.” Naomi would have nothing less than himself and all his wealth; her lips will scarcely utter the large desire of her faith, but she counts upon it; and lays her plans for it. The name of Baal will no longer satisfy her, he must call him Ishi. And in like manner how sweetly will His chosen ones be encouraged, and allured and comforted by their Kinsman in the second wilderness of the latter day. For a time they may remain unacknowledged. “Doubtless thou art our Father,” will they then say, “though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer.” The remembrance of their Redeemer, their Kinsman, will come into their mind, and they will plead with Him then. (See Isa. 62:7; 64)

In full faith of the blessing, and that Boaz would, as Naomi had expected, tell her what she was to do, Ruth enters on the plan prescribed to her for acquiring Boaz as her husband. In all this Naomi and Ruth are as one—the one by counsel, the other in action, helping forward the common blessing. Thus Ruth now hearkens to the counsel of Naomi, goes down to the threshing-floor, and does accordingly. There she seeks a pledge from Boaz. She comes to trust in the shadow of his wing. She would have him spread his skirt over her, doing for her the full services of her near kinsman. She trespasses as far as faith warrants her, but no farther; for Boaz, as they judged, was the nearest kinsman on whom it lay to repair the ruins of Elimelech's house; and thus Ruth is strong in faith, and seeks the blessing confidently, but withal humbly and graciously. And her faith is rewarded; according to it, is it done to her. She finds no terrors in this “mighty man of wealth,” but all is the law of kindness; for though he cannot acknowledge that he is the first bound to her as under the law of the next kinsman, yet he blesses her in the name of the Lord as his daughter, his adopted one—pledges to her his love, vindicates her, and is her ready debtor in grace to all that she required. Tenderness and delicacy mark all their intercourse through the night, confidence on her part, and full grace and readiness of love on his; and in the morning he dismisses her with tokens of his affection and care. And laden with these she returns to Naomi, and they rejoice together. Naomi again, in counsel, interprets all the ways of this mighty kinsman, assuring Ruth that” he will not be at rest” until he had perfected his kindness to her.

In all this we are given clearly to trace the coming says of God with Israel. Of old He had sought them; He fount them in a desert land, He led them about, till He made them to ride on the high places of the earth. This was their time of love. Unsought He then took Israel for His inheritance, and spread His wings over them: “When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware

unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee." (Ezek. 16:8.) But in the latter day the Lord must be sought unto, as Ruth now seeks Boaz, and as He witnesses by His prophets, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." (Hos. 5:15.) "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you, and ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jer. 19:12.) And again, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them I will increase them with men like a flock." (Ezek. 36:37.) Then Israel, like Ruth and Naomi, shall encourage themselves in the Lord, shall seek the shelter of His wing again, and the covering of His skirt again; and plead with Him for His land and for His people: the remnant shall return unto the mighty God of Jacob. And the confidence and delicacy of her approach, and His ready acknowledgment of her virtuous and worthy name, which we have observed, sets forth something of the way between the Lord and His Jewish remnant in the days when she is waiting for Him, and desiring to be taken into His banquet-house, and have Him perform all the part of a kinsman to her. The book of Song of Solomon in its full prophetical import, appears to exhibit the same in beautiful mystical characters. Confidence in His love, and yet tenderness and humility, will surely mark the path of the spirit of His waiting Israel then.

And their hope shall not be disappointed; for according to Naomi's largest expectations, Boaz seems to take no rest till he finishes the matter. On the morning after he had in grace pledged his kinsman vows to Ruth, he begins his services in accomplishing them, and there is none else that will own her, or take her poverty and ruin upon them. She is disclaimed by him who should have been the repairer of her breach, and Boaz alone will stand forth her kinsman and redeemer. Without delay, in presence of the appointed witnesses, he takes Ruth in all her degradation for his own, and endows her with his name and wealth. The poor gleaner of his fields is made to share the magnificence of "this mighty man of wealth;" the poor stranger from Moab is made the first of all the mothers in Israel. Rachel and Leah may be forgotten now, for one has come in their stead to build up the house of Israel.

And the figure of Israel as they shall be is here beautifully given to us. For it shall be, when the Lord sees that there is no man, when He wonders that there is no intercessor, that then His own arm will bring salvation. Of all the sons that Zion has brought forth, none will guide her, or take her by the hand; the nearest kinsman will fail in that day. Counsel will have perished from the wise, and understanding from the prudent. In vain will salvation be looked for to the hills and to the multitudes of mountains, "Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people: then will he put on zeal as a cloak," and appear for the recompenses for the controversy of Zion. As the true Boaz, He will not be in rest till He "have finished the thing;" till He clothe her with garments of salvation, and rejoice over her as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife; and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son." The blessings before pronounced upon them by the people that were in the gate, and the elders, are now made theirs by the hand of the Lord Himself. "The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem." And so it came to pass. They called the name of the son that was born to Boaz and Ruth, Obed; and he was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David; and in David, the Bethlehemite, was the throne established forever; worthy deeds shall be done in Ephratah, and famous things shall be spoken of

Bethlehem; for out of Bethlehem-Ephratah has the Seed of Ruth according to the flesh come forth, who shall be Ruler of His people Israel. And then shall the house of Israel be built through this most honored mother. The Lord who, concerning the flesh, has come of her, shall make His Israel again a crown of glory in His hand, and a royal diadem; the first dominion; even the kingdom, shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Zion shall no more be termed forsaken, nor her land desolate, but she shall be called Hephzibah, and her land Beulah, for the Lord will delight in her, and her land shall be married.

Then shall she blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit; the barren shall sing. She that was “the poor and the stranger,” the daughter of Moab, and the widow in Judah, shall forget the shame of her youth, and the reproach of her widowhood, for her Maker will be her husband; and she that was desolate and a captive, and removing to and fro, shall receive her children again within her own borders. The barren shall bear seven. The gleaner shall be the honored partner of the mighty; for “he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people; he maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.” (Psa. 113:7-9)

In this action we observe that Boaz, treating with the kinsman, seems to bind himself not to redeem the inheritance of Elimelech, except by taking this poor and afflicted stranger to be his wife. In like manner has the Son of man so joined Himself with Israel, that He will not stand up to claim as His own the earth and its fullness, the world and its kingdoms, but as “King in Zion,” as “Son of David,” as one with that nation whom of old He had separated to Himself as the lot of His inheritance. (See Psa. 2:6-8.) For it is in Israel that He will glorify Himself (Isa. 44:28), as He says by Isaiah, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.” (Isa. 43:21.) And it is the full and complete duty of their kinsman that He will then graciously acknowledge and perform. He will avenge their blood, He will redeem the inheritance, and build up His brother's house (Lev. 25:25; Num. 35:19; Deut. 25:5); for “thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded on her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the, voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish them that oppress them.” (Jer. 30:18-20.)

In connection with Ruth, I would here further observe, that the person and action of the Lord Jesus, as the Goel, the Kinsman of Israel, and the Redeemer of the inheritance, is again strikingly exemplified in the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was the faithful Jew in his day: he witnessed the sin, and foretold, even weeping, the sorrows of his people. And so the Lord in His day stood in the midst of the evil, alone faithful; and as a second weeping prophet, He told of the coming judgments of the daughter of His people. In Jeremiah we have the Christ, not in the character of the Lamb of God, but in that of the Kinsman, the faithful weeping Prophet of Israel. And it is in this character that we must hear Him saying, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” For who can estimate the bitterness of the tears of Jesus when He wept over the city, saying, “If thou hadst known at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace"?

But He who sowed in tears then shall reap in joy hereafter, and gather His sheaves in the land of Israel, even filling His bosom with them. And so we have also this reaping typified to us in the action of the same prophet purchasing, as the nearest kinsman, the field in Anathoth, which belonged to Hanameel, his uncle's son.

In this mystical action Jeremiah was under the direct instruction of the word of the Lord. (See Jer. 32) At this time he was in prison for the testimony. of God against Israel, and the Chaldean enemy was at the gates of the city. But the prophet has nothing to do but to obey the word which the Lord had sent him.. He does not stand to question the way of the Lord in this strange procedure, nor does he for a moment pause to take counsel in his own heart about it; but, being so commanded of the Lord, he weighs the money, subscribes the evidence, seals it, and takes witnesses that he may purchase the field in Anathoth. In faith that “the end of the Lord” would surely appear to be in all truth and mercy, he takes care to secure the evidence of the purchase according to the law and the customs. He gives them into the hand of the faithful Baruch, that they might be put into a place of safe keeping, there to “continue many days;” and then, when his obedience was thus fulfilled, but not till then, he inquires of the Lord why was all this?—why, in the present threatened ruin of Israel, when all there was soon to be the sport and spoil of the invaders, should he have been thus required to bury his money in the devoted land? The Lord, in answer, tells him the purposes of His heart, for His secret is with them that fear Him. He tells him that the land, which now for a season was to be desolate, without man or beast, should return into the possession of Israel again, that fields should be bought there for money again, and evidences subscribed, and witnesses taken again in the land of Benjamin and in the cities of Judah.

And such is the action of Israel's true and faithful Kinsman. He has already paid the price of redemption He weighed it in the balances when “he was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death;” and the Lord has been well pleased, and has “crowned him with glory and honor,” and thus sealed His title to the inheritance; and He, the blessed Kinsman, “continues for many days,” expecting till He shall see, in “the world to come,” “all things put under him.” (See Heb. 2:5-9.) Then shall He return into the long-lost inheritance, be seated in Adam's forfeited dignity, have dominion over the works of God, and be brought forth as the Heir of all things. The earth and the fullness thereof shall be His then in possession, as it is now in title, and the everlasting doors shall be lifted up to Him. (Psa. 24; 110) And then shall the full joy of that song be known, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.”

Beloved brethren, what a company and what a joy is this to be! That you and I may have increase of faith to gain fresh spoils from “this present evil world,” and to wait for “the world to come.” The world that now is has rejected the Son of God; but “the world to come” shall own Him. It was “this present evil world” that sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. It was this world that crucified Him. It was “the pride of life,” “the deceitfulness of riches,” the receiving “honor one of another,” the every-day buying and selling, planting and building, eating and drinking of this world, that crucified Him. It was “that which is highly esteemed among men” that did this thing. And it is all this that still refuses to have Him to reign—that would have Him still to delay His coming. But it is all this upon which His day is to come as a thief. Oh, beloved, love not the world, nor the things that are of the world “Remember Lot's wife.” Be ye like unto men that wait for their Lord; desire the days of the

Son of man; be on the house-top; as those who are looking out for His return; abide in the field as those that are apart from the “stuff in the house.” (See Luke 17:31, 32.) Dead with Christ, glory in His cross, own as precious the blood of the Son of God (which the world has shed, and is to answer for), by being willing to be rejected with Him. And know that ere long He will own your worthless names before the angels of God, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To His name, which alone is the worthy one, be all praise forever and ever.

Chapter 187

Saul and David: 1. The Responsible Man and the Man of God's Choice

OR,

THE RESPONSIBLE MAN, AND THE MAN OF

GOD'S CHOICE.

In the Book of Deuteronomy (chapter 17:15-20) God made provision for the day when Israel should desire a king. From whence he was to be taken, what he was not to do, as well as what he was to do—these were set forth by the Lawgiver in that book, and in that portion of it (chapters 12-29.) which treats of laws to be observed by the people when in the enjoyment of their land. Israel entered Canaan; Joshua, and the elders who survived him, passed away; judges were raised up as needed; but as yet no king was appointed over Israel, the only attempt to set one up, which was made previous to the days of Samuel, having proved a miserable failure. (Judg. 9) A king, however, was clearly contemplated by God; and His purposes could not, and cannot, be accomplished without one. Hannah spoke of the king (1 Sam. 2:10), but she never saw him. Her first-born, Samuel, however, was commissioned to anoint David in the house of his father Jesse, and in the presence of his brethren, to be the first king on that throne (1 Chron. 29:28) which is yet to be filled publicly by the Lord Jesus Christ. But ere God marked out David for this office, there was one reigning, by divine permission, over the twelve tribes of Israel. Saul had been anointed by Samuel to be captain over God's people Israel, to save them out of the hand of the Philistines, for God had looked upon His people, because their cry had come unto Him. (1 Sam. 9:16.)

Saul was given to Israel in answer to their request. But was this request unforeseen by God? A skeptic may affirm that the portion of Deuteronomy above referred to could not have been extant, or known, to the prophet, else why did he seek to turn the people from their purpose? The fact was that they asked for a king through unbelief. The motive first put forward,. that Samuel was old, and his sons walked not in his ways, was not the real reason which made them anxious to have a king. Samuel was, it is true, displeased at their request. It seemed like a personal slight in his eyes. In measure that was true; but God showed him that Israel's conduct on this occasion was only in harmony with their ways since they came out of Egypt. (1 Sam. 8:6-8.) And far worse than the personal slight put on Samuel was the rejection of the Lord as their King, for the proximate cause of their request was the invasion of Israel's territory east of Jordan, by Nahash, king of the children of Ammon. (Chap. xii. 12.) In wilfulness and unbelief they clamored for a king: “We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” (Chap. viii. 19,20.) Their words, then, clearly intimated distrust of the Lord's care of them, and interest in them. Unbelief really lay at the bottom of that popular movement—for popular movement it was; and the conditions under which they asked for a king were certainly not such as God could approve of.

That they wore to have one was plain. This was no after-thought in God's mind. But their motives for desiring one were wrong. Scripture details all this to us (1 Sam. 8-12), giving the clue to Israel's actions, and furnishing us with a key, the key by which, if any difficulty arises in the mind about Deut. 17, it can be satisfactorily explained; whereas the skeptic would settle the question, as he thinks, by the denial that Deut. 17:14-20 is God's revelation by Moses. The law gave directions about the king, and guidance also for his conduct; but though foretelling the establishment of the kingdom, it did not prescribe the conditions under which they should prefer their request. Did, then, the existence of the law in Deuteronomy diminish their guilt in the matter? Assuredly not. They were wrong in asking for their king when and how they did, and, as the history shows, he became a hindrance to them. But to any true-hearted person among them, how comforting such a portion of the law must have been, as it showed that, whatever in their wilfulness and unbelief, they might do, God had given directions which, if carried out, would be for the welfare of all concerned when a king should be set over them. A saint of Samuel's day would surely have valued that law as a proof of Jehovah's forethought for His people. A critic of this day would deny its authenticity as part of the law given by Moses. The people's wish was for a king to fight their battles with the Ammonites; the Lord's thought was that the king should save them out of the hand of the Philistines. (1 Sam. 9:16.) Saul answered to the desire of Israel, but fell miserably short of the thoughts of God. Had God, in the days of Samuel, ceased to care for His people? Israel evidently seemed to think this. They considered only the pressing evil of the moment, that of Nahash, the Ammonite, acting against them from without. The Lord thought of a worse evil, the power of the uncircumcised within the land. Nothing less than deliverance from that would meet His desires on their behalf. And David, in whose choice the people had no part, and for whom they had expressed—no wish, carried out the mind of God as to the Philistines, by first slaying their champion, and subsequently subduing them, and taking Metheg-Ammah, or Gath, out of their hands (2 Sam. 8:1; 1 Chron. 18:1); and finally destroying, with his captains, the remnant of the giants that remained. (2 Sam. 21:15-22.) But this introduces us to the kingdom in connection with David. To the histories of Saul and of David—both anointed of God, and on earth together—let us now turn.

Between these two—both kings by divine appointment—there are great and important differences. Saul was not a converted man, though, after his anointing by Samuel, God gave him another heart, so that the aim of his life was changed, and his thoughts ran so far in another channel. (1 Sam. 10:9.) David was a saint of God, a man after His own heart. (Chap. 13: 14.) Saul too, until he met Samuel, at the instigation of his servant, seems not to have known him. The servant, judging from his language, knew something of the man of God, whereas his master was in ignorance about him (chap. 9: 6); yet the prophet lived within the limits of the tribe of Benjamin, to which Saul and his family belonged. And the yearly circuit of Samuel to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh was all within the territory of little Benjamin. Kish was a mighty man of power, and the character of his son was evidently, in his native city, well known (chap. 10: 12); but to Saul, the man of God, the judge, the prophet was, it would appear, a stranger. Could that have been the case had grace previously worked on Saul's heart, and brought him to know God? With David, how different! Tending his father's flock by night, his thoughts turned to God (Psa. 8); and before he entered the lists against Goliath, he had experienced what the power of God could effect, and had known deliverance in the hour of peril. (1 Sam. 17:34-36.) Again, Saul comes before us as the responsible man, but David as the man of God's purpose, these two illustrating in some degree the first man and the

second Man—Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ. As the responsible man, the continuance of Saul's dynasty depended on his obedience. (1 Sam. 13:13.) David received the kingdom unconditionally. One command only was given to Saul, namely, to wait seven days at Gilgal for Samuel, but that one command he failed to keep. (1 Sam. 10:8; 13:18.) In this he resembled Adam. If he had been entrusted with a number of commands from the prophet, and had kept all but one; or if he had been commissioned to do some great thing, which had overtasked his powers to accomplish, his weakness would have been manifested certainly, and we might have regarded him as an unfortunate person; but no such lenient judgment can be passed upon him. All he had to do was to wait fol. Samuel, and it was just in this that he failed. The Philistines pressing upon kraal, Saul could not trust God; so he offered a burnt-offering, and forfeited, for himself and his posterity, the kingdom over Israel. How closely did he resemble Adam, first, in distrusting God, and next, in throwing the blame of his disobedience on the one who had given him the command! “I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord; I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt offering.” (Chap. 13: 11, 12.) Adam charged his sin upon God—“The woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” (Gen. 3:12.) Saul held Samuel accountable for his failure: “Thou earnest not within the days appointed.”

But we must not anticipate. Saul, after his anointing by Samuel, was given three signs, by which he would know that God was with him. (1 Sam. 11:13.) Two men would meet him by Rachel's sepulcher, at Zelzah, in the border of Benjamin, to tell him of the finding of the asses, and of his father's sorrow for his son. Three men would meet him by the oak, àìåï (not plain), of Tabor, on their way to God to Bethel, from whom he was to receive two out of the three loaves that one of them was carrying with him. Further on, at the hill, or Gibeah, of God, where he lived—for he did not go beyond it—(vers. 18, 14), a company of prophets would meet him coming down from the high place, with psaltery, tabret, pipe, and harp, and prophesying; and the Spirit of God would come upon him, and he would prophesy, and be turned into another man. Now these three signs, as they came to pass, might be regarded in two ways, either as simple proofs of the prophetic gift of Samuel, and so would tend to confirm Saul in the thought that he who had foreseen them could not have been mistaken as to God's mind about him; or they might be read, and surely, by one taught of God, would be read, in connection with the associations that such places as Rachel's tomb and Bethel could not fail to recall. Rachel had died just after the birth of Benjamin, who, first called the son of sorrow, was named by Jacob the son of his right hand. To this tribe Saul belonged, and the nation, in the depths of its humiliation, was now to look to him for deliverance from the yoke which pressed so heavily upon it. By the oak of Tabor he received two loaves of bread from the men on their way to Bethel, where God had revealed Himself to Jacob, when the fortunes of Israel's progenitor had been at their lowest point, himself a wanderer from his father's house, because of his sin. The remembrance of God in connection with Bethel might well stimulate any true-hearted person to encourage himself in God, who could act in grace, whatever might be the condition of His people in consequence of their sins; and the homage paid to Saul, by the offer of the two loaves, might strengthen him in the understanding that to him Israel was to look. Then the Spirit of God coming on him at Gibeah of God, where was a garrison of the Philistines, was calculated to teach him that God's power could be put forth in the very presence of the enemy.

Saul was now to be an object of desire, homage was rendered to him, and in the company of the prophets, who could rejoice in God, though Israel had been brought low, the Spirit of God came upon him. (Chap. 10: 10.) At first modest and retiring, he hid himself among the stuff, that is, the baggage of the company gathered together to Mizpeh to learn who was to be their king; but his hiding-place discovered by the Lord, he was brought forth, and welcomed with acclamation. Judged by his stature, there was none like him among all the people. To outward eyes he must have appeared as born to be a king. Hailed as king, he is seen to the greatest advantage at the commencement of his reign; for when the children of Belial brought him no presents, and despised him, he held his peace; and when the opportunity first arose for him to lead Israel in battle, he availed himself of it at once, and planned the attack by which the Ammonites were routed. As the king, the Spirit of God having come upon him, he led Israel to victory; and as king he restrained the popular feeling which would have consigned the children of Belial to death. “The Lord,” he said, “hath wrought salvation in Israel:” not a man, therefore, was to be put to death. (Chap. 11: 18.) To God he ascribes the glory of the victory. So far all appeared promising. Modesty, energy, moderation, these characterized the king.

After this, at Samuel's suggestion, the people assemble at Gilgal to renew the kingdom there. Clearing the prophet of any abuse of power among them, and confessing that they had sinned in asking for a king, they learned that on their obedience, and on that of their king likewise, would depend their preservation from visitations of divine judgment. (Chap. xii. 14, 25.) And this took place at Gilgal, so rich in associations for Israel; for there, on their first entrance into the land, all the uncircumcised among them submitted to that rite, which speaks to us of the putting off of the body of the flesh by the circumcision, of Christ (Col. ii. 11), and might well have reminded them of their uncircumcised state of heart, which moved them to ask for a king. How suggestive, then, to them was Samuel's selection of Gilgal, rather than of Bethel or of Mizpeh!

The king acknowledged by all, the prophet receded from that, place in the foreground which he had occupied up to that time, though he did not disappear off the stage of Israel's history; for whilst it appertained to Saul to lead the army, he could not act aright unless the mind of God was made known to him. This the Lord would communicate by Samuel. (Chap. x. 8; xv. 8.) And with the setting up of the kingdom, we read, for the first time since the days of Joshua, of the formation of a standing army. Hitherto, as occasion required, armies had been raised for special purposes, and were disbanded when the object for which they were gathered was accomplished. Henceforth the nucleus of an army Saul kept around him, reserving for himself on this occasion two thousand, to be with him at Michmash, and one thousand, to be with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. With the one thousand Jonathan gained the first victory over the Philistines during his father's reign. This was at Geba. The Philistines heard of it, and Saul blew the trumpet through all the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.” (Chap. 13: 8.) Jonathan's victory effectually roused the enemy, and people, as the sand which is on the sea-shore for multitude, accompanied by chariots and horses, confronted, at Michmash, the little army of Israel. Truly Israel seemed in a worse plight than ever. Disheartened, distressed, they followed Saul with trembling, who was now in Gilgal, awaiting Samuel's promised visit, according to his word, in chapter 10: 8. The seventh day arrived, but Samuel had not appeared, and the people were scattered from Saul. Forgotten, as he thought, by the prophet, deserted by the people, who clearly had not confidence in him, Saul, waiting no longer, offered the burnt-offering. Samuel then appeared, for the seventh day, though come, had

not gone. Now the king failed on this the first time that his obedience was put to the proof. His burnt offering was productive of no divine interposition. The armies of Israel gained no victory that day, for the king stood convicted of disobedience to the Lord his God. He had done foolishly. But the consequences of his sin were not to be confined to himself. His posterity would share in them, for God had sought Him a man after His own heart to be captain over His people, and that man was not of the house of Saul. In this again does Saul resemble Adam, all of whose posterity are involved in the consequences of his act, and another, the second Man, is the One to whom God has turned to accomplish all His will.

Saul had disobeyed, yet he seemed to honor God, for he would not engage in battle till he had offered his burnt-offering. In this there is instruction for us. If God has acted in any remarkable way in the past, there is the tendency in those who have not really the divine mind, for their present circumstances, to resort to the imitation of something, which formerly done, whether in obedience to a divine command, or resulting from spiritual guidance, was fruitful in happy results. Thus Israel, on the first occasion that they met the Philistines at Ebenezer, sought to make use of the ark as a charm, and so brought it, unauthorized by God, into the camp. In the days of Joshua the ark had been in the camp, and had preceded the armed men round the walls of Jericho, till they fell. But we never read of Joshua making use of the ark in a similar manner again. The Israelitish warriors, however, in the days of Eli, evidently recalling to mind that striking passage in their history, commanded its presence among them (1 Sam. 4:8, 4), but only to suffer the most humiliating defeat they had ever known. “Israel was smitten, and they fled every man to his tent, and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen: and the ark was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.” Was it from lack of power that God did not give them the victory? No, for twenty years after, on the same battle-field, at Ebenezer, God gave to Israel a remarkable and decisive victory. Assembled at Mizpeh, not for war, but for confession before God, the Philistines came up in force against them. Alarmed at the advance of the foe, they entreated Samuel to pray for them. The prophet, however, having the mind of God, first offered a burnt-offering, and then cried to God. By his action as we know, he brought the death of Christ in remembrance before God, and the Lord answered his cry by thundering upon the Philistines, and discomfiting them, so that they were smitten before Israel, and then, for the first time, was the Philistine yoke of servitude removed from the neck of the people. (1 Sam. 7:13, 14.) The Philistines were subdued, åÇéÄÌëÈÌðÀòåÌ, a term not used of Israel's enemies since the gis of Jephthah, and never again met with in connection with the Philistines till David was reigning in power at Jerusalem. (2 Sam. 8:1; 1 Chron. 18:1.) The haughty uncircumcised people of Philistia never bowed down their necks in token of submission whilst Saul, the son of Kish, wielded the scepter in Israel.

Now, in a similar way to that in which Israel acted on the first occasion at Ebenezer, Saul acted at Gilgal. Jonathan had smitten a garrison of the Philistines which was in Gabe, thus bringing, as a consequence, the enemy in full force against Saul and his little army. Dispirited, demoralized, forgetful of God's former intervention on their behalf, and having no confidence in God, their king, or themselves, they “hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.” (1 Sam. 13:1-7.) In this state of matters it was that the king offered the burnt-offering, and, doubtless, remembering the effect of

Samuel's burnt sacrifice at Mizpeh, he expected a similar result. But he had acted in direct opposition to the prophet's command. Hence, as Israel learned that the mere presence of the ark in the camp could not ensure them the victory, Saul discovered that his sacrifice produced not the results which probably he anticipated. Imitation will not avail in the work of God. We cannot command God's presence or power as men resort to a charm.

Saul's disobedience patent, his want of faith was afterward rebuked, and that by the faith of his son, who, with his armor-bearer, climbed up a rock on his hands and feet, and routed a garrison of the uncircumcised. Now the host of the Philistines in the field trembled, the garrison trembled, and the spoilers likewise, and the earth quaked, when Jonathan and his armor-bearer had smitten just twenty men. Hearts and the earth are both in God's hands, and where faith is in exercise, He can make the stout heart to quail, and the earth under them to shake. But the enemy, be it remarked, was as vaunting as ever, till Jonathan and his armor-bearer assumed the offensive. They had first to strike; then God acted, and a trembling seized the host of Philistia. But where did this take place? Just where Saul had been afraid of his opponents. At Michmash; eastward of Bethaven, the Philistines, by their presence, had utterly cowed Saul and Israel. From Michmash the battle, on the day of Jonathan's victory, passed over unto Bethaven, and Israel smote them from Michmash unto Aijalon. (Chap. 13:5; 14: 23, 31.) As on the battle-field of Ebenezer, where Israel had lost the ark, the Philistines were subsequently subdued; so, where Saul had been afraid of them, Jonathan, by his faith in God, procured for the people a victory. For it was not under better auspices, as men would say, that he engaged his opponents. The position remained unchanged; but faith in God, which sees things as He sees them, made Jonathan view the Philistines in their true light as uncircumcised ones (chap. 14:6); and, counting on the power of God, he went forward to victory, of the full fruits of which, however, Israel were deprived by the foolish behavior of Saul. Now, for a time the Philistines were checked, and Saul could turn his attention and his arms against his enemies on every side, “against Moab, against the children of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines.”

But whilst gaining victories, and whithersoever he turned vexing his enemies, it was left for David to subdue each one of these. Nothing permanent could Saul effect. He was a warrior, that was true; he delivered Israel out of the hand of them that spoiled them; but for decisive results in battle with these different enemies, Israel had to wait till David reigned in Jerusalem. In the catalog of Saul's wars one other enemy is briefly mentioned in chapter xiv. 48 “He gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites.” But this expedition ended most disastrously for Saul; so it is related at length in the following chapter.

“Amalek,” said Balaam, “was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever.” (Num. 24:20.) God had not forgotten what he did to Israel, narrated in Ex. 17:8-16. Now the time had come for the execution of divine vengeance, and to Saul was entrusted the duty of carrying out God's before-announced purpose. (Ex. 17:14.) Generations had come and gone since the Lord had sworn that He would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Had He forgotten His oath? No. The lapse of time made no change in His mind, and the hour having arrived, Saul is commissioned to carry it out. But in that he failed, sparing Agag, and the best of the flocks and of the herds. His disobedience was immediately dealt with. “Because,” said Samuel, “thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.” (Chap. 15: 28.) He lost the kingdom for his family when he disobeyed the word of the prophet,

which was the command of the Lord. He was himself rejected from being king, when he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the flocks, and of the herds. Agag was slain by Samuel, Saul was rejected, and now a new person comes on the scene—a man after God's own heart. The kingdom was rent that day from Saul, and given, in God's counsels, to David, though he was not yet manifested as the man of God's choice. From that time, too, Samuel came no more to see Saul till the day of his death. They did meet, however, once in the interval when Saul was made to feel that the power of the Spirit of God was stronger than that of a demon. (Chap. 19:24.)

In the midst of this sorrowful history, it is a refreshment to read of one heart which entered into it all in real sorrow. “It grieved Samuel” when the Lord told him of Saul's disobedience, “and he cried unto the Lord all night.” And again, “Samuel mourned for Saul.” He had felt his own rejection by Israel, but he did not, as nature might have dictated, exult over the fall of the one who in some degree occupied the place he had filled. Nor was he indifferent to the king's sinfulness. How should the servant of God be unconcerned at the open disobedience of the man whom, by God's command, he had anointed to be king over His people? Samuel mourned for Saul. He felt it all deeply. In Saul there seemed no conscience work. “I have sinned, yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.” Such was Saul's utterance, which evinced how little a sense he had of the gravity of his offense. Amalek was God's enemy. Saul had not taken God's part in the matter, as he had been commanded, and all his anxiety seemed to be not to lose his place in the estimation of men, but there was no indication that he humbled himself before God. Samuel mourned for Saul, who did not mourn for himself. Now the probation of the responsible man has ended. He has been tried, and found wanting. But his life is prolonged for a season, and, still wielding the scepter in the place which God had set him, he demonstrates his opposition to God, and his enmity to the man of God's choice.

Here we enter on a new chapter of Israel's history, and we might say a new book of the world's history; for the introduction of David upon the scene was an event of world-wide and of political importance. It is true the theater of the events about which we read, in connection with the son of Jesse, was but a small one, since the land of Canaan, and even the extent of David's kingdom, occupies but a small space on the map of this earth. Mightier kingdoms than David's have existed, more extended sovereignties have been known than he over possessed; but he sat on a throne, and, as its first occupant, on which no Caesar, no emperor, will ever be seated—the throne of the Lord. (1 Chron. 29:23.) The kingdom given to him was the first public step taken by God in connection with the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ over Israel. God's purposes must be accomplished; so, when the responsible man fails in carrying them oat, another one, the man of God's purpose, is raised up to fulfill them. Saul was not the king of God's choice. The Lord had indeed hearkened to the wish of the people; He had given them a king, and victories they had gained under his banner. Were they satisfied with things as they were? God was not. So now, unasked by the people, He provided for himself a king. But where was he to be found? No one knew—not even Samuel—till guided of God, He anointed David to be king in the midst of all his brethren. The people, by asking for a king, virtually said that the Lord had not made their interests His object and concern. His selecting a king, without any request from them, after Saul's disobedience, effectually refuted any such imputation. “The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people” (chap. 13: 14), was a

clear intimation from God that the true interests of Israel were then, as much as they had ever been, of real concern to Him. But David was not brought forward till Saul had openly failed. So the Lord Jesus Christ, God's appointed King, was not spoken of till the first man had demonstrated what he was.

The hour had come for the appearance of David, in connection with Israel's history and God's purposes. So Samuel was commissioned to go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and, directed by God how to proceed in the matter, the prophet departed on his mission. How far must Saul have got from God, when Samuel feared for his life, if he executed the command entrusted to him. (Chap. xvi. 2.) Seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel, but the king was not among them. At length, the least thought of by men, the youngest, who was with the sheep, was sent for, and the prophet, directed by the Lord, poured the anointing oil upon him. Two things characterized him—his beauty, and his outward appearance. Saul was remarkable for the latter (chap. 9: 2), but his heart was not right with God. Eliab, David's elder brother, had personal appearance to commend him, but “the Lord,” Samuel was told, “seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart.” (Chap. 16: 7.) Saul had another heart given to him after he had been anointed. We read nothing of this kind as regards David. The Lord saw his heart, which man could not. Besides this, he “was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to.” (Chap. 16: 12.) So, whilst there was that in him which God alone could fully discern, he was not deficient in that which man could admire. In nothing suited for a king was he to be deficient. His heart, that God saw. His personal appearance all could admire. Thus far as to his person. Here, however, another thing should be noticed. David was anointed king without any conditions as to the continuance of his kingdom and dynasty being expressed or implied, for he was the man of God's purpose, the type of the Lord's Anointed, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 188

Saul and David: 2. The Responsible Man and the Man of God's Choice

OR,

THE RESPONSIBLE MAN, AND THE MAN OF

GOD'S CHOICE.

Now the aged prophet's chief service was finished. He had witnessed the rejection of the priesthood in the line of Ithamar. He had seen the failure of the king for whom Israel had asked. He lived to anoint the king whose throne shall never pass away, though for a time it has been overthrown. Himself the link between God and the people during the transitional state between the manifested failure of the priesthood, and the raising up of the king of God's choice, he lived long enough to see the commencement of the train of events which yet await its full accomplishment, when the faithful priest shall walk before God's anointed forever. (1 Sam. 2:35.) Thenceforward, on three occasions only, does Samuel figure in the history (chaps. 19, 25:1, 28.), though he judged Israel all the days of his life. In this we may trace something analogous to the condition of things in the days. of John the Baptist. At first, the one on whom all eyes were fixed, and to whom the crowds turned, he ceased to occupy the same prominent place after that the Lord had been baptized of him in Jordan. (John 3:26.) His work went on till his imprisonment stopped it; but, as he beautifully declared, speaking of the Lord, “Me must increase, but I must decrease.” Similarly the prophet, under whom Israel had been victorious at Ebenezer, retired into comparative privacy after he had anointed David to be king. To Saul, as king, he had given directions. To David he gave none that we read of, but left the public stage free for the display of the deeds and victories of the son of Jesse, whilst he carried on his less obtrusive service of judging Israel, till death terminated his mortal career. Henceforth two men are prominent in the history, both anointed by God to be kings over Israel; the one Saul, that is, “asked,” who, as his name may serve to remind us, was raised up when the people asked for a king; the other, David, that is, “beloved,” whose name may remind the reader that he was a special object of divine favor.

David, anointed by Samuel, now becomes the instrument by which God is to work in power. The Spirit had come in power upon Saul. (1 Sam. 10:10.) He now came in power upon David (chap. 16:13), and left Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. God had not made Saul king without giving him power for his work. Rejecting Saul, He raised up David, and fitted him in a similar way for His service, for God never sends anyone to warfare at his own charges. We must, however, make a difference between these two men. The Spirit coming on any person in the manner the historian has described, for the same term, òÀìÈä is used with reference to Saul and to David, does not of necessity imply a constant endowment of spiritual power. In Saul's case, the Spirit thus came on him, in chapter 10: 10, and chapter 11: 6. In David's case the Spirit came on him from that day and forward. Was Saul, then, less well furnished than David? By no means. As long as he was under probation God bestowed the Spirit in power whenever he needed it. But

knowing what the instruments were, God dealt with each accordingly. Now a sad spectacle presents itself. The one who had been entrusted with temporal power on earth, and not deprived of it, actuated by an evil spirit from the Lord, is led, as the sequel shows, into direct personal antagonism to the man after God's own heart, and seeks to use his authority to take away David's life. Into man's hand God, after the flood, put the sword of government, and has never withdrawn it. How has he used it? He has wielded the sword of justice to put to death the holy One and the Just, and to stop, if possible, the spread of God's truth. The power given of God has been used against God. A diabolical course of action certainly. But such a state of things was not permitted, till man had shown insubjection to God. In Saul's case, this demoniacal possession was not allowed, until he had manifested disobedience to the divine command. Yet, guilty as he was, and therefore deservedly suffering, God was willing to show him mercy, till he rejected it. But who was able to cope with the evil spirit, and to set free the king of Israel—for a time at least—from its influence? None but David, the son of Jesse. He alone could minister to the king in this matter, as he alone could conquer the giant. When he played before Saul the evil spirit departed from him (chapter xvi. 28), a type, surely, in this of Him who could cast out demons when none else could (Mark 5:4; Luke 9:40); but only a type, for the Lord could give His disciples authority over evil spirits to cast them out, David could authorize no one to soothe the son of Kish.

At Saul's court David played. When his presence was no longer required there, he returned to his original occupation of keeping his father's sheep in the wilderness. (Chap. 17:15.) He knew his place, and kept it; and in his place learned about God in a way others had not, and the lesson thus learned fitted him for future usefulness. In these different conditions his ways commended him. At the court, in the camp, and with the sheep, he conducted himself wisely and well. Nevertheless, till God took him out of his original calling, David returned to his humble occupation of a shepherd. Was time thus spent time thrown away? Who would say that, as he reads Psa. 8? which describes lessons learned, it would seem, during the night season. Who would say that he had wasted his energies in the sheepfold, when he experienced as a shepherd the deliverance of God? Now the time arrived, and the occasion arose, for which God had been training his servant in the wilderness.

In Ephes-Dammin, where subsequently David and Eleazar, the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, successfully withstood the onslaught of the Philistines (1 Chron. 11:13), the power of the uncircumcised received a check at the hand of the stripling son of Jesse. The Philistines stood on a mount on the one side, and Israel on a mount on the other, with the valley of Elah between them; and there went out of the camp of the Philistines a champion, Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span, that is, about nine feet nine inches in stature, and he defied the armies of Israel. From before him they all fled. In his presence Saul, and even Jonathan, felt themselves powerless. For forty days he defied Israel—a pitiable spectacle indeed—challenging any one to single combat, with servitude, as the penalty to be meted out to the conquered foe. The crisis had now come—the question was fairly put. Israel, if their champion were beaten, were to be servants to the Philistines; the Philistines, if Goliath was slain, offered to be servants to Israel. No longer, then, would the enemy admit of a compromise. Victory or servitude, and that without hope or prospect of any end to it. Such were the terms on which Goliath proposed to meet a champion from the children of Israel.

How bold in his words, yet how really apprehensive of danger, did he show himself to be! Why all that armor, the helmet, the coat of mail, the greaves of brass on his legs, with a javelin (ëìÄéãÉåï, Josh. 8:18), not a target, of brass between his shoulders, and an armor-bearer with a shield going before him? What thought had Goliath taken for the safety of his person! Encased in scaly armor, and with a shield to cover his whole person borne before him—in such attire, but not till he had taken such precautions, did this giant challenge the Israelites to single and mortal combat. Appearances were all in his favor; his height was imposing, and his armor would seem to defy penetration. But these precautions surely indicated a want of confidence in himself, and a fear of those he contemptuously called the servants of Saul. How bold the enemy can be before those who are afraid of him! And “when Saul and all Israel heard the words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.” And no wonder, for unless God is brought into such circumstances, what can feeble man effect? For forty days this went on. A fall period of probation Israel passed through; but as yet no one was found to take up the challenge. The people were made to feel their own powerlessness. When this had been realized, David, sent by his father, entered the camp. He saw the giant. He heard his words. He witnessed the abject terror of the men of Israel. All were afraid but David, the youth, who viewed the matter in the right light.

Offers had been freely made by Saul to any man who would meet the giant, and kill him, of freedom for his father's house in Israel, and the king's daughter for his wife, and enrichment with great riches. The people, to whom David addressed himself in the camp, were well acquainted with them, yet they failed to nerve one single man to volunteer for such a perilous service. And no wonder. For what are promises of temporal favors and earthly enjoyments for one who has to face, as he thinks, certain death to earn a title to possess them? Such sink into insignificance in the presence of the power of the enemy, and with death confronting the man. But David looked at the matter in another light. The servants of Saul Goliath termed his opponents. To defy Israel had Goliath come, said the people, addressing David. He, however, remembered who Israel really were, namely, the armies of the living God. In this strain he answered them, and in the same strain he spoke to Saul. He sought to rally all Israel, that they should no longer be afraid. Could the armies of the living God be overthrown? Could death triumph in such circumstances? The very language he used—and it was the simple truth—should have settled the question for Saul and for Israel, as it was already settled for him. The armies of the living God were Israel, whom Goliath defied, and he, the champion, the terrible one, was but an uncircumcised Philistine.

With David, then, it was not a question how things looked to man, but what the things were in God's sight. He viewed things in the light in which God viewed them, and all was clear and certain for him, the man of faith. “Let no man's heart fail because of him,” David said to Saul; “thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” This was the language of faith, not the bravado of a boaster. Goliath was only an uncircumcised Philistine, he had not the token of God's covenant on his person. (Gen. 17:11.) But all this was lost upon Saul, He looked at David, took note of his youthfulness, and attempted to discourage him. All right, if David had been going in his own strength; but if the contest really lay between God and the enemy, what mattered youth and inexperience in war? The living God must conquer him who terrified His people with the dread of death. So David knew, and in God's strength would he meet the giant. For God was his God. He had proved His delivering power at the sheepfold. There he had received that training which fitted him for the combat. The lion and the bear, which had robbed his father's fold, he had slain

single-handed. What better than the fate of those unclean beasts could the uncircumcised Philistine have meted out to him, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God?

Armed with Saul's armor, David assayed to go, for he had not proved it; but the armor of man's devising, since the conflict really lay between God and the enemy, encumbered the man of faith. So, putting it off, and furnished only with offensive weapons provided by God, the five smooth stones out of the brook, he went forward to the encounter. The Philistine moved forward, preceded by his armor-bearer. David went to meet him, with God for his shield. Goliath disdained him, and cursed him by his gods, vaunting of his ability to give his flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the boasts of the field. Boasting in word, attempting, too, perhaps, to terrify David by cursing him, this was all that the enemy could do. David heard his boastful language, and replied with becoming spirit, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.” Confident was the Philistine, as confident was David. Yet how different was the spirit of the latter from that of the former Goliath boasted of his strength, “I will give thy flesh,” &c. David trusted in the Lord; “the Lord,” he said, “will deliver thee into mine hand.” To Goliath he speaks of Jehovah. To Israel and to Saul he made mention of the living God. Each term was in keeping with the circumstances in which David was placed. To rally Israel and Saul, he reminds them of the living God. Answering the boastful Philistine, he speaks of Jehovah of hosts as the God of the armies of Israel. The living God could not be overcome by the power of death. Jehovah of hosts, who has power in battle, could not be subdued by the champion of God's enemies. In His name, then, David, stripling though he was, would go forward, and felt sure of, the victory.

With the sling and the stone Goliath was conquered. The weapon needed was not far off. In the brook which ran between the two armies the stone was found that laid low the champion of the uncircumcised, and silenced forever his boasting. All his armor proved unavailing to ward off the death-blow: even the shield borne before him by his armor-bearer did not intercept the stone. God provided what was wanted, and it was found to be all-sufficient. A principle we have here of wide application. God does provide the weapons wherewith, if called upon, His people may meet those opposed to Him. The Lord promised to provide them. (Luke 21:15.) So Stephen proved the Lord's faithfulness to His word, when His enemies were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke. (Acts 6:10.) In this he does not stand alone, for the Lord still cares for His people.

David had said that he would cut off Goliath's head. A vain boast it might have sounded, for there was no sword in his hand. He did it nevertheless. The giant's head was severed by his own weapon, a foreshadowing, surely, of that of which we read in Heb. 2:14. The combat over, the Philistines fled, and Israel pursued them to the gates of Ekrom and Gath, their two nearest cities. Israel spoiled the Philistines, but David was contented with Goliath's head and Goliath's armor. The armor he put into his tent (Luke 11:21, 22), the head he carried to Jerusalem, here mentioned for the first time in connection with God's king, but in perfect keeping with the order of events. For the one who has the power of death must be vanquished ere the kingdom can be set up in power.

So Jerusalem, the place of the throne, only comes into notice in this history after the death of the enemy of God and of His people. And now a question arises as to David's parentage. Whence was he? Saul asked. To Saul it was unknown; to Abner likewise. And none answered the question, till David himself told Saul of his father. Some in the camp knew who he was, but his parentage was not openly proclaimed till after the death of Goliath. (Compare with this Rom. 1:4.)

Henceforward David was to be famous. His name was never to be forgotten. Israel remembered his victory, women celebrated it in song (1 Sam. 18:6, 7), and the enemy never forgot it. (Chap. 21:11; 29:5.) As for Jonathan, he loved him as his own soul. They were knit together in love at once. It could not be otherwise. Jonathan, who had smitten a garrison of the uncircumcised, could not but be drawn to David, who had conquered Goliath. And nothing Jonathan had was too good, in his eye, for David to be invested with. Of all that had distinguished him before the people he had divested himself, that David should be arrayed in it. Saul, actuated by human thoughts, which completely shut out God, pressed on David the use of his armor before he met Goliath. Jonathan, after the victory, invested David with his robe, his garments, his sword, his bow, and his girdle. Saul thought to shield the person of David from the blows of the giant. Jonathan gave to David, in token of his admiration and his love. In him we see that putting aside of self which is the fruit of divine grace.

Jonathan was occupied with David. Saul eyed him from that day and forward. To him he was an object of jealousy, to Jonathan of admiration. What caused this difference? The songs of the women put Saul in the second place. This the king could not endure. So jealousy took possession of the unhappy monarch, and urged him to a course, which his better judgment, at times, condemned, but from which he never really turned. From this time, till Saul's death, David experienced his bitter enmity, and the history which sets this forth divides itself into several distinct portions. From chapters 18:9-19:17 we have David, as yet at the court and in the camp. From 19:18, 21:15, we see him a fugitive from his home. Chapters 22-26 describe his life, trials, and escapes in the land of Judea, and chapters 27-31 exhibit him as an exile with the Philistines, dwelling at Ziklag, until Saul's death. Many must have been the lessons that he learned of God's goodness in sustaining him and delivering him during these years, in spite of his failures. And during this period of his life many of his psalms were probably composed. Thus God has made his trials, as He did the imprisonment of Paul, to redound to His own glory, and to the instruction and comfort of His people in all succeeding ages.

Whilst at the court, and in the camp, God, in a marked way, watched over David, and raised up friends where they might not have been expected. Twice did God preserve him from being struck by the king's javelin. (Chap. 28:11.) Removed by Saul from the court, he was transferred to the camp, where he behaved himself wisely, and the Lord was with him. In the camp, and on the battle-field, he by his conduct gained the hearts of all the people; but this only made Saul the More afraid of him. So, wishing to compass his death, without directly imbruing his hands in David's blood, Saul made him acquainted with the dowry he wanted, ere he could become the king's son-in-law, by marrying Michal, Saul's daughter. Outwitted in his diabolical plan of thus compassing David's death, for David slew of the Philistines just doable the number required, and, being still victorious in battle, Saul charged Jonathan and his servants to kill him. Here, again, the unhappy monarch's purpose was defeated, for Jonathan befriended him, and a third personal attempt on David's life (chap. 19:10) proved as unsuccessful as the other two. What folly to fight

against God! But what power can the enemy exert over a man! Attempting next to have David assassinated in his own house, the wretched man's daughter, Michal, took part against her father. After that, following David to Samuel's house at Ramah, the Spirit of God is seen to be superior to the spirit of evil, since Saul himself is once more found among the prophets. The power of the enemy was powerless before the Spirit of God. The king, so often led by the demon, is, however unwillingly, and to his own confusion, controlled by the Holy Ghost. Neither man nor devil can prevail against God. Into what a dreadful position, however, can a vessel drift which once was used of God! Once endowed with power by the Holy Ghost to work for the deliverance of Israel at Jabesh Gilead, the same spirit has at Ramah to counteract the murderous intentions of this unhappy man.

The second portion of the history of David in trial has commenced. He has become a fugitive. But at what a juncture to fly from Naioth Saul's intentions were certainly manifested, but God's sheltering care and power were as clearly evidenced. How irrational is unbelief, and God may demonstrate it to our confusion. David fled to Jonathan, and told him, what Jonathan could not as yet credit, that nothing short of his death would satisfy the king. The opportunity for testing the accuracy of David's statement was speedily afforded Jonathan; but clearly it was not of the Lord that David should put into Jonathan's mouth a story destitute of troth. In this we see the man apart from the type, and whenever henceforth, in his exigency on account of Saul's enmity, he trusts to his own inventions, invariably have we to mark how untruthfulness characterized him. Born in sin, a transgressor, too, we see illustrated in David what it is to be the man of God's purpose, in whom the divine plan was to be carried out. He did not deserve the honor and greatness, being only a type of Him who is worthy of it all. As a man we can trace in him the taint of the fall, but, despite his failings, God's purposes connected with him are carried out. Had God dealt with him as He did with Saul, on the ground of responsibility, would he have remained the head of a dynasty which is never to end? A saint he was, but a sinner likewise; and, when left to himself, how low did he sink! Yet his throne will be established forever. (Isa. 9:7.) As a type of the Lord, David stands out apart from all. But as an illustration how God's purposes can be carried out, despite the failure of the instrument, in this, thank God, he is not alone.

But to return to the history. Jonathan and David together in the field, the former knowing full well who was to be the future king, makes the latter swear to show kindness, not only to him, but to his seed after him. Jonathan sees nothing beyond the establishment in power of David's throne. (Chap. 20:14, 15, 42.) In this he was right. There will be nothing on this earth to supersede it. But how little could it have appeared to outward eyes that the fugitive, as David had now become, was to sit upon a throne, and that the house of Saul should be indebted to his clemency for preservation from death! Jonathan, too, though he expected to see David commence his reign, did not expect to survive him. David would abide when Jonathan would be here no more. (Chap. 20:14.) The covenant then made David kept. In the zenith of his glory and greatness he remembered it, and his kindness to Mephibosheth was a proof of it. (2 Sam. 9) And later on, near the close of his reign, he acted upon it, in sparing Jonathan's son from being hung by the Gibeonites for Saul's slaughter of the Hivites, in his zeal for Israel and Judah. (2 Sam. 21:7.)

Leaving Jonathan, David fled to Nob, and, by his deceit there, was the cause of Ahimelech's death. (1 Sam. 22:22.) At Gath he feigned himself mad. After that he is found in Moab, whither he had taken his aged parents, to place them under the protection of its king. In these movements,

had he the guidance of God In asking such a question, are we sitting in judgment on a fellow-creature as those who would have done better? God forbid. Placed in similar circumstances, failure on our part might be just as conspicuous, and equally inexcusable. What led to such failure?—this is the question for us. The answer to this lies on the surface. David had left God out of his calculations. How often may we be in danger of doing the same?

But his visit to Nob calls for more than a passing notice. Ahimelech, at David's request, gave of the show-bread to him and to his men, which by the law was assigned, only to the priests. The condition of things in Israel was abnormal, for the anointed of God was persecuted. “He had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him.” (Mark 2:25.) His act was clearly allowable under the circumstances. It showed what was the state of matters in Israel. It showed, too, that God would not allow anything to stand in the way of the carrying out of His purposes, which at that time were inseparably bound up with the preservation of David in life. For little as it was, doubtless, then, and certainly was afterward, understood, the providing for the wants of the Lord's anointed and his company, was a matter of no small moment to God. (Compare with this portion of the history Matt. 12:8, 4; Mark 2:25, 26; Luke 6:8, 4.) Men could not put the Lord's anointed, and those with him, into straits for the supply of their necessities by rejecting Him, and then attempt to use God's institutions to prevent those wants being met. No divine ordinance was to stand in the way of God's anointed, and those with him being cared for by God. But though David evidently acted in this abnormal way in accordance with the mind of God, his story told to Ahimelech we must not justify, nor his flight to Achish, king of Gath, with the sword of Goliath in his hand. Think of the conqueror of the giant a fugitive in Goliath's native town, and with his sword I There dissembling, for fear of the Philistines, so as to be dismissed by Achish as a madman, he leaves his territory for the cave of Adullam, not far off. He has now reached his lowest condition. A fugitive from house and home, he finds shelter in a cave for himself and his men.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 189

Saul and David 3

OR,

THE RESPONSIBLE MAN, AND THE MAN OF

GOD'S CHOICE.

After this his fortunes in time change. A wanderer from his home, with no place above ground in which he could be safe from the determined hostility of Saul, he has to find a resting-place below it, in a cave of the earth. Thither he betook himself, and became the center of attraction, the rallying-point for his brethren and his father's house, as well as for all that were in distress, in debt, or discontented. God now began to show that He would gather people to His anointed one. To his followers, as Saul truly remarked, the son of Jesse had nothing externally to offer. Fields and vineyards, as yet, David could promise to none. Service, with hardship, was all he could ensure them, yet God drew hearts to him. Success often makes a person popular. David could point to nothing of that kind in his endeavors to frustrate the designs of Saul. Nevertheless, when in Adullam, he found himself at the head of a band of four hundred men. God was with David. But what creatures we are! It was after this that he went to Mizpeh of Moab, and entrusted his aged parents to the keeping of its king. It was natural to think of his parents. The Lord thought of His mother on the cross, and provided a home for her with John the Evangelist. But was David right in placing Jesse and his mother under the protecting care of an idolatrous king? How all here was determined by the king. His brethren had come to him in the cave of Adullam, but the care of their aged parents evidently devolved upon David. We may trace, too, in this step a foreshadowing of the future, when Edom, Amon, and Moab, escaping out of the northern invader, in the last days (Dan. 11:41), an opportunity will be afforded Moab of harboring the outcasts of the nation of God. (Isa. 16:4.)

Thus far David, left, as it were, to his own wisdom, acted for himself. God watched over him. But surely we must admit that this portion of his history (chaps. 20, 21.) is none of the brightest. Gibeah of Saul, Nob, and Gath are associated with a want of truthfulness in the man after God's own heart. We now enter on a new portion of his life. In this his trials increase, but he has now what is of immense value, the mind of God to direct him, first by the prophet, and next by the priest. The prophet Gad came to him, to tell him to leave the hold, and to depart into the land of Judah. Henceforth David can enjoy that which Saul had lost the guidance of God. Persecuted, exiled from his home, wandering from place to place, finding shelter in caves and natural fastnesses, he could avail himself of the guidance of God's prophet, and soon afterward of God's priest likewise. The land of Judah is now the field to which he confines himself, and first in the forest of Hareth, his whereabouts is discovered to Saul. But if he is persecuted by the son of Kish, he proves himself to be the real friend and protector of the people; for, whilst Saul was slaughtering the priests of the Lord at Nob, David was rescuing Keilah from an attack by the Philistines.

Asking counsel of the Lord, David went to Keilah, and the inestimable advantage of having God's mind is plainly seen, as we contrast at this time Saul and David. Saul, under the tamarisk tree at Gibeah, is like one fighting in the dark, as he upbraids his servants for not telling him that Jonathan is in league with David. Miserable man! He does not turn to God to learn the true condition of matters, but dark suspicion fills his heart; his son, his servants, his kindred, all seem to fail in befriending him, and Doeg, the Edomite, is the only one who is ready to do his bidding. With David how different. Directed by God to go to Keilah, his men at first demur, being unwilling to face the danger of an encounter with the Philistines; but when he inquired again of the Lord, the clear answer readily obtained removed all objections, Keilah was in consequence saved, and the enemy was smitten with a great slaughter. Inside the town, as its deliverer, a new experience awaited him, now afresh exposed to the attempts of Saul against his life. On former occasions Jonathan and Michel had befriended him, now he has to learn what One greater than David had to say, “For my love they are my adversaries....They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.” (Psa. 109:4, 5.) The men of Keilah, it turned out, were quite ready, if the opportunity presented itself, to deliver up their savior to Saul, an act of baseness only frustrated because David, inquiring of the Lord by the ephod just brought by Abiathar, who had fled to him after the murder of Ahimelech, discovered the intentions of the Keilites. Saul looked upon David as fairly caught in a trap, shut up in a town which had gates and bars, and was marching to seize on his person. David, warned of God, departed from the city with his men. Saul had shown his contempt for God's prophet by following David, with murderous intentions, into the very presence of Samuel. He had shown his want of reverence for God by slaughtering His high priest. How did the Lord reply to the acts of the insensate monarch? He made him prophesy in the presence of Samuel, and He guided Abiathar, the new high priest, to the camp and company of David.

In the wilderness of Ziph, about fifteen miles south of Keilah, the Son of Jesse now went. Here his last interview with Jonathan, of which history his preserved any record, took place. The affection that had existed between them continued. Jonathan came to strengthen his hands in God. He knew that David would be king, and was satisfied that it should be so, looking to be next to David in the kingdom. In this, however, Jonathan was mistaken, for the next mention of his name is to tell us of his death upon the battlefield (chap, 31:2); and the next time that David, in this history, mentions his name, it is to pour out a lamentation for the loss he had thereby sustained. (2 Sam. 1:17-27.) Jonathan never lived to see David reigning in power. In that wilderness, as far as we bow, they parted forever upon earth. “David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.” (Chap. 23:8,) Such is the brief account, without note or comment appended, given us of the two friends taking different paths. In Jonathan, however, he had still a friend, in the Ziphites he only found traitors. Here, amongst his own tribe, where, if anywhere in the lend, he could have been safe, he has to face and to feel the base treachery of the men of Judah, a foreshadowing of the conduct of the Jews, who delivered the Lord into the hands of the Gentiles. The base treachery of the Ziphites was unexampled in their day. They volunteered the information to Saul about the haunts of David, and twice over they did this (chaps. 23:19, 26:1); but each time God watched over His servant, and delivered him from his persecutor. What people were these Ziphites! “Blessed be ye of the Lord; said Saul, “for ye have compassion on me (chap. 23:21) Poor Saul. His language betrayed his unhappiness. Wretched Ziphites! Saul's blessing was the witness of their shame, and their conduct has not been allowed to sink into oblivion. David, it would seem, did not forget it; for when he sent of the spoil of the Amalekites to all the places (chap. 30.) in which he

and his men were wont to haunt, among the list of places specially mentioned, Ziph is not found. In the day of his trial, the: Ziphites curried favor with Saul. In the days of his victory over the Amalekites, the Ziphites received no token of his favor. Which position was the best? To be the friend of the determined opponent of the man of God's choice; or to be ranked by David amongst his friends? A simple question, easily answered. May none who read these lines be regarded by the Lord as Ziphites of their day!

Pressed by Saul, David's case seemed well nigh hopeless. Retreating from Ziph into the wilderness of Maon, escape appeared cut off. “Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about, to take them.” (Chap. 23: 26.) Outnumbered, surrounded, David could do nothing. Flight was impossible. Saul's object seemed at last on the point of being attained; but God now interposed by an invasion of the Philistines from the west, which, diverting Saul from his purpose, till he could check the invaders, gave David the opportunity to escape with his men to the strongholds in Engedi, on the shore of the Dead Sea. What a thing it is to have God on our side, for, without our striking a blow on our own behalf, He can distract the attention of those who are harassing His people; and, further, He can so lead the enemy as to place him at the mercy of those he would persecute. For the next time that Saul and David were near each other, Saul discovered into how close a proximity he had been to David and his men in the cave. (Chap. 24.) With three thousand men Saul had come to seek David. Six hundred, at the utmost, David had.

God so led Saul blindfold, as it were, that he is found alone in the cave, in the presence and payer of David, to experience the forbearance of his son-in-law, and the respect in which the man after God's own heart held one who had been anointed by the Lord. What cared Saul for David as such! How differently did David view Saul as such. “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.” (Chap. 24:6.) What God had set up, though rejected by Him, David would not raise a hand to destroy, reading, surely, in this a lesson to many a one since his day. If provocation could have justified the slaughter of Saul, David had received provocation enough. If providential circumstances had been a safe guide for David, surely, when Said entered the cave alone, David's time to be avenged had some. It was in this light that his men viewed the matter, and urged him to take advantage of his opportunity. Placed in his power, David made Saul aware of the, risk he had run, and forced the king openly to acquit him of any designs against his person or his life; whilst he remitted his cause to the Lord, to judge between them, and to plead his cause, and to deliver him out of hand. “'After whom is the king of Israel Come out? after whom dost thou pursue'? after a dead dog? after one flea?” (Chap. 24: 14.) What a victory did David gain that day ! Saul had to humble himself before him, and to entreat his kindness for his offspring when David should be king in power, making David to swear to him. Saul could trust to David's oath. David could not trust Saul.

Samuel now died. The link formed by the Lord between Himself and the people, after the failure of the priesthood, and before the establishment of the kingdom, was to exist no more. The king was there, though as yet in rejection. All Israel lamented after Samuel. How ready are people to sorrow outwardly for one when dead, to whom they did not care to listen when living. There was a time, when Samuel was everything to them, namely, when feeling the pressure of the Philistine yoke. What had it been of late? Samuel had experienced what it was to be rejected. (1 Sam. 8) This, too, David knew—once the hero of the nation's songs, he was at this time the hunted, homeless,

persecuted victim of Saul's malice. How few, after all, of the nation as yet rallied round him! From the depths of Lowliness, to the height of grandeur and power, some have passed, and David amongst that number. But as yet his only change was from wilderness to wilderness. So he left that of Engedi to sojourn in that of Peron, a little to the south-west of his recent place of abode. It was sheep-shearing time, when men were generally disposed to be hospitable and kind (Gen. 38:13; 2 Sam. 13:23); and to Nabal—a rich man—an opportunity was now offered to show himself friendly to David and to his men. Nabal, however, was naturally churlish. He was willing to receive favors, but was unwilling to repay them. To David's messengers he returned a disdainful answer: “Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master.” In Nabal's eyes David was nothing hut a slave, who had broken away from Saul. Opportunities were lost on such a man. All David's care of his interests went for nothing in Nabal's eyes, when David asked to be remembered. Abigail, Nabal's wife, discerned something of the truth about David. Nabal knew nothing about him but his family pedigree. In this he resembled the Jews, who knew the Lord as son of Mary, but could discern nothing more in Him; whilst David resembled the Lord in going about and doing good, and showing many favors to his countrymen. Now he has again to experience what the Lord Jesus knew full well-hatred, rewarded for good. Nabal was deaf to his appeal; but, worse than that, he railed on the messengers sent to him. All the bitterness of his heart came out, when the opportunity of acting graciously was afforded him.

What an opportunity he lost, and lost forever, of showing kindness to the Lord's anointed. To nature, Nabal's refusal was hard to endure, and, in this respect, unlike the Lord, David prepared to avenge himself; but, met by Abigail, God preserved him from that, and shortly afterward took up Himself the controversy with the man who had thus treated His servant. Nabal was removed by death, and Abigail became David's wife. She had discerned in David his true character and position, and, with David in the foreground of the picture, all surrounding objects were seen by her in their right light. Nabob her husband, is a man of Belial-Saul, the king, is only a man. But David was fighting the battles of the Lord, and he would yet reign over Israel. The whole political history of her day was plain to Abigail, when David was the chief figure before her eyes. How plain, too, things can become now, when the Lord Jesus Christ is before the soul. David must live; Nabal, and all his enemies, must die. For her, as for Jonathan, and for Saul, when in his right mind, David is the future king, and no new dynasty is to supersede his. Ruler over Israel he was to be. She knew it. She confessed it. And all her desire was to be remembered by him in that day. But, like the penitent thief, who asked the Lord to remember him when He should come in His kingdom, yet found that he was never to be away from Him from that day forth, she shortly afterward discovered that her place was to be with David in his future career. Death set her free from the law of her husband, to be the wife of David whilst he was still in rejection. The Lord, she said, would build David a sure house, because he fought the battles of the Lord, and evil had not been found in him all his days. His soul would be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord his God. The souls of his enemies God would sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. Between her and Jonathan, both attracted to David, there was this difference: he was attracted by what David had done; she was occupied with what he was.

David now married, and had two wives, both of them, probably, of the tribe of Judah, for there was a town, named Jezreel, in Judah, not far from Maon and Carmel (Josh. 15:55, 56), from which it is

likely Abinoam came. By her he had Amnon, whose history is connected with the sorrows of his house. By Abigail he had Daniel, or Chileab, of whom we read nothing. He probably died young, for, on Amnon's death, Absalom, the third son, looked forward to the throne. After Absalom's wretched end, Adonijah, the fourth son, regarded the throne as his right by birth. The Lord did build David a sure house, but Abigail had no share in the building of it.

We now come to Saul's last interview with his son-in-law. Betrayed again by the Ziphites, David's hiding-place made known by them to Saul, the king set forth for the last time to seize the person of his daughter's husband. But how impossible is it to fight successfully against God. For, whilst Saul and his host were asleep in their camp, David, accompanied only by Abishai, walked into their midst, and took away the king's spear at his bolster, and his cruse of water; “for a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.” A deep sleep, úÌÇøÀãÌÅîÈä, a term never used of natural slumber, but of sleep, either supernatural, for a special purpose (Gen. 2:21; 15:12; Job 4:18; 33:15), or spiritual, in governmental dealing with man. (Prov. 19:15; Isa. 29:10.) How easily can God deal with those opposed to His will! Here, without the exercise of power in judgment, but by supernatural sleep falling on them, God paralyzed the action of an army, and let the object of their pursuit walk about in their camp unnoticed and unharmed. What a proof to Saul that the Lord had departed film him, and was protecting David for, awakened out of his slumber by David, when at a safe distance from him, he learned how his life had once more been in David's hands, and that he owed his preservation from death to the grace of God restraining the hand of his son-in-law. David now addresses Saul: “If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the Lord, for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.” (Chap. 26:19, 20.) The alternative here put is worthy of notice. If the Lord had stirred up Saul, it could only have been because David had sinned. But clearly his conscience charged him not with any willful sin, for which he was suffering divine chastisement in such a manner. An offering, therefore, if he had unwittingly sinned, would settle the matter with God. But if evil men had stirred up Saul, cursed were they of the Lord.

We live in a day of grace, so such language would not become us. By-and-by, however, it will be seen that those who willfully persist in frustrating God's purposes about His king, will be dealt with in unsparing judgment. (Rev. 17:14; 19:20, 21.) Saul knew perfectly well the true state of the case, and, like Judas, Pilate, his wife, and the centurion, all of whom justified the Lord, Saul cleared David But, further, he condemned himself: “I have sinned. Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.” Saul's own words determine the matter. “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee,” will be the Master's words to the wicked servant. Out of his own mouth was Saul condemned, and David justified from all charge of evil-doing. But David could not trust Saul after this, any more than before. He remits his cause wholly to God to judge: “Let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.” Saul's life had been much set by in David's eyes, yet he would not trust his in Saul's hands; and although the king said, “Return, my son David,” he would not return. The siren voice of Saul had no charming power on the ears of David.

Further, Saul owned that there was a glorious future before David, and yet he had been seeking to take away his life. There was a clear conviction in the king's mind of David's increasing greatness,

but that conviction had in no way checked his desire to destroy him. He was fighting, therefore, with his eyes open as to the future in store for David, yet, like a man dealing blows in the dark, he never could strike the object he aimed at. He had passed the zenith of his career, how long, and how sadly. David had not reached his, and beyond David Saul here also sees nothing. “Blessed be thou, my son David. Thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.” Conviction which leads to no amendment, nor to a right course of action, must only increase the condemnation of the one who confesses to it. After this they parted, and never again, that we know, met on earth. Saul went onward to his end. David waited to ascend the throne. But the whole of Saul's career was run ere David was king in power.

The last portion of David's history during Saul's life now commences (chaps. 27-31.), and again we see him failing to trust Jehovah. Yet in what remarkable ways had God preserved him from being seized upon by his enemy, and the last escape not the least remarkable one of his life. But, looking at circumstances and men, instead of trusting God, “David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me, than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me to seek me any more in any coast of Israel; so shall I escape out of his hand.” (Chap. 27:1.) In the exercise of patience and dependence on God we so often fail. So was it with David. His judgment about Saul was correct. He sought for him no more when told that he had fled. (Chap. 27:4.) At what a price, however, did David purchase rest from the king's persistent pursuit of him! Dissembling now again characterized him, and by accepting Ziklag as a gift from Achish, he professedly owned the Philistine's right to deal with land which belonged to God's people. A fugitive from his country, a pensioner at the court of Achish, and with professions of attachment to the person of the Philistine king, he was ready to swell with his band the army of the uncircumcised which moved to battle against Saul at Jezreel. Whilst at Ziklag, David invaded the Gershurites and the Amalekites, putting to death every man and woman among them, lest Achish should hear of his acts, and his displeasure and his suspicion be aroused. But, worse than all, forgetful of God, and of His former tokens of preserving care, he deceived Achish by the answer that he returned to his inquiries. Thus David failed again.

Saul's last act of disobedience has now to be recounted. He had driven out David from his home; he had despised God's prophet, in the person of Samuel, at Naioth, in Ramah; he had slain God's priests, namely, Ahimelech, and others, at Nob. Now the mind of God, when he wanted it, he could not get. God had deserted him, who had first put himself in open opposition to God. To an unhallowed source for acquiring knowledge about the future the wretched king then turned. He well knew it was an unhallowed source, and one forbidden of God; for he himself had at one time cut off those that had familiar spirits and wizards out of the land. Of this the witch at Ender reminded him, a last warning, if he would have taken it, to pause in his downward career; for death was the penalty attached to the sin of consulting such people. (Lev. 20:6.) In Saul's case the penalty was exacted (1 Chron. 10:13), and from Samuel's lips, who appeared at his request, he learned of the defeat of Israel, and of the death of himself and of his four sons on the morrow. (1 Sam. 28:19.) Saul, who had openly turned from God, got his answer from the aged prophet of God. God thus met the unhappy man, and did not allow a demon to personate His servant. It was Samuel whom Saul saw. It was an unusual eight the witch beheld. She confessed it, when she told Saul she saw gods ascending out of the earth. Her familiar spirit was unable to act, for God

Himself had taken up the matter against Saul.

Samuel was dead, yet he existed in the unclothed state, and in the woman's house at Endor held intercourse with Said, and told him what would befall him and his eons on the morrow. The king's course of departure from God is plainly recounted, and the future as clearly declared. He would be on the morrow with Samuel. Then death does not terminate existence for the righteous or the wicked. Samuel was dead, but he had not ceased to exist. Saul would die, but he would be with Samuel in the place of departed spirits, called in the New Testament, hades. The existence of such a place, and who are there, is all that Samuel by his word declares. The condition and distinctive position of each in hades he was not commissioned to reveal. But this at least is clear, that the prophet was better off there than here. He had no desire to come back to earth. He had been disquieted by being brought up. (Chap. 28:15.) His peaceful state had been interrupted by appearing on this occasion to Saul. Two points about the other world are, then, here made clear. Death is not the end of any man's existence; and the righteous dead have no desire to be brought back upon the stage of this world again. Saul got his answer, one of no uncertain sound, but one which could give him no ray of comfort. God, he felt, had forsaken him. Samuel confirmed this. It was true. Nothing now remained for him but death, and after death the judgment. His reign, which commenced, to outward eyes, so auspiciously, ended disastrously. Victory attended him at the beginning—defeat, followed by death at his own hand, closed his career. He went out of this world to meet an offended God. Thus ended the course on earth of the responsible man.

David had been again left to himself, and what was in his heart had come out; but as the man of God's purpose, his followers were being increased, whilst Saul's end approached. Going to battle with the lords of the Philistines, some of the tribe of Manasseh swelled his ranks, and on his way back to Ziklag more of them joined him, the last chance for any in Israel to own the king, whilst still rejected by the nation. (1 Chron. 12:19-21.) Delivered from his false position by God, though ostensibly it came about by the worldly wisdom of the Philistines, he returned to Ziklag to find it burnt, and all that he and his men had possessed carried captive by the Amalekites, they knew not where. Thus God chastised him for his unfaithfulness, and brought him back to real dependence on the Lord; for without a friend, it would seem, to stand try his side, he had to hear the murmurings of his followers, who threatened to stone him for the loss of their wives, their sons, and their daughters. Poor David! He wept. They all wept. But he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Weeping was common to them all. Encouraging himself in God is only spoken of David.

Here he was alone, and doubtless his soul was restored by this dealing of God with him. But how had he fallen! Saul never joined hands with the Philistines, yet Saul at Ender was deserted by God. David, who had fallen so low, could nevertheless, at Ziklag, inquire of God by means of the ephod, and was assured of victory over that very people, for the non-fulfillment of God's word, against whom Saul had been rejected. The saint of God can never be in too low, too desperate, a condition for God to come in, and bring him out of it. This David experienced, for, following after the enemy, he “smote them from the twilight, even unto the evening of the next day, and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.” (Chap. 30:17.) All that the Amalekites had taken, he captured, being more than they had lost. God was thus gracious unto him.

Returning from the slaughter of the Amalekites, the time had at last arrived when David could reward, by the bestowment of his favors, those who had befriended him and his men during his wanderings because of Saul. He thought of them, and requited them. Further, on the receipt of intelligence of Saul's death, as the king, he dealt judicially with the one who professed to have slain Saul, and sent a message to the men of Jabesh Gilead, in token of his marked approval of their act in burying the bones of Saul and his eons. Justice and judgment are prerogatives of the king. As yet, however, he was but king in Hebron, and owned only by the tribe of Judah, having to wait God's time till all Israel should accept him; For seven years and six months he thus waited, during which there were long wars between the house of Saul and the house of David. They of Saul's house were the aggressors (2 Sam. 12); but all efforts to thwart God's counsels proved abortive. One by one, every hindrance to David's receiving the homage of all Israel was removed. Abner was treacherously slain—Ishbosheth was murdered. At length David was anointed king over all Israel, all the tribes accepting the man of God's choice. Throughput this time of expectancy, how did David act? He waited, for the most part, for God to act on his behalf. Once did he depart from this, his only right path, when he yielded to Abner's proposition to secure, by his personal interest, the kingdom for David. That the Lord would not allow. David was not to be indebted to Abner for the allegiance of all Israel. God would move their hearts to receive him. And He did. Yet that was not all. David waxed greater and greater, and increased in power and the extent of his dominions, till the throne of the Lord was established, in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, from sea to sea, and from the river Euphrates to the ends of the land.

Saul, the responsible man, went from bad to worse. He failed at the outset of his career, and ended it only after he had exhibited undisguised, unmitigated, and ceaseless opposition to the man after God's own heart. David, on his first appearance, was alone, his brethren did not even stand by his side. Trusting in God, he slew the giant, and, as his troubles increased, men rallied round him, till at length there came to him a great host, like the host of God. (1 Chron. 12:22.) At times his deliverance seemed hopeless, but God always opened a way of escape, till, every opposer and hindrance having been removed, he stood forth before Israel and the surrounding nations as the man of God's purpose, the king of His choice. How long will it be ere David's Son, of whom David was a type, shall be seen and owned as King of kings, and Lord of lords?

Chapter 190

Science and Scripture

Dear Brother,

It is far happier to take the word of God simply as the word of God, and have nothing to do with the infidelity of man. When in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom know not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and that is the true ground for the soul. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar.” If man does not bow to what God says now, God will show he had enough evidence of the truth in Christ and His word, so that the rejection of it proves what he is, and he will have to bow to it in that day. “The word that I have spoken” says the Lord, “the same shall judge him in the last day.”

But we all know that infidelity is rampant, and that numbers of young Christians, in houses of business and elsewhere, are beset by it; for “the unjust knoweth no shame.” I send you therefore a few remarks, very brief, not going into the discussion of the subject, but merely some general principles which may help them when they have to do with it—principles which set its just limits to science. Science is occupied in phenomena, what the perceptive mind of man can take cognizance of. It may search into these with the utmost minuteness, it may see that these are regularly governed by general laws, and from the universality of phenomena discover a general principle which acts in all of them. It sees too that certain phenomena are constantly consequences of other phenomena, so far as that, when certain phenomena occur, they are, if not hindered by some external power, followed by other phenomena which are their consequences. There are certain constant facts, and facts which flow from other facts, with (as a general rule) a regularity which constitutes a law of nature. All this science can investigate.

Doubtless there is a vast number of such a fandsto connections not yet discovered, and I know of no limit in principle to any discovery of the order of nature. But science can go no farther; it deals with phenomena (that is, the perceived course of nature), and cannot go beyond them. These, as ordinary and universal phenomena, can be (if science has gone so far) traced to causes which have produced them, and regularly produce them, or to some general uniform principle, such as what is called gravity; so that there are, as to the course of nature, general laws and productive causes. Still the way this is spoken of is very commonly incorrect; as if there were a succession of events. Now this is not the case in much referred to.

A general principle is discovered, as gravity, or the action of acids on certain other substances, or the laws of electricity. In these cases there is no succession or series of events, but either constancy in fact, as in the movements of the heavenly bodies, or, if certain substances are applied to others, uniform effects produced, and new combinations formed, and the like. This has nothing to do with a succession of productions. I do not say everything produced has proceeded from an antecedent, and this from another. It only proves that there are certain general laws which govern what exists, so that they as a rule act uniformly, or perhaps constantly. Adams or Leverrier could discover that there must be a planet in a certain place because of certain disturbances in the

movements of Neptune, and there it was found. So Kepler discovered elliptic orbits, and equal spaces in equal times, and the like; and chemistry ascertained the combination of elements in regular proportion. That is, regular and orderly (or, as they are called, general) laws of the operations of forces in what exists in the visible universe have been discovered constant in their nature. What exists moves in a regular way, or, when the occasion is there, the same thing produces the same effects; not a succession of productive causes, but uniformity in the actions of each, so that we can calculate on effects if nothing hinders. But that is all. Science informs me of these general laws which govern what exists; but the things must already exist so to act.

Science can go no farther than the phenomena, and consists in generalizing them under a uniform law. But, before the course which existing things follow, the things must exist which follow that course, though that course may have begun with their existence; and no doubt they did. But that course only is the subject of science, its general principle as a fixed law. The existence, and probably the law it follows, is there before the researches of science can begin, and the laws of force and phenomena when they have begun; and these only are the subject of scientific generalization. Of existence, or the source of laws which govern force and produce effects, it can tell me absolutely nothing. They are not the subject of science at all. Many, very many, know a vast deal more of science than I do. It is not my occupation, and I am willing to learn many interesting facts from them; but they cannot tell me better than I can know myself what the domain and sphere of science is. I can judge of that as well as they—perhaps better, as it is not my idol. Science is occupied with phenomena, and phenomena only, and that to discover the facts and the laws which govern them; but at they search into is only the actual uniform operation, where it exists, of that whose existence is there before the inquiry could arise. They must take that for granted when they search into the laws which govern its present phenomena. Science can discover the laws of what does exist, but there it must stop; its existence they have no law for. With all respect for their skill in what mentally is very interesting, if they go beyond it they are simply sutor ultra crepidam. I suppose for some I must translate the rebuke given by the Rhodian sculptor to the cobbler who could show that the shoe on the statue was not rightly made, and, famous by correcting the work of a renowned artist, would go farther, and judge the work, but was only the cobbler beyond his last. With the existence of the creation, or of the laws which govern it, they have nothing to do. They may investigate those laws when they exist; if they go beyond, I say, Ne sutor ultra crepidam.

But what they have discovered leads me to another point, which they have obscured by their studies and constant occupation with secondary causes, and which is much more simply and clearly apprehended by unscientific minds. If a man of science met a peasant with his cart, and tried to prove the cart had not been made, he would bring Bedlam, not science, into the poor man's mind. He might explain the curves produced by a fly on the periphery of the wheel as it turned, what the principles of the pressure of weight on the parts of the cart were, and the plane of draft, how far equal wheels affected the draft, and much more. Nay, he might explain to him how the stimulus of the whip applied to the horse behind set the centripetal nerves to produce an effect on the cells, or combination of cells, in the horse's brain, and by some unknown reflex action set the motor efferent fibers in activity, so as to act on his hind heels, and even his fore-legs, at the same time, to move the cart. Still my poor carter would believe his cart had a maker, and was made with a particular design, to carry manure or corn, as the case might be; nay, perhaps, in his

ignorance, that, though born of a cart mare, the horse was made too, and would fancy, poor ignorant man, with a whip in his hand, that it was made for him to have dominion over; nor would he be much in the wrong.

But I must turn to the direct point. A succession of produced facts they have not. They have uniform and universal continuance of force, operating in a constant way as a general rule, though perhaps not absolutely universal, as gaseous molecules, or the satellite of Uranus, but enough to give a general fixed phenomenal law, and uniform effects of certain chemical substances; but this knowledge of phenomena brings out the principle of causation. Thus Mr. Mill says, “All phenomena, without exception, which begin to exist, that is, all except primeval causes, are effects either immediate or remote of those primitive facts, or of some combination of them.” This science has no right to say. It can only say, This is the case in all the course of material nature which we have examined; and as an induction we reckon on it elsewhere when the same cause is in operation, or from the same effect conclude to a similar cause. Nothing more.

But the principle of causation, intuitively believed in men's minds, so that he cannot think of beginning to be without it, is established scientifically as necessary to material existence, and the course of nature in what begins, by the infidel himself. He cannot think otherwise. As a scientific induction, then, it is necessary to the first existence of material existence and fixed laws. That is, I have a creative power. It is true that this leads me to self-existence, which, for the very same reason, I cannot understand, because it does exist without being caused. But this is merely saying man cannot understand what is beyond him. Of course he cannot, or he would not be man., that is, a finite creature.

That is, science must stop—in what belongs to it—the course and order of the violin, or ordered universe, and in its nature cannot go beyond it. It knows there must be a primeval or primitive cause for everything; for everything in its sphere is the effect of a cause, and, it asserts, must be. If so, material existence itself must be, and the fixed laws also. As to what and how that primeval cause is (which is not caused, or it is not primeval), it cannot tell. Of course it cannot; nor do I blame it. It is in the nature of things. But ignorance is no ground—I should say no valid ground; for ignorance is very fond of asserting—no valid ground of asserting. That is, science assures me from what it does know that there must be a primeval cause of the existence of what it searches into; but it is, and must be, wholly ignorant of that cause—cannot conceive it: it is not in its sphere of knowledge.

As to change of species, I must say, though I cannot enter into it here, there is no ground for asserting it. Mummies and geology all give us the same continuous species, as has been fully shown, and no passing from one to another. Facts fail the assertors of it; and facts only are of any worth here. And as to evolutionism, while within the same species there is clearly development from the sperm to the plant, from the ovum to the full-grown creature, species appear perfect in starting, though in the kind of creature there is, as a general rule, progress up to man himself. And, so far from the stronger driving out the weaker during the subsistence of a race, the stronger are those that disappear.

Infidelity would exclude a Creator. Its will is in its thought. Mr. Mill talks of primeval causes, primitive facts, collocation of permanent causes; but this only proves that he was forced to come to what was primitive and permanent, what exists of itself. Another tells us we are compelled to admit

a primordial cause or causes, of whose nature logic and science can tell us nothing. “Thus we are conducted to a blank wall by a method which is wholly powerless to penetrate the mystery which lies behind.” He adds, “This we may call logical or negative atheism.” Now I understand this; for this author, though an evolutionist, does not deny revelation, but avows himself a Christian; but it is not correct, because it pretends to think of what is beyond the blank wall, when it knows and sees nothing. It has no negative right even, but only to say, I do not know—it is not in the sphere of my knowledge; I am simply ignorant, and leave it to intuition and revelation, where all is plain. Indeed we may go farther, because the mind of man does conclude there must be a cause, nature.

It is a very simple principle, that the mind of man cannot go beyond the mind of man, or it ceases to be such; that it cannot reach God so as to know and grasp what He is. If he could, God is not God, or man not man. Cicero's subjecta veritas quasi materia can never take in God. It puts God and man wholly out of their place, and though in an innate sense there is a God remains, it is a fact that man by his own power has never known Him. His highest reach is an “unknown God.” With conscience it is another matter; but that is not science. As to this, it is clear, fixed laws cannot account for existence, for the things must exist to have the laws attached to them. They are forced to recognize causation; man does so necessarily, and that leads up to a first cause, but it is not science. This may occupy itself with fixed laws, but the laws were fixed somehow before it began its work. What they are when they exist, science may ascertain, but no more. J. N. D.

Chapter 191

Scripture Queries and Answers: 1 John 1:7

Q. 1 John 1:7.-Is it true that the last clause of this verse teaches us that the blood of Jesus cleanseth the sins of believers as a present process (that is, ie actually cleansing)?

A. It is always a serious thing when an effort is made, on grammatical grounds, to overthrow a plainly revealed truth of the gospel. Now, there is not a single fact more certain than that in Christ we have redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of sins or offenses. (Eph. 1; Col. 1) So, in the next chapter of our epistle, John writes to the entire family of God," Because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." In Rom. 5 we are said to be justified in virtue of Christ's blood, and reconciled by His death; in Hebrews, sanctified by the offering of His body once for all; yea, more, perfected by it forever (ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς), for unbroken continuance. But why heap together scriptures so familiar and precious to the youngest Christian To represent the cleansing of the believer by the Savior's blood as a continuous act, and therefore incomplete, is to dishonor the efficacy of His work, and to weaken the ground of that peace which He is declared to have made by the blood of His cross., (Col. 1:20.) How manifest it is that a false interpretation not only introduces an error, but sets one scripture against another—the surest way to discredit all.

Thus, if sin-cleansing by the blood of Jesus is assumed to be only going on, it would falsify the same John's language in Rev. 1:5, where we are said to be already washed by His blood, and this comes out more strikingly in any exact rendering, like Dean Alford's version: "Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his blood." His love is constant, but the washing, or loosing, us from our sins is set forth by a participle of that tense which expresses an action simply past, excluding duration. John could have used no such form, if we had to come before God for daily cleansing by the blood, of Jesus; for in this case it would be correct to employ, not the aorist, but the imperfect tense, which precisely expresses a continued, or repeated, action.

How, then, did the apostle use the present? Was there laxity in his expression, when he said," The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from every sin?" On the contrary, the tense is just as exact in 1 John 1:7, as his use of distinctive participles in Rev. 1:5. A little learning is proverbially dangerous; and in the exegesis of scripture voluminous commentators are apt to go astray, no less than their followers. But to give an opinion. on such a question hardly becomes people ignorant of the fact, that the present in Greek, as in most languages, is in no way limited to an incomplete action yet in course of performance; for it no less correctly expresses an absolute present, as in general propositions, doctrinal statements, apothegms, and descriptions of manners, customs, or matters of frequent occurrence. Just so, in English, we say, "Food nourishes the human body; poison kills." The idea intended is not the continuance of the act, but the quality of each material, or their opposite effects on man. Almost every chapter in the epistles furnishes instances. Take a plain and kindred statement from 1 John 2: "He is the propitiation for our sins." Does the present here mean that He is actually now atoning for our sins? Clearly not; such an interpretation of the present would incontrovertibly overthrow the atonement. It is here evidently used in its absolute sense, without reference to any definite moment, for expressing the great and

blessed truth of His propitiation. Just so in our text the notion of continuous cleansing would distinctly contradict the grand doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and of the gospel in general. It is therefore the gravest error.

Further, it is inexcusable ignorance to assume that the present tense must be so taken; for the present may convey an absolute or abstract-statement, and not continuance only. Let the reader take the Epistle of James, or the Book of Proverbs, and observe how often the absolute present occurs in every chapter. The same thing will be found in Paul's epistles, and especially in John. The sense and the context must decide which is meant in each case; and the selfsame principle applies to every book which lays down general maxims as truly as to the Bible.

Let us, then, look yet more closely into the verse and its surroundings. The apostle treats (not, as in Hebrews, of our access to God as worshippers once purged, having no more conscience of sins, but) of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, in virtue of the eternal life fully manifested and reported. But there is a solemn message, as well as a joy-giving manifestation: not only is the Son seen and heard, and the revelation written for others, but God is made known as light, and in Him no darkness at all; so that those who pretend to fellowship with Him, while walking in darkness, lie, and do not practice the truth. Gnosticism was then at work, soon to advance to still deeper impiety. It is not a question of saints more or less consistent, of failing Christians exhorted or corrected, but of false men contrasted with true believers, for profit and warning. But if (and here he introduces the true) we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus cleanseth from every sin. He is contrasting the believer, not only with Gentile or Jew, but with the spurious class of professors of Christ then spreading. The Christian is not like the Gentiles, walking in the vanity of their mind, darkened in understanding, estranged from the life of God, on account of the ignorance which is in them; nor is he like the Jews, walking at best outside the sanctuary, where God hid Himself behind a veil. Jew or Gentile once, the Christian owns and follows Christ, the light of the world, and consequently walks not in darkness, but has the light of life. There we walk, no longer in uncertainty, but in the true knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ.

In Eph. 4 we are exhorted to walk as children of light (that is, according to it), being now no longer darkness, but light in the Lord. Here this is not yet the question, though it follows at great length in chapters 2 and 3. The apostle is distinguishing the true from the false, and lays down, that if we walk (not according to, but) in the light, if we walk no longer as men in the dark but as Christians in the light of God fully revealed to our souls in Christ, we have fellowship one with another, we are brought into common thoughts and affections, joys and sorrows, as saints, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us completely. No otherwise could we stand in that light, or enjoy this fellowship. It is not a mere momentary emotion, but the standing of Christians contemplated in this threefold way: walking in the light, mutual fellowship, and cleansing bf the blood of Jesus. These are blessed privileges, every one, yet do they involve the gravest responsibility. It is no question of practical measure; for how could such as we experimentally be said to walk there as God is in the light? But if grace has brought us into the light to walk there, as He is in the light, in no partial revelation but the fullest of God's nature, all is plain. Christ once suffered for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God; and now in Him we, who once were afar off, are made nigh by His blood. Peter and Paul perfectly harmonize with John.

There is provision for failure, but this is in chapter 2:1, as in John 13 There is fresh application, not of blood which abides shed once for all in ever efficacious value, but of water, figure of the word applied by the Spirit, in answer to Christ's advocacy with the Father. “He that is washed (λελουμ■νος) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” So more generally Christ gave Himself for the church, that He might sanctify, having cleansed it with the washing of water by the word. No one holds so mean and shallow a view as that this means, by reading of the scriptures, but by the Spirit's applying the word to the conscience, both at conversion and all through the Christian's course. It is not true, as Alford says, that the word translated “washing” means “laver” or “bath” (which would be λουτ■ρ), but “bathing,” and hence the water used, not the vessel which contained it, ■ν ■ characterizing it as effected by the word, and not ritual or ceremonial as in Judaism. To read the scriptures is all well; but this goes far more deeply to the Lord's application of His word to convict, or otherwise deal with the soul, as we may see in Peter's case, Luke 22:61. But there is no such thought in 1 John 1:7, which ought in that case to read, “If we do not walk in the light... the blood cleanseth;” just the opposite of what the apostle says and means. “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ.” For repetition in washing with water the feet apt to be defiled here below, scripture leaves ample room; repeated application of Christ's blood is unknown to God's word, though common enough in Christendom—another gospel, which is not another.

We have seen, then, that continuous cleansing by blood cannot be meant, not merely because it has no just sense in itself, but because it opposes other scriptures which treat the effect on the Christian as complete. Scripture cannot be broken. Repeated application of Christ's blood the word does not countenance anywhere else, even if the word here implied it, which it does not. It remains, therefore, that we must fall back on the only possible sense of the present here open to us, namely, that the apostle states, in an absolute way, the cleansing of believers by the blood of Jesus, expressed (as it regularly is in such propositions) in the present, but abstractedly, without reference to time past, present, or future, as one of the main characteristics of their place or standing. Hence it is no question of this or that sin, when confessed: His blood, cleanseth from every sin. Details are not before us, nor restoration after failure. It is the proper and full value of His blood. Consequently, if it were the design of the Holy Spirit to reveal this absolutely, the present tense was the one exactly suited to the apostle's hand, as we see it now before us. The effort to limit, or even apply, the expression “cleanseth,” to the continuous force of the present, is therefore mere ignorance, or worse. The doctrine of the clause, the context, and scripture in general, declare unitedly and unequivocally for the absolute (or, as some less correctly term it, the emphatic) usage of the present in the closing verb of 1 John 1:7.

Chapter 192

Scripture Queries and Answers: Giving Thanks to the Father

Q. It is asserted by some that thanksgiving at the breaking of bread should always be addressed to the Lord Jesus, never to the Father. The ground taken is that the table is that of the Lord Jesus, not in any sense that of the Father. How far have these thoughts foundation in scripture? μαθητ■ς.

A. There is no doubt that the table is the Lord's, but it is as far as can be from the truth, and a mere human inference, to draw thence that there is not the fullest liberty to praise God, and to worship the Father, while fully owning and giving thanks to the Lord. Such thoughts are the mere workings of a reasoning mind; they are not Christ, nor of the Holy Ghost, who never limits the truth as revealed, nor turns one truth against another. The Spirit might on one occasion make God in His nature the theme of blessing, at another the relationship of Father. And even in exalting our Lord Jesus, there is all variety of His personal glory, as there are also most distinct aspects of His grace to us, of which the Lordship is rather the least, however true and important. But He is Son, Priest, Advocate, and Head of the church, which differ quite from His Lordship, and are every one of them fraught with blessing, and call out the praises of the saints. In every point of view then to address our thanksgiving to the Savior only is narrow and wrong, and especially so were He to be worshipped at His table as the Lord only.

John 19:5.—A question is sent, whether “Behold the man” may mean, Jesus says, “Behold the man.” But the whole context shows it is Pilate. As to the form of the sentence, the words, “And Jesus came forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe,” are a parenthesis. It runs thus: “Pilate went out therefore again, and he saith to them, Lo, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him (Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe), and he saith to them, Behold the man!” Jesus had thus, consequent on the first part of Pilate's speech, been led out before them. For they did not enter in where Pilate judged, that they might not defile themselves.

Scripture Queries and Answers: the Breaking of Bread

THE BREAKING OF BREAD.

1. Two or three saints in fellowship at the Lord's table, meet, with or without previous concert, at some place where they have gone for a temporary purpose—a watering-place commonly—where there is no gathering, and no one in fellowship. Can they rightly spread the table for the time they are together in the place, the whole thing being discontinued (unless in the meantime some residents should be brought into fellowship) as soon as they leave? Under such circumstances is the true character of the table maintained? And if so, is it material whether the fact of their breaking bread be known only to themselves, or done in such a way that others may know and perhaps come to the room?

2. If there be a resident brother or sister in fellowship at the place, but no breaking of bread, can the table be spread at any time that another brother in fellowship may happen to be there for a limited time, and then discontinued until another similar occasion arise? If the brother should go to the place on an occasional day for the express purpose of enabling the resident brother or sister to enjoy the privilege of breaking bread, would it make any difference?

3. In the case of several in fellowship removing, with a view to permanent residence, to another town where there is no gathering, or where several may be converted or brought out of the denominations, should they begin breaking bread at once, and of their own accord? or should they announce their intention and seek the fellowship of the surrounding gatherings before doing so?

4. If the practice of beginning to break bread under the circumstances specified in these cases, and more particularly in the two first mentioned, is right in your judgment, in what way would scripture enable us to guard against the danger of its being accompanied with self-will—considering one's own convenience—lack of die godly exercise and of its leading, if it were generally acted on, to disorder?

BERNE, July 30th [1878].

Dear Brethren,

I see nothing at all to hinder brethren, who find themselves together for bathing, breaking bread together, provided it be done in a spirit of unity with the meetings they belong to. In the case of a resident Christian walking uprightly in the truth, “calling on [the name of] the Lord out of a pure heart,” he has the same title if he desired to walk permanently with brethren. There is nothing to hinder; but it would be happy (specially if those at the bathing place were young brethren) that the matter be communicated to the meeting they belong to, that the thing may be done seriously and with Christian care. In the former case it is to preserve confidence and unity, in the latter for right Christian care. The true character of the gathering is preserved, that is, two or three gathered together to Christ's name; but it is important that it should be done in unity with those already gathered. Full liberty, but liberty in hearty unity, is what we have to seek, and subjection of

individual will to the action of the Holy Ghost in the whole.

As to your second question, it is practically answered. Provided it below in a spirit of unity, I see nothing to hinder. It might be on purpose to act against the assembly when the single absent brother did not walk well. This would be clearly wrong, and what I say always supposes that all are walking godlily and in grace.

As to the third question, it is always desirable that they should do it in unity with those united in the place nearest, or whence they come. No one can hinder their doing it, but it is not done happily or godlily when it is not done in communion with those with whom they are already in communion.

As to the fourth, the grace of God and the application of the word to the conscience can alone hinder the exercise of self-will.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

J. N. D.

Chapter 194

Scripture Query and Answer: Daniel 9:24

Q. Dan. 9:24.-Having lately seen it stated (in print) that Dr. Posey denies “holy of holies” to be the right rendering in Dan. 9:24, and asserts “an all-holy” (alluding to the Messiah) to be the true one—I should be glad of information on a point of so much prophetic importance. P.

“It cannot be spoken of the natural ‘holy of holies,' which in contrast to the holy place is always the ‘holy of holies,' never holy of holies. Still less is it the material temple as a whole, since the temple, as a whole, is never called by the name of a part of it. ‘Holy of holies,' that is, lit. ‘holiness of holinesses.' All-holiness is a ritual term, used to express the exceeding holiness which things acquire by being consecrated to God. It is never used to describe a place, but is always an attribute of the thing, and in one place, of the person who is spoken of.” —(Posey on Daniel, pp. 179, 180.)

A. I cannot find that any person is called in the Old Testament ■■■■ ■■■(Dan. 9:24.) Things are, where characteristically described. The innermost part of the sanctuary is properly called ■■■■■ ■■■(Ex. 26:33.) In Ezek. 45:3 the sanctuary is called “holy of holies” without the article. For the prophet there writes of the most holy sanctuary, not of the sanctuary and the most holy place, as the Authorized Version would represent it. With Ezekiel, then, before us we have a precedent for Daniel, there describing the sanctuary; and looking at the subject of his prayer for the sanctuary (ver. 17), city and people (vers. 18, 19), the answer of the angel is in full keeping with his request. Seven heptads are determined upon thy people, and upon thy city, at the end of which the sanctuary will be anointed. I take it the Authorized Version gives the sense, though the anarthrous form is not the usual one where the house is described. So I should dissent from Dr. Pusey's views. The context would lead me to accept the Authorized Version as correct in making it the sanctuary, and not the Messiah. S.

Chapter 195

The Sea and the Song

Ex. 14; 15

When Israel crossed the sea, there was a visible manifestation of power to a double end—the rescue that Jehovah effected for them, and the destruction with which He overwhelmed the pride and flower of Egypt. But the victory was so signally of God, so purely miraculous an interposition, in a way foreign to all human thought, that it fittingly betokens, with a force peculiar to itself, the crushing defeat of the enemy about to be displayed before all worlds, and suggests that which our souls welcome with divine joy and delight—the final and total eclipse of every agency, human or Satanic, which has ever raised an impious front before God Jehovah wrought so conclusively that day for His own glory, in vindication of His title to have and to hold His people, that one cannot but be struck with the sublimity and finality of the action. But how much more with its twofold fitness for stereotyping upon every heart, on the one hand by the deliverance He wrought, His desire and His purpose to bless; and on the other, by brushing away to utter destruction, with the breath of His mouth, all the hosts of Pharaoh, that the marshalled forces of the enemy, in their mightiest array, are but as a cobweb in the pathway of the onward march of His counsels from eternity!

What could be more sublime than the command before Pi-hahiroth— “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show to you to-day. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace!” Six hundred thousand men were to stand still in the profound silence that befitted them in a scene where so unparalleled a drama was about to be enacted, moving neither foot nor finger! How calculated was such an inspiriting word to draw the trembling heart of Israel from a fatal occupation with its own exigencies to faith in Jehovah of hosts! A Savior-God was there, and, according to the word of His power, was about to interpose for them to a degree not determined by their own conception of their extremity, but by the fitness and adequacy of the occasion for bringing into bold relief a revelation of Himself in that character, the character in which He loves to present Himself to faith. The One who “plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm,” stood by the Red Sea shore on that momentous night, to give effect to the rod of Moses in cutting a narrow channel through the surging waters for His beleaguered people to slip through! Who shall arrest His hand, or have the temerity to curse whom He blesses? Apart from Jehovah those waters were death and destruction, but Jehovah and the sea (Christ's cup of death in principle) meant life and liberty, deliverance and redemption, for them, but an eternal collapse for their enemies and His, to whom, when He makes bare His arm, He will give no quarter.

The way in which God gave demonstration in that hour of signal victory of the validity of His title to Israel as His purchased possession (types of us assuredly), and the way in which the selfsame night He (lug a grave for Pharaoh and his chariots in the bed of the sea, wrapping its waters around them in one mighty winding-sheet, suggest to us the prophetic utterance of Hos. 13:14: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” —thus bringing into view further assured victories, both for an earthly and a heavenly people!

“Thus Jehovah saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah and his servant Moses.” (Ex. 14:30, 31.) Now what could be more in keeping with these wondrous issues than that Moses (type of Christ, of course) should celebrate the achievement of Jehovah with a song, the only fitting mode of expressing the new and triumphant resurrection ground upon which the typical Redeemer stood in the midst of his typically redeemed brethren! For the very first time were lips opened, and opened of Himself, in melody before God, for He had wrought salvation!—a salvation of which they knew not the frill significance, it may be; but in all this it is our privilege to learn the higher lessons of His work of grace as now revealed to faith. They are now a typically saved people, not merely as so lately in Egypt, sheltered by the passover-blood, but brought out of Egypt for God, and the power of Egypt broken under their foot Under shelter of the blood God had pledged His word for their safety as against judgment, but now they were saved indeed, and they knew it They ate of the pass-over standing, as it were; loins girt, staff in hand, “in haste” to leave, being yet on the enemy's ground, and shackled beneath his stubborn power.

The very nature of the instruction given them precludes the thought of resting thus, and yet, alas! how many now-a-days tarry in such an attitude of soul, as though it were rest with God, whereas God took pains to prohibit the rest, and was Himself outside. Clearly it was, on the contrary, the prelude to departure, the sound of the give: trumpets, as it were, preparatory to the final break-up of their relations to Egypt, its associations and its penalties; they had been sheltered in Egypt that they might go forth to God. He who bought them with blood to make them His bondman, redeemed them by power to make them His freemen. He who, as the Paschal Lamb, would give His blood to shelter, was also God's Male of might to bear the judgment to deliver. He would have them a separated, enfranchised, people to Himself, and none should stay His hand. Short of this it was not salvation, and short of salvation there could be no divine song. God has been pleased to make salvation and song correlatives, and thus song has become the unique privilege of the redeemed, whether earthly or heavenly saints, as looking forward or backward to that stupendous work of redemption which could alone give perfect rest to the conscience, and suffice for leading the heart into communion with the Father and the Son. I require for this to know, not only that the blood has been shed to put away my sins, and is my perfect, security as against the destroying angel, but that I have been brought to God in redemption effected once and forever, and thus I have perfect peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Instead of its being, as before, my sins between myself and Him, it is Himself who is now between me and my sins, and the One who has thus interposed has given me to know that in the doing it He has brought me to Himself, and tuned my heart to His own praise. He has borne the judgment due to my sins, and condemned sin in the flesh; in the Person of my Substitute I am clear from, and carried beyond, the judgment forever; the power of death is annulled, of Satan finally broken. I raise, with joyful heart, a song of victory; for sin, and death, and judgment, that gnashed their teeth upon me, are behind me now, and even “as he is, so are we in this world!”

The angels who kept their first estate, if we may safely interpret the silence of scripture, are not privileged to sing; the vault of heaven has never yet resounded with the accents of song. The earthly paradise was the handiwork of God, and, as everything else, He made it “very good;” but even so fair a scene with man, in innocence and uprightness, its intelligent and richly-endowed

center, furnished no suited conditions for song. God spake with man, and man with Him, as also the angels are said to do; but it is the crowning work of redemption, and that alone, which strikes a chord in the heart of God, and tuned the heart of man to respond. It is when redemption is an accomplished fact, and God is glorified therein, that He in whose person it was wrought says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” (Psa. 22:22.) Then only can He lead the praises of His saints, for song is born of salvation!

Salvation is a signal interposition of God, when every other resource has failed, between us and the state of things into which we have plunged ourselves by our sins, not only averting from us in a way consistent with His righteousness, the eternal penalties incurred, but delivering us from our old, and translating us into a new, position in the activity of His grace, to be permanently enjoyed with Himself, according to His eternal purpose. It is this which legitimately gives birth to song, and it is as natural to the saints of God, as for a bird to carol when the shades of night are chased away by the morning sun. And what a song was that we are considering for compass and for power! How it must have gladdened for the moment the heart of God, as it ascended from the serried ranks of Israel, fresh from their baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea! How suggestive of all the after-consequences of what God had achieved! For the first time an indulgent God permits us to speak of a habitation amongst His redeemed family for Himself; such a thought could only be acceptable to Him in connection with a people set apart as they, by blood and by power. Had Israel but understood its rich and precious import, what a cheering, invigorating, thought would it have been to their hearts, that Jehovah of hosts would deign to dwell in a habitation they should build for Him in their midst, the God of such sheltering grace, and such wonder-working power! “Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders” —consistently enough do we now for the first time hear of “holiness.” God was pleased to withhold the revelation of this attribute of His character until redemption had been typically accomplished, for not only is it one of His attributes, but through grace are we made partakers of it, and without it shall not see Him! How beautifully, then, is it in keeping with His blessed ways that He should first present it as based upon the great redemption work!

In short, the song is the celebration of victory, in view of the full accomplishment of the counsels of God for Israel, and also typically for us. It accordingly takes no account of the wilderness, which is no part of His counsels, but rather of His ways; but the crossing of the Jordan enters into it (ver. 16), and the conquest of Canaan, the setting up of His sanctuary in the land, and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Thus the habitation for Him, in verse 2, contemplates the temple in Zion, and concurrently with this, for the first time we hear of the Lord's reign—in a word, His house and His throne in Jerusalem. All the special features of God's counsels of blessing to Israel are thus before us in this divine carol: salvation for a redeemed people, a habitation for God in their midst, God revealed in holiness, the enemy dashed in pieces, the Jordan crossed, all opposition subdued, the land enjoyed, Jehovah King forever and ever!

In conclusion, how beautiful and how significant is the fact that, though they sang in the wilderness, it was as upon resurrection ground, and thus they sang not a word about it. Faith, privileged to be occupied with the counsels of God, bridged all the distance from the sea to the promised land, from the cross to the glory. Not a note could be raised until the vanquished enemy sunk “as a stone,” and the people were free; but when that was achieved, the song which God inspired, and which Moses led them to take up on the farther shore of the sea, raised melodies in

the desert which shall reverberate in mightier volume throughout eternity

For us, along with this, a sweeter song is reserved (Rev. 5:9.) Here are our hearts tutored in its touching strains, its tender cadence, and, as in spirit, already within the scene which ever opens freshly to faith, and where alone it can be fully rendered, we rehearse, but all too feebly, its heavenly harmonies. May He who is the burden of our song forever inspire, as He loves to do, our poor hearts to take up in loftier notes its blessed refrain, as the sweetest privilege we know this side the glory! R.

Chapter 196

A Letter on Separation

I write rather because of the importance of the point than for any immediate occasion of circumstances: I mean leaving an assembly, or setting up (as it is called) another table. I am not so afraid of it as some other brethren, but I must explain my reasons. If such or such a meeting were the church here, leaving it would be severing oneself from the assembly of God. But (though, wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, He is in the midst, and the blessing and responsibility of the church is in a certain sense also,) if any Christians now set up to be the church, or did any formal act which pretended to it, I should leave them, as being a false pretension, and denying the very testimony to the state of ruin which God has called us to render. It would have ceased to be the table of the people and testimony of God, at least intelligently. It might be evil pretension or ignorance; it might call for patience if it was in ignorance, or for remedy if that were possible: but such a pretension I believe false, and I could not abide in what is false. I think it of the last importance that this pretension of any body should be kept down; I could not own it a moment, because it is not the truth.

But then, on the other hand, united testimony to the truth is the greatest possible blessing from on high. And I think that, if any one through the flesh separated from two or three walking godlily before God in the unity of the whole body of Christ, it would not merely be an act of schism, but he would necessarily deprive himself of the blessing of God's presence. It resolves itself, like all else, into a question of flesh and Spirit. If the Spirit of God is in and sanctions the body, he who leaves in the flesh deprives himself of the blessing, and sins. If, on the contrary, the Spirit of God does not sanction the body, he who leaves it will get into the power and liberty of the Spirit by following Him. That is the real way to look at it. There may be evil, and yet the Spirit of God sanction the body (not, of course, its then state), or at least act with the body in putting it away. But if the Spirit of God by any faithful person moves in this, and the evil is not put away but persisted in, is the Spirit of God with those who continue in the evil, or with him who will not? Or is the doctrine of the unity of the body to be made a cover for evil? This is precisely the delusion of Satan in Popery, and the worst form of evil under the sun. If the matter, instead of being brought to the conscience of the body, is maintained by the authority of a few, and the body of believers despised, it is the additional concomitant evil of the clergy, which is the element also of Popery. Now I believe myself that the elements of this have been distinctly brought out at ——; and I cannot stay in evil to preserve unity. I do not want unity in evil, but separation from it.

God's unity is always founded on separation, since sin came into the world. “Get thee out” is the first word of God's call: it is to Himself. If one gets out alone, it may require more faith, but that is all; one will be with Him, and that, dear brother, is what I care most about, though overjoyed to be with my brethren on that ground. I do not say that some more spiritual person might not have done more or better than I: God must judge of that. I am sure I am a poor creature; but at all cost I must walk with God for myself....

Suppose clericalism so strong that the conscience of the body does not act at all, even when appealed to: is a simple saint, who has perhaps no influence to set anything right, because of this very evil, therefore to stay with it? What resource has he? I suppose another case. Evil goes on, fleshly pretension, a low state of things on all sides. Some get hold of a particular evil which galls their flesh, and they leave. Do you think that the plea of unity will heal? Never. All are in the wrong. Now this often happens. Now the Lord in these cases is always over all. He chastens what was not of Him by such a separation, and shows the flesh in detail even where, in the main, His name was sought. If the seceders act in the flesh, they will not find blessing. God governs in these things, and will own righteousness where it is, if only in certain points. They would not prosper if it were so; but they might remain a shame and sorrow to those they left. If it be merely pride of flesh, it will soon come to nothing. “There must needs be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest.” If occasion has been given in any way, the Lord, because He loves, will not let go till the evil be purged out. If I do not act with Him, He will (and I should thank Him for it) put me down in the matter too. He loves the church, and has all power in heaven and earth, and never lets slip the reins.

I have not broken bread, nor should do it till the last extremity: and if I did, it would be in the fullest openest testimony, that I did not own the others then to be the table of the Lord at all. I should think worse of them than of sectarian bodies, because having more pretension to light. “Now ye say, We see.” But I should not (God forbid!) cease to pray continually, and so much the more earnestly, for them, that they might prosper through the fullness of the grace that is in Christ for them. J. N. D.

Chapter 197

A Note on the Similitudes of Matthew 13, Especially the Treasure and the Net

I suppose that the kingdom of heaven, in the six parables in which it is here spoken of, means the same thing. It is the subject of comparison. It may be, and is, viewed in various aspects, but the thing compared is the same. Your interpretation of the last makes of it an entirely new dispensation, when Christ has taken to Him His great power and is reigning and judging; or at least you mix these two together as one. I am not aware that, though “the heavens rule,” the term “kingdom of heaven” is applied to the earthly dominion of the Son of man. The Son of man gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

It has been long ago noticed that the first three of these parables present the outward apparent effects of the gospel in the world, the three last the thoughts of God in it: one, the result in man's responsibility; the other, the intention of God. We get the manifested effect on earth in the three first. The crop spoiled in the world, and to be left so till the harvest; the spread of a common doctrine in place of individual conversion; and that doctrine corrupt, a great power in the earth. Hence, in the parable, the tares are only gathered together in bundles on the earth, and the wheat gathered into the garner. The scene has ceased on earth, save that the tares are gathered in bundles for judgment. The wheat has disappeared there. Then God's actual judgment in power explains what now is known only spiritually. Hence the explanation of symbolical prophecy and parables always goes farther than the parable or prophecy, because these give the facts in their enigmatic form, which the spiritual mind alone can explain. In actual judgment all is manifest. In the explanation the tares are cast into the fire, which they were not in the parable, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The parable closes with the closing of the public state of things in the world—the closing of the present state of things. The explanation (not the parable) gives the judgment of God on the wicked, and the shining forth in glory of the saints. The Son of man in judgment gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend.

In the last three parables we have the mind of the Lord in what took place, and first, it seems to me, in contrast with Judaism. Judaism, and Israel itself, was no hidden treasure, no mystery of the kingdom. The Lord gave up nothing to have it. They were His known people and inheritance in the world. He came to His own, though His own received Him not. When He comes again, He will take them to have the world, not the world to have them. In no case has the Lord, it seems to me, taken the world to have the Jews.

To come more directly to what drew my attention to these statements, or (to speak more exactly) to which my attention was drawn, the net cast into the sea. I cannot receive the thought, that it refers to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, after the church is gone. As to the facts of that day, and that the preaching will take place, we are agreed. It is to the parable and its explanation that I refer. In the tares you have the position of the kingdom in the world. It is not the work of Christ and the Spirit for His own objects—simply the facts and the result till the close of all

here. They are found as such in the world, and dealt with. In the parable of the net, the net is cast into the masses of population, the sea, and gathers out, the object being good fishes, though the net enclosed all; but they are taken out of the sea, and brought to be handled by the fishermen who drew the net. In the parable of the tares there is no gathering a company into one net-full, with which the fishermen are occupied. The whole in the case of the net is their work. In the tares it is the Lord's, and Satan's who spoils it in its effect on earth, though he cannot injure the wheat or hinder its being put into the garner. It is the effect in the world till harvest, with the fact that the wheat is hid in the garner.

Further, in the gospel of the kingdom, when the church is gone, there is no gathering a net-full of good and bad. All is individual, and in the judgment all the world is brought together without exception; not a net-full gathered and the separation made between those only who are in it, the mass of fishes being left in the sea. The kingdom of heaven, the subject of all these parables, never embraces all the world, but is a partial thing, save buying the field to have the treasure hidden in it, which makes the special object more distinct, but the operation of the Lord is partial. The field is the world, but the operation is sowing, and tares, and a treasure which is there; but in the parable of the sheep and goats it is expressly all the Gentiles who are gathered, and no partial collective operation at all. Nor am I, indeed, aware that the throne of judgment set up on earth is ever called the kingdom. The statement of Matt. 25:31 seems to me to make a clear distinction.

Besides this, the comparison of the use made of the sea does not seem to me to seize the true use of these figures. In Isaiah the wicked are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. This is a special action of the surf, and the wicked are viewed in this character and compared to it. That is another idea from the vast sea of nations, out of which a net-full of fishes is taken, good as well as bad. The sea and the fishes of the sea are distinct things, and it is a different thing to bring up all the nations—everybody—for judgment, and to gather of every kind, and leave the mass of the rest where they were. There is no bringing to shore in the lodgment of the nations, before the judgment, but a gathering of all together. The fish are brought out of the sea into a net; that is the fishing work. I do not enter on the analogies of the days of creation, as not necessary to my object, but I think, in the remark that this subject occupies thirteen out of twenty-two chapters of Revelation, there is confusion between the beast and the Gentiles outside.

I have only one more, remark to make, already alluded to as a principle. The statement of the par le is overlooked and confounded with the explanation. In the parable of the net, as in the tares and wheat, the explanation is, and is meant to be, different from the parable. In the parable, it is carefully stated that the persons who separate are the persons who have drawn the net: “which when they had drawn to shore, they sat down, and put the good into vessels.” They are occupied with the good, and simply reject the bad. In the explanation the angels, certainly not the fishermen, separate the wicked from among the just—another kind of act—and cast them into the fire. In the parable we have the fishermen's work carried out to the end of the fishermen's part in it. The two previous parables give the thought and purpose of God in the kingdom of heaven; this, the part His servants take in it. In the tares, further, you have no action of men but of Christ and Satan, and then judgment in this world, providential and actual, the wheat being gone out of the way into the garner. The gathering into the net, and out of it into vessels, is a distinct part of the parabolic action, and done by the fishermen. In the parable of tares and wheat the servants are forbidden to meddle with what is to be done, and the work of judgment, which is all, save the Lord's and

Satan's, committed to others.

J. N. D.

Chapter 198

Son of Man

Observe the expression, “Sort of man.” This is the character in which, according to Dan. 7, the Lord will come, in a power and glory much greater than that of His manifestation as Messiah, the Son of David, and which will be displayed in a much wider sphere. As the Son of man He is the heir of all that God destines for man. (See Heb. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:27.) He must, in consequence, seeing what man's condition is, suffer in order to possess this inheritance. He was there as the Messiah, but He must be received in His true character, Emmanuel; and the Jews must thus be tested morally. He will not have the kingdom on carnal principles. Rejected as Messiah, as Emmanuel, He postpones the period of those events which will close the ministry of His disciples with respect to Israel unto His coming us the Son of man. Meantime God has brought out other things, that had been hidden from the foundation of the world, the true glory of Jesus the Son of God, His heavenly glory as man, and the church united to Him in heaven. The judgment of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the nation, have suspended the ministry which had begun at the moment of which the evangelist here speaks. That which has filled up the interval since then is not the subject here of the Lord's discourse, which refers solely to the ministry that had the Jews for its object. The counsels of God with respect to the church, in connection with the glory of Jesus the right hand of God, we shall find spoken of elsewhere.

Luke will give us in more detail that which concerns the Son of man. In Matthew the Holy Ghost occupies us with the rejection of Emmanuel.

Chapter 199

Testimony of Peter and John Compared With Paul's

It has been of old noticed how Peter and John are ministerially brought forward in John 21, Paul's ministry being of course omitted. But I want to inquire more into the two former, and first John. The main teaching of the Spirit of God by him is the person of the Lord as come from heaven, bringing life; and after having His sheep and His heavenly care, after being owned in His three characters, His sending of the Holy Ghost. In his epistles eternal life in Him become our life, and its characteristics, with one remarkable statement of the love of God. But dispensationally he has to do with earth, as Peter, that is, Christianity as developed on earth. In chapter 6 the Lord is owned prophet, refusing to be king, and goes up on high as to the priestly place; but His going up on high only just alluded to in His discourse, the disciples having the character of the Jewish remnant when He rejoins them, whereupon they come to land. Our individual place in Him we have fully, but the church never; rarely what is heavenly: what is divine manifested here, but not man in heaven. Literally in the former chapter (17.) we have the whole time skipped over, from the Jerusalem church to appearing in glory (only in ver. 24 coming to what is heavenly), in verse 21 the immediate converts of the twelve; in verse 22 the glory. The Jews are set aside from the first chapter, and Christ is the true vine on earth. As a general truth the Spirit replaces Him. In chapter 20:17 is the Christian's individual place by redemption. The Lord is then in their midst on earth. From that place He sends them, and, as risen, confers the Holy Spirit in the power of the breath of life, and gives the title of administering forgiveness of sins. This is the remnant, there as Thomas, when they hereafter see and own Him. Personal revelation, then, three times, and the case of the remnant committed to Peter as his present service.

John's ministry reaches mysteriously over till the Lord comes. And this we have with warning in the epistle that the last time was come already in apostasy and Antichrist; and in the Revelation the judicial account, first of the church, then of the world, the Christian's place being found in chapter 1: 5, 6; but all an earthly Christ, though what He has made us in it; and chapter 22: 17, where the whole circle of their affection as on earth is described. The church formed on earth is unnamed by Peter and John. We have sheep and a flock, one flock and one shepherd, children and family unity, but no body. Then Christ builds His church: the living stones come to the Living Stone. It grows to a holy temple, but there is no present body or present house. Peter has the keys of the kingdom entrusted to him, and what he bound on earth was bound in heaven (so of the two or three in Matt. 18; cf. 2 Cor. 2:10). In the kingdom I get conferred authority and administration, and I think in this Jerusalem church sphere, administrative forgiveness, as distinct from redemptional forgiveness (though founded on redemption), which is eternal. But this administrative forgiveness, as a present dealing, is very important; only there is another and greater redemption through His blood, and consequently no sin imputed to us at all, no more conscience of sins. Redemption and salvation of the soul we have in Peter (and in his sermon baptism to the remission of sins), but not peace (save salvation), nor completeness in Christ. In John we have believers in Christ, and as He is so are we in this world, personal standing in Him. We have cleansing by Christ's blood and propitiation. But all this was in this world—blessing enough too.

But Paul's ministry was wholly apart. He was delivered from Jew and Gentile, united to a glorified Christ, and thus witnessed of our sitting in Him in heavenly places, and of a new creation. The foundations were all the same, but the distinct heavenly position as entered into now was his alone to tell, death being on all the past, and so the church's place. Christian and apostolic forgiveness he could speak of down here, but administered forgiveness of past sins, a reception of it, as to the past, is not his affair. He is not an administrator with authority from heaven, as in Matt. 16, but one who brings us there. The nearest to it, “ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified.” But this just shows the difference: it is not forgiven. If there is forgiveness, it is identical with imputing no sin. There may be no government, as in James. So that the forgiveness in John 20. is a wholly inferior thing. He could bind and loose, his orderings were the commandments of the Lord, but with him all this was church detail. What he had was a new dispensation, an οἰκονομία, dating from Damascus, not Antioch, though formally in mission inaugurated at Antioch, showing its second great proof, the power of the Holy Ghost present down here, as the glorified Christ was the basis and starting-point of it. Hence He owns no apostles before the ascension of Christ. It started entirely anew, independently and directly from Christ, though recognizing, and, in one sense, tacked on through Ananias to the old thing; for he washed away his sins in baptism, but not sent, therefore, to baptize at all. The basis of the mission of the twelve, as in John, not merely in Matt. 28, is resurrection, which is indeed the seal of salvation work, but knows no union with Christ—our resurrection with Him leads into it; but even baptism for Paul was not for remission of sins, however true, but to Christ's death, putting on Christ. Hence, of course, with Him alone we have the rapture, not merely the revelation of Christ.

The Peter ministry, then, closed by the destruction of Jerusalem, Jewish restoration by Christianity failed, as by Christ, John's testimony, personal, especially as to Christians, follows the church to the time it would not repent, and judgment came on it, is neither cold nor hot, was spewed out of Christ's mouth (the little flock having kept the word of His patience with little strength), and then going on in judgments to His appearing. Paul takes up what is for heaven from heaven, and gives it by the Holy Ghost its full character. It is a great thing for conscience to have forgiveness presented to it as a present thing here, but it is not our place in Christ nor the Christian. Peter, with a full statement of redemption, puts the believers (Jews) in the wilderness, and suffering with Christ, a hope being laid up for them in heaven, and they awaiting the glory to be revealed, pilgrims and strangers here, and the government of God going on. But you have no Canaan warfare as Jehovah's host. Satan is a persecutor, a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Christ is building a spiritual house with living stones. Believing, they rejoice, receiving the end of their faith, soul-salvation, but they have to hope to the end for the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Withal the time was come for judgment to begin at the house of God. Peter himself was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed. Paul looked for the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Nor do you ever get in Peter God's love to the world, or God in this outgoing grace, but a people called by redemption under the government of God.

In John, as the revelation is above and beyond dispensation, the revelation of the Father and the Son in the Son, so it is eternal life in the Son manifested in Him, and thus “true in him and in you.” God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in. His Son. He that hath the Son hath life. Thus we have fellowship in the nature we have got with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; and here

the Holy Ghost is not mentioned; it is nature, and so subjected to captivity by it. There is more than this by the Holy Ghost. We know that we are in Him, and He in us, but thus far as to life. Hence we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, and he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself as he is pure. Peter was an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed. Paul says we shall appear with Him when He shall appear; now the power of His resurrection, and the fact of His sufferings: John, we know we shall then be like Him, and so now purify ourselves as He is pure; Paul, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord, and then we shall be ever with the Lord. And “with” is a leading word with the apostle, as John has more “in.”

In Hebrews the same ground is taken as Peter in respect to the pilgrim character; but there we have much more of the person and offices of Christ, and of His present position on high, and consequently the perfect purging of the conscience, and an eternal redemption to enter into the holiest. In this respect it is present approach to God in the holiest.

To Correspondents

Acts 5:31; 17:30, Rom. 2:4.— “Ens” is quite right. To say that the command to believe and repent belongs to and flows from the law is not scriptural, but the fruit of theology. Others in their desire to set forth the freeness of grace, have fallen into the Sandemanian trap of denying the distinctively moral character of repentance, and thus reduce it to a changed mind about God. Whereas grace works so that in faith the eye of the soul looks to Christ as the Savior, and in repentance that eye looks at self and judges what it is and has done as before God. Faith and repentance are inseparable: if one is divinely given, so is the other; if the repentance is human, the faith is no better.

Chapter 201

To Correspondents: Letter on Separation

It is notorious to all readers of the “Collected Writings” that the “Letter on Separation” in our last Number was written and printed many years ago. A date never was affixed to that letter, which kept to the general principle. Not a word was changed, nor was there even a thought that any one would conceive it referred to recent circumstances. It was inserted, like many other pieces from time to time, because a similar need calls for it now as when written: for the exercise of his judgment the Editor of the Bible Treasury is alone responsible. He believes that there is a superstitious notion largely prevalent, that once an assembly, always an assembly (save for judgment): a notion which wrought of old the fatal false security of the Jew, and which helped to build up the vast imposture of popery, where unity is the constant plea to swamp, not conscience only, but the energy of the Spirit in testimony to the glory of Christ, and to the holy nature and righteous ways of God. Those who think themselves exempt from such a snare are already deceived; and there is no danger which may not assail those who desire to stand together in their weakness, but faithfully on God's ground for His saints in the present ruin-state of Christendom. It is a great sin to abandon what is of God I it is equally a sin to accredit what dishonors Him collectively or individually. None can escape from responsibility; nor. would faith desire it but to glorify God in obedience though in suffering and grief for Christ's sake, as well as righteousness.

Chapter 202

To Correspondents: 1 Corinthians 5

1 Cor. 5 On the Question and Answer in the last number a letter was written, but not received till after its writer had agreed that it should not appear. Only he wished it stated that a meeting, which gave rise to the later (in contrast with the earlier) remarks, subsequently declared him who withdrew to be a wicked person outside, instead of merely letting him withdraw by his own act. In the last sentence however, room had been left expressly for adequate clearance: if truly done as in God's sight, it is well and due to Him. And it should be understood that the judgment thus added studiously avoided going beyond the recent guilt: the rest of the question remains where it was.

Chapter 203

The Truth

Christ is the truth; the Father's word is the truth; the Spirit is the truth. The word is the perfect and divine revelation of God's thoughts from and of heaven (John 3:11, 12, 31, 32), but perfectly suited to man on earth as Christ, the living Word, was. Thus begotten by the word, by God's will, the new man lives by every word that proceedeth out of God's mouth, follows Christ, is led by the Spirit in the path through the world which the vulture's eye hath not seen. An act of obedience, for which he has perhaps but one word, is acceptable to the discovery of divine wisdom, not unrighteousness, but perhaps not righteousness, according to man, but a divine path in the desert where is no way. The spiritual man judges all, but is himself judged of none. The word of God abides in the young man. He that doeth His will abides forever. The anointing abides even in the babes, who shall abide in the Son and in the Father. With them is one Spirit. So Peter from Isa. 40, and the same prophet later, “With thee is continuance.” But here we have our abiding through the word abiding in us. The word and Spirit both abide, and in us; and so we abide in the Son and in the Father. So here, too, we abide in Christ, and do not sin. The abiding is applied to God and love in chapter 4.

Chapter 204

Two Greek Words Translated As House

On the whole, in spite of authorities, I am disposed to think that ο■κος is the house viewed from outside as an object set before us, ο■κ■α from inside; ο■κος the building as such, the temple always, so a family, or lineage metaphorically. It is very often merely a difference of conception in the writer. If I think of the house as a building to which I came, I should say, ο■κος, if I was going in to a set of people in it, or having to do with the house inside of it, not materially, but as containing, I should say, elide. We have a striking example, how near they run together, and yet have a different sense: in 1 Cor. 1:16 ο■κος of Stephanas, the family looked at objectively from without; in xvi. 15, ο■κ■α. The material house as from without was not the first-fruits, but the household as a whole which was so. What seems a difficulty is the end, of sermon on the Mount, building the house on a rock. (Matt. 7:24; 25 Luke 6:48, 49: as far as I find, it is always thus, ■κοδ■μησεν ο■κ■αν.) I think ο■κ■α is the whole concern the builder had in his mind for his habitation, a dwelling with his family, which was of course a house. Hence “go not from house to house,” is ο■κ■α, though they might from ο■κος to ο■κος. Cf. Matt. 5:15; Phil. 4:22, and more strongly Matt. 10:12, 13, 14; 13:51; John 4:53. In Luke 10:5, we have both. They go into the ο■κ■αν or dwelling containing the family, and say, Peace be to this house, ο■κ■, an object before their minds as one thing. They brake bread, κατ' ο■κον; and τ■ν κατ' ο■κον α■τ■ν ■κκλησ■αν, meeting there, not in the household. See Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 20:20. So the blessing comes as the peace on the ο■κον, Luke 19:9. In Matt. 12:25, ο■κ■α κατ' ■αυτ■ς, in Luke 11:17, ο■κος ■π■ ο■κον. Here in Luke ο■κ■α would not do; it is a single whole thing, not collective as in Matthew: ο■κ■α would have been too intimate.

Chapter 205

Two Sticks: 1 Kings 18:12

How many believers in this day are culpably like the poor widow of Sarepta before she met the Tishbite. They know so little of the wonderful service they are predestined of the Lord to fulfill for Him here, that they are, ignobly enough, looking only for a couple of sticks, accounting that they have just sufficient in the barrel and the cruse to die upon, but far from enough to live upon! They have so little understood the wonderful fact that they have present possession of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, as the inexhaustible resources of faith—of which the meal (or wheaten flour) and the oil were types—that they go along with their eyes upon the ground; and their piety chiefly consists in a suitable preparation for death! It may be in the near, or it may be in the distant, horizon, but this only is looming before their souls. These are they who religiously affirm that “in the midst of life we are in death,” never having learned how much happier it is to be able to say, and how much more divinely true it is to the saint, that in the midst of death we are in life, not knowing either how incomparably greater a thing it is to be fit to live than to be fit to die.

When the famine had long raged throughout the land, and even beyond its borders, the prophet of God was directed to forsake Israel's dried-up rivulet, Cherith, for Zarephath of Zidon, for there had Jehovah commanded a widow woman to sustain him; the many widows of Israel being passed over, that a Gentile might taste of His goodness, and be also the almoner of His resources. At the very gate of the city they met, and he, being entitled to draw at once upon her supplies, requests of her bread and water, only to elicit the disclosure of her abject penury. Everything but the last mouthful was gone, and she and her son were at the point of death.

Elijah's reply, “Fear not,” &c., beautifully asserts the ascendancy of his faith. Be it that the famine was at its height, and that the person upon whom he was billeted was an embodiment of wretchedness and misery the most profound, he had gone there in the name and at the word of the God of Israel, to live, and not to die, and to announce, as well as to receive, succor. And as the two mites dropped into the Lord's treasury by the Jewish widow of another and a later day, met the commendation that she had cast in more than all the rest, so were the “two sticks” of this Gentile widow, gathered with a view to the last desperate morsel before death, to be used for preparing, by the bounty of Jehovah, “enough and to spare,” the prelude of a new lease of life to herself and to the prophet, and the pledge of unmeasured mercy and grace to the Gentiles. She had gone forth of the city, having no object higher or happier than the “two sticks,” but she found the Lord, as it were, at the gate; for there she met His prophet, and there she heard His word. How many believers are like her, as she sallied forth that eventful day, full of their own thoughts and forebodings! In what they have, and what they seek, they have self for their motive, thus rising no higher, and seeing no further, than the couple of sticks, for they have not yet met the Lord at the gate, or, in other words, have not yet got their commission—the service for Himself He has assigned to them here.

What a revolution of soul must she have experienced as the word of Jehovah fell from the mouth of His prophet! Retracing her steps now, not to be the prey of death, but as one taken out of the

world, and afresh sent into the world, she enters the city with composure and with dignity, as hostess of the servant of the living God. Henceforth the famine is over for her and for her household, and she ranks as a commissioned officer in the commissariat of the Lord of hosts. In a marked manner is she identified with His interests on earth, and that primarily, for the prophet had said, “Make me, therefore, a little cake first.” Her faith and her self-denial ran together as twin-sisters, for she did so, and she and her house did eat a full year, even until Jehovah sent rain upon the earth. Had anyone told her that morning that before the sun set she should eat abundantly, and her household, and that also she should entertain the same day as her guest the most distinguished man upon earth, even him at whose word the heavens had so long been shut up, would he not have been unto her as one that mocked?

And in like manner, how little now do saints, generally recognize that no higher dignity and no greater privilege could be conferred upon us than are ours already, in being sent here to find in the interests of Christ our first consideration, and in being made competent, by the divine resources we possess, to minister of them as freely to others as we have partaken of them abundantly ourselves! How simply and bow confidingly did the Zidonian widow receive and act upon the Tishbite's testimony! She goes back into Sarepta ennobled by faith, and enriched with promises; qualified and commissioned by Jehovah to dispense His bounty to His honored servant, and to be the witness of divine superiority to the deepest human exigencies, as to, herself and her house; a poor Gentile by nature, but bound up now in the bundle of life with Elijah and Elijah's God!

Nevertheless she has practically to learn death. Upon the old ground she had met the wreck of every earthly hope in becoming a widow, but this would not suffice. Upon the new ground of divine favor and exhaustless benefits, death must be experimentally brought home to her heart. And so the son of her bosom is out off before her eyes, but she receives him again at the hand of the Lord, plus the incalculable gain that the sentence of death carries with it to faith. She held him before, upon the uncertain tenure of the old creation, as the fruit of her womb; she gets him back upon new creation tenure as the fruit of resurrection. Moreover, the man of God (figure of Christ) and the word of the Lord are both established before her soul— “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.”

Surely all this is full of instruction for ourselves, and beautiful in its season, for the scene around is one of dearth, and drought, and death; and how happy and how blessed is the discovery made to faith, that in the antitypes of the flour and the oil we have Christ our life, and the Holy Ghost its power, in such present plenitude as to render us eminently superior to everything here, so that the famine prevailing in the old creation only enhances more and more unto our souls the immeasurable and unfailing resources of the new.

How little do they know of this who resemble the widow—before she met Elijah, under pressure of what she felt powerless to avert, and only seeking to pass, without further suffering, out of this blighted scene—a sight as painful and as pitiable as a stranded ship on a barren coast! But the truly-taught saint of God should be like a noble merchantman, freighted with a cargo more precious than gold of Ophir, filling her sails with every heavenly breeze, touching at every open port to discharge somewhat of her unworldly and exhaustless treasure, carrying divine blessing wherever she is welcomed; and knowing, moreover, that she is homeward bound, having everything taut and trim to enter harbor in full sail, “for so,” says the apostle Peter, “an entrance

shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” R.

Chapter 206

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

Eph. 3:8

“Enough is as good as a feast,” says the world, and as to that which perishes with the using it is true in its way. Yet even here the world convicts itself; for it acknowledges that by enough every man means something more than he has; so that practically he never reaches his “enough,” and how much less the feast? This only makes good the conclusion of the preacher, “the eyes of man are never satisfied.” (Prov. 28:20.) And again, Eccl. 12:8, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” The human heart is too large for any terrestrial thing to fill it!

But on entering the now creation, that blessed expanse where “all things are become new.” I begin with God's feast; I find “all things are ready,” and I prove that “all things are of God,” as He says, “my dinner, my oxen, my feelings” all is of Him; I have come to a marriage feast; it is the initial thing in “the creation of God!” We road in Luke 15 that, as soon as they entered the house, “they began to be merry;” and since that joy met no reverse, we may conclude it is without a break and without a bound; assuredly then that newborn joy ought to go on characterizing all who know that they are within that festive scene, and as truly now as by-and-by in the glory, though then, of course, circumstantially and manifestly:

“He spread the banquet, made me eat,

Bid all my fears remove,

Yea, o'er my guilty, rebel head

He placed His banner—Love!”

Is it not a seasonable inquiry, whether as vessels—emptied of care and every ill, and filled as He who has formed us for Himself, loves to fill us—we do in any adequate way experience and express the blessedness which we are not only aware of being ours, but are familiar with as such? I may know even to familiarity what God has given me, but I have never known it in power and consequently have never truly made it mine, much less can I be the expression of it, if I do not practically and positively enjoy it, and, as it were, jubilantly, it being the habitual delight of my soul.

In the Lord's ways with Israel, gracious and merciful as He was to them, the blessing was a measured one: according to their obedience did He mete out blessing from His hand. But if we seek analogy to the principle and character of our blessing, we must revert to that of Noah and his sons; there we find God declaring on the ground of the sweet savor of the superb sacrifice He had just accepted from the first altar ever erected— “Even as the green herb have I given you all things:” this surely suggests the church's unmeasured portion in the new creation as “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” which blessing being based upon the value before God of Christ's sacrifice of Himself, is as immeasurable as it is illimitable. As immeasurable as the excellency of Christ; as illimitable as the Father's delight in Him. It may be interesting to trace this profuseness of blessing in each of its varied and wonderful characters as it met us at

first, waits upon us at present and stretches us on into glory, indicated by such words as “riches,” “fullness,” “abound,” “abundantly,” and the like, as found in the writings of John, Paul, and Peter, premising as one loves to do, that it finds its center and its extent in Christ; root and stem, branch and twig, tendril and cluster, “from me is thy fruit found!” Hos. 14:8. “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall.” Gen. 49:22.

John says “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and of His fullness have all we received, and grace upon grace.” John 1:14-16. So in Rom. 5:15: “The grace of God and the free gift in grace has abounded unto many;” in verse 17, it is termed the “abundance of grace,” and in verse 21 we find that if the offense abounded and how wide spread soever sin has abounded, the grace has over-abounded, grace is regnant: so also in Eph. 2:7, “the exceeding riches of his grace;” again, 2 Cor. 4:15, “grace abounding through the ninny may cause thanksgiving to abound.” It is the abounding grace of God multiplying itself in its objects! In like manner, mercy. Peter says, “According to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again,” I Peter i. 3, and Paul says that He who has quickened us together with Christ found a motive in the riches of His own mercy, Eph. 2:4, 5, and in the same scripture as to love, we read, “For his great love wherewith He loved us” (the word “great” being rendered “plenteous” in Matt. 9:37, and “abundant” in 1 Peter 1:3); in John 13 “having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them,” not “to the end” in point of time, but to the uttermost, “going through with everything.” Oh! love unmeasured and untold, filling our lives with its unwearied ministrations in priesthood and in advocacy, how truly is it love abundantly! So from the Lord Himself we get not only “I am come that they might have life,” which an Old Testament saint had, but “and might have it abundantly.” John 10:10.

This deeper, fuller, brighter reality was doubtless fulfilled in the communication of His risen life after His resurrection. John 20:22. As the risen man He is constituted head or “beginning of the creation of God,” and as such His first work, a work in which His heart went out, was to impart to His beloved disciples, His “brethren” now, His life in resurrection, the “life abundantly!” And when that same blessed One, who down here received the Spirit without measure, is exalted on high, the glorified Man, He makes it His first service from the new platform of glory gained to bring them into positive, eternal union with Himself by baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, the promise of the Father, and accordingly we read “which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior.” Titus 3:6. Before His departure He had tutored the hearts of His disciples in His own joy for their joy, in respect to obedience, John 15:11; in respect to dependence, 16:24, and as to the Father's unwearied care, 17: 13, their joy must be full and His joy must be filled up in them!

In Ephesians—wondrous, blessed ground for faith—we read (chap. 1: 8-10), “He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself;” this we may therefore term the abundant revelation of His counsels! Again (19) “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead,” &c. Here is power working transcendently in an objective way, its correlative being chapter 3: 16 and 20, “that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man—according to the power that worketh in us;” clearly this is the highest energy of power working subjectively.

Before we quit Ephesians we may see also the provision for our defense while engaged in true Christian conflict. The apostle says, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor,” or panoply, “of God,” chapter 6: 11-18; and in other epistles we read, “The arms of our Warfare are not fleshly, but divinely powerful to the overthrow of strongholds,” 2 Cor. 10:4; we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Rom. 8:37.) In a similarly triumphant strain does Peter speak (1 Peter 1:11) of the saints' departure to be with the Lord, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

So in Rom. 15:13, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost;” only here does hope find its sphere of exercise and only in us its full fruition. How strikingly again, do we see in the Epistle to the Colossians to what surpassing blessedness our participation in the mystery introduces us for “God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations,” the apostle agonizing as to the saints “that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 1:27; 2:8.) Lastly in chapter 2: 9, 10: “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are filled full in him,” which signifies as toward God our present completeness in Christ—may we not say abundantly?

Seeing then from scripture these varied characters of blessing, taken without much regard to order, in respect to grace, mercy, love, life, the Holy Ghost, joy, counsels of God, power, defense, hope, the mystery and completeness in Christ, we may fairly remark that if God speaks of each of them in this uniform way, it must be because He would impress our hearts ever and anon with the exuberance of the blessing which He has poured into our bosom, giving us, indeed, “all that love could give!” But the question arises, what is the practical effect to our souls of the sense of such supreme, such magnificent blessing—surely to draw out the heart to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ and all the faculties of the soul in worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth; surely to fit us for closer, deeper, fuller fellowship with the Father and the Son; surely, also, while learning herein what an object we are to the Father's heart, to assimilate us more and more in an ever increasing degree, to Him who has been essentially the object of that heart from eternity!

What a striking illustration of more than regal bounty is furnished in Solomon's munificence to the Queen of Sheba; all she had given to him, the many camels' load of spice and gold and precious stones, he gave her back, shall we not say enhanced a thousand fold? Next she got “all her desire, whatsoever she asked.” (2 Chron. 9:12.) Lastly “Solomon gave her of his royal bounty.” (1 Kings 10:13.) But in the closing chapter of Revelation (20: 1, 2), we have an illustration of divine bounty in the new creation, “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river was there the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Only here is an adequate illustration of our twelve-fold blessing; for surely it is the privilege of faith to be ever drinking of the water of life, and feeding even now upon the fruit of that tree of which it is significantly said it is “on either side of the river.” Though the nations have yet to learn, as one day they will, that the leaves of the tree of life alone can heal them, yet we are already privileged as knowing our place in the new creation, to eat of the fruit which is alone “sweet to our taste” and to drink of the stream which alone refreshes the new nature!

But if instead of illustration we turn to instances we find that when Christianity was inaugurated at Pentecost, the typical idea was a full vessel; the disciples “were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:4); the apostles were full of the Holy Ghost, great power and great grace was upon them all, chapter 6: 3 full of the Holy Ghost, verse 5; full of faith and power, verse 8! Paul the pattern man in living, says that “the grace of our Lord surpassingly over-abounded” to him with faith and love, 1 Tim. 1:14; when his sufferings abounded his consolation also abounded by Christ. (2 Cor. 1:5.) Again he says, “I am filled with encouragement, I overabound in joy.” (2 Cor. 7:4.) When slighted by the Corinthians the abundance of his love is displayed. (2 Cor. 12:15.) When caught up into the third heaven he received abundance of revelations (verse 7); he testifies of the Corinthians that they were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, that they abounded in faith and word and knowledge and in all diligence and in love; also of the Macedonians that they abounded in affliction and joy, poverty and liberality.

When he had received a present from the Philippians, and was unable to requite it from any visible resource, he says, “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19.) When he desired that the Corinthians should have the privilege of contributing of their bounty to other saints, in what a wonderful strain he speaks! “God is able to make every gracious gift abound towards you, that, having in every way always all-sufficiency, ye may abound to every good work. Now he that supplieth seed to the sower, and bread for eating, shall supply and make abundant your sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; enriched in every way unto all free-hearted liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.” (2 Cor. 9:8, 10, 11.) He brings their souls into contact with God, as it were, for their enlargement. Never, surely, can we lose sight of the fact that we are finite vessels; but what is of moment is to observe that the Holy Ghost is a wonderfully expansive power, and He dwells in a singularly expansive vessel. It is no marvel, then, that as He fills the vessel it enlarges by the divine afflatus, as in Eph. 3:16—the Holy Ghost in the inner man, and Christ in the heart, we apprehend the immeasurable height, and length, and depth, and breadth, and we know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled even unto all the fullness of God! As though a tiny egg-cup were expanded to the dimensions of a gigantic vase, magnificent in its capacity and proportions; and yet, says the apostle, the confines are not reached, for God delights to bring our finiteness into constant contact with His infinitude, and not only all we ask, but all we think, He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above! What vessels of blessedness and of blessing would His heart delight to make us!

“Now into him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the assembly hi Christ Jesus, unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.” (Eph. 3:20, 21.) R.

Chapter 207

On War

A Few Notes on the 1878 Appeal issued by the Society

of Friends (London).

That war is wholly opposed to the Christian spirit, as well as to all the precepts of our Lord, no soul subject to scripture will deny; and so far the Society of Friends is quite right in calling attention to it. Among Christians it is absolutely unjustifiable. But we have in this Appeal assertions that, to say the least, confuse the mind, and for which the humblest. Christian may ask, Have we for these the authority of scripture? To my mind, the Appeal (well-intentioned as it is) lacks God's word in its most important statements, as, e.g., the two first, on which it is based. To warrant them, the Friends can produce no scriptural proof. But to assert that scripture teaches so-and-so, when it teaches otherwise, wherever it treats of the matter in question, is serious and mischievous.

In the first statement, then, of this Appeal, addressed by the Friends to their fellow Christians, we are told that “The deliverance of the world from the curse of war is to be effected mainly by the force of Christian principle. It is this that would make war impossible, by removing the causes, pretexts, and practices which perpetuate the system.” Now “the world” takes the place of Christians, and this little word “mainly” sets aside His coming, who alone is, in scripture, emphatically called the “Prince of Peace.” For if peace be established “mainly” without Him, by the efforts of Christians, His presence is quite a secondary matter, not one of prime moment or necessity. If “peace” be the question, scripture says and insists that He is the necessity. (Psa. 72:7.) Still, not to dwell on the exactitude of one word, but to go on the principles taught, it is here that a simple, but most pertinent, question suggests itself at once. Does scripture anywhere teach that the world is to become Christian? or, to put it in another form, Are we taught that the world will be ruled by Christian principles, so as finally to cease to be “the world?” If so, then all that is in the world, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” which produce wars and commotions, with their attendant horrors, will be presently supplanted by the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace,” &c. (Gal. 5:22.) Then manifestly wars must cease. But all this beautiful superstructure rests on the value of the little word “if.” And we must let scripture itself speak. The apostle Paul declared, God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained.” (Acts 17:31.) Here, then, is the world unchanged, till it be judged by Him; while another apostle (John) tells us that the Christian “shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5) And that solemn assize of judgment, in its two aspects, for which the world thus waits, is not only thus alluded to continually in scripture, but is detailed also in all its reality, that of the quick, or living, in Rev. 19, and that of the dead, in Rev. 20 Scripture then states, with a seriousness too real to be trifled with, that “this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4), that system of things surrounding us to-day, of which man is the center and Satan the prince, will not become Christian, but, be found in open antagonism against God, and waging war against Him at the time of the end.

But we have the testimony of our blessed Master Himself on the state of the world at the end. He speaks of the existence of wars and commotions as the beginnings of sorrows, specially to be observed by His disciples, when His coming in power and glory is in question. He says to them, “And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet; for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” (Matt. 24:6-8.) These beginnings of sorrows are to continue till the time of tribulation ends them, such tribulation “as was not since the beginning of the world to this time—no, nor ever shall be.” (Ver. 21.) And the tribulation is in its turn ended by His own personal appearing, but by naught else, and not, therefore, by the wide over-spreading of Christian principles among the nations of Europe, or in any other part of the globe. For He goes on to say, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and all the powers of the heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” (Vers. 29, 80.) Reference to the Old Testament is in entire harmony; for it shows that it is His presence who is “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6) which will end the horrors of war, not the efforts of men, however well directed and carried out these peace societies may be, that will bring no “peace,” while its Prince is rejected by, and absent from, the world. No, “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.” (Psa. 46) An examination of the context in this psalm will show who “He” is. It is the Lord of Hosts, Israel's defense when the heathen rage in that day, their long-rejected Messiah. Again, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Isa. 11:4; Mic. 4:8.) In both these passages the context clearly shows when this will be the state of things among the nations. It is “in the last days,” when the house of the God of Jacob is built, and He reigns in Jerusalem. (Isa. 24) But judgment precedes the blessing of those days; and in the meantime the night of darkness and horrors thickens, wars increase, as but “the beginning of sorrows,” while the world drifts on towards that “morning without clouds,” of which David spoke in the Spirit (2 Sam. 23:4), when He, “whose right it is,” shall usher in that bright millennial day, His thousand years' reign in peace over the earth. “He shall come down like rain upon the new mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of grace, as long as the moon endureth.” (Psa. 62) Well may we who love Him close such a blessed description of that coming day by echoing the words of the psalmist, “And blessed be his glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.”

But we are further told in this Appeal that “The war system will die when all Christian people are willing to accept in their fullness the teachings of the New Testament, and to act them out. It is thus within the power of Christians to make war impossible amongst the nations of Europe.”

Now, there is in this teaching a distinct ignoring of the present and continuous existence to the end of what scripture calls “the world,” a vast system antagonistic to God (James 4:4)—a system now swayed by its prince (John 14:30), and now “lying in the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19.) Can this forgetfulness of the existence of the world be traced to the doctrine of an “inward light in every man,” held by the Friends—sometimes called by them, “That seed which is in us” (Barclay); “The

Spirit and grace of God in themselves" (Fox); "Christ within," &c., &c.? But whatever may have given rise to this ignoring of the world, it is solemn to teach anything which sets aside what scripture everywhere asserts. The Christian is continually spoken of as one in contrast with the world. "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." (John 15:19.) Again, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed." (Rom. 12:2.) And again, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15.)

The other eight statements of this Appeal, being based on the two here briefly examined, need not be dwelt on, save to notice that the language, "We are bound" to this or that, hardly accords with the spirit of a simple child of God. He feels that bondage does not befit him whom the Son has made free, whose yoke is easy, and burden light. (Matt. 11:30.) But while we can all surely say amen to the text, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5), and seek that the principles of the kingdom should govern us now, as they will govern the children of the kingdom then, yet, to go on quietly here, as men who wait for their Lord, becomes us here, not to form or join peace societies for the improvement of this world. God will deal with it in judgment before that coming day, when "peace on earth" shall be established in everlasting security.

H. C. A.

Chapter 208

Watchman, What of the Night? 1

Isaiah 21:11

The watchman of that early time, and as under the spirit of prophecy, said, “The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come.” God has never let the night-time of the ruin of creation and of man—no, nor yet of Jerusalem and of His people Israel—pass out of His own hands; and to them that look for Him, all will, yet issue in “a morning without a cloud,” when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His beams.

Another (and he, the anointed apostle for these last times) sent to us from the risen Son of man, exalted above the night of chaos and of ruin,, and seated in the glory of God, cries, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” The prophet and the apostle are each right, and in the mind of the Lord, in their respective occupations and seasons, giving out these varied lessons to the people of God.

Isaiah, in the midst of the earthly family, is directing their thoughts as to the night and morning, in relation to the two centers of the earth, Jerusalem and Babylon. Paul, in the midst of the heavenly family, is instructing the elect Gentiles what to do, and what to be, in these present church ruins, and in the night time of an evil world. Paul writes to those united to the Lord, who has been cast out of it till the morning comes, and the word by this watchman to us is, “Ye are all the children of light, and of the day, we are not of the night, nor of darkness, therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober,” &c.

Many of those who are instructed in the school of God, know that the ministry of an Old Testament prophet, and his prophesyings, can only find their opportunity and place, when the people to whom he is sent have failed in the original blessing where God had set them, for, as we have said, God never allows even the ruin to pass out of His own hand. The ministry of “an apostle by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,” is of a different order, and reveals the hidden things which were “kept secret from before the foundation of the world, and which God ordained to our glory,” with Christ. The blessing of the church in the heavens, by His divine callings and separations in a risen Lord, and the final prosperity of Israel, and the nations on the earth, by their bounds and divisions, together with the deliverance of a groaning creation, into redemption-light, are alike in the counsels of the living God, and to be manifested in glory. It is equally in His own hands to meet and set aside Babylon and the Gentile nations then, as to establish Jerusalem, and make her a praise in the whole earth, with Christ hereafter.

The watchman said, by Isaiah,” The morning cometh, and also the night: ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come;” and these are the alternations which lie before us for inquiry and examination. Originally everything in creation that God saw was good, and there was no evil; but, as in a moment, all was changed, and everywhere there was evil, and no good. Originally too, the blessing of God that maketh rich rested on every creature, but, as in an instant, the blessing was nowhere, and the curse of God lay heavily on all around. In creation the evening and the morning

made each day, but in history with man, it is the morning cometh, and also the night, alas! Still, He has not cast away the heavens and the earth that He created for His own pleasure with the sons of men, nor will He suffer the mighty ruin to pass into the power of the enemy of God and man. But what will He do, in whose hands are the issues of life and of death? Only to think for a moment of God Himself standing in the breach, and acting upon the supremacy of His own goodness, over all the evil and the misery; yea meeting the usurpation of Satan, and the outbreak of sin in the creature, by falling back upon His own sovereign power and electing love. God's only resource was in Himself, nothing could challenge His omnipotence, or escape His omniscience, or go beyond His control. He alone can say, “Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” How will He, and how can He, bring down His own immensity and infinitude in grace into the circle of morning and night? How connect them with Himself inside the range of men and things, where all is now in ruins and wretchedness, and when all that was morning has become night, and gone down into darkness?

He who said, Let there be light, and there was light, and who made a firmament in the midst of the waters, to divide the waters from the waters, can bring in a sunrise to form a morning where there is none. In the earliest records of His ways, He did it after this creation-pattern of dividing the one from the other, when He acted as the Possessor of the heavens and the earth. For example, “when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” When this supremacy of God, by act and deed, in dividing the nations, is anything more to man than an historical fact, it becomes a very wonderful thing. Marvelous indeed to set their bounds, and, further, that God should come out into the midst of mankind, to divide them, and to act upon His own sovereignty in grace—yea, to begin a register, by which to chronicle an earthly family for Himself in their generations! This supervision and care makes one understand that some purpose of God, which He has ordained for His own glory, and the blessing of His creatures, is to be ultimately reached in the circle of manhood, notwithstanding the expulsion of Adam from paradise. One only begins to discover what this divine secret can be of dividing a nation from all others, and a race from races of men, when we recall the promise that “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” This wonderful registration was therefore strictly maintained till after Jesus, the Immanuel, was born, to whom God pointed, according to the genealogies that went before, and which closed by His incarnation.

It is remarkable, too, that our early progenitors were guided to call their sons by names, not only significant of their own faith in this promise, but that their offspring were the rightful heirs. The two books of Chronicles, which contain the generations of Israel, and their kingly history, maintain these facts in their general character, and prove likewise that God held that elect nation always in His mind, by starting their genealogies from Adam and Seth. The first, of these books is in harmony with the dividings and distinctions in the six days' work of creation, and with God's intention of thus bringing out a seed for the accomplishment of His purposes, and the establishment of covenanted blessings in the midst of Israel and the tribes, as “an elect people” on the earth. The second book opens grandly with the record of this accomplishment, in the typical David and his son Solomon, reigning on God's throne in Jerusalem. The king and his kingdom are established in Israel, and divided off from the nations, as the wonder and admiration of the whole world. Consistently with those objects, the first book begins its genealogy of the family, or

household of God, in the elect line of Adam, Seth, and then Enoch. It commences thus the history of the elect tribes, in the registry of Jehovah and His people, by going back to the man created in the image of God; and closes their antediluvian ancestry with the Enoch who walked with God, and was translated that he should not see death. A precious type this of the heavenly family caught up, on the one hand, and an early intimation that Israel will really be connected with them, and in blessing likewise, in the time of their happy millennium.

It is a point of much interest and significance to notice here, that in this Book of Chronicles, where God is writing up His people, or setting Israel as a firmament to divide the nations from the nations, the Spirit refuses to introduce or make any mention of Cain, that wicked one, and his posterity. I judge this was that the earthly family might be rightly identified by descent, and as born after the flesh, with the promises of Jehovah; and, moreover, distinguished and divided off from all others, as they afterward were, by circumcision. Indeed we may ask, in passing, how could the man who went away out of the presence of God, and became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, be a link in the chronicles of an elect people? On the contrary, Seth, or the substituted and appointed one (instead of righteous Abel, whom Cain slew), is the man with whom the generations of men and their genealogies begin anew in Gen. 5 “And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years. And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters.” Israel's genealogies, which include the birth of the Messiah and finish with it, are on this account full of interest; nor is there any other ancestry or generation worthy of record, save it be “the dukes of Esau, and the dukes of Edom,” which stand apart in an unenviable place of their own, and outside.

Succession in the flesh was thus established by God, and became their pride—yea, everything—to a true Israelite. On this account, as “an elect people,” it was their only remaining glory and boast, on coming up out of Babylon, that they could be still reckoned by their genealogies and families, because the promises were made to “the Seed” of their father Abraham. Thus “the Tirshatha” says, in Neh. 7, “My God put it into mine heart to gather together the nobles and the rulers of the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy, and I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first,” which identified them with the city of Jerusalem and the first Book of Chronicles. Morally and prophetically, we may add, as well as by adoption and birth, they were the descendants of an elect seed, to be brought out in due time as the ordained family, and an appointed nation, for the introduction of covenanted blessing upon the earth. This was promised through Abraham, the friend of God, as the heir of the world, and confirmed to David, the man after God's own heart, as the anointed king, whose greater Son is yet to rule and reign over it, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

It may be further observed, that the First Book of Chronicles closes its earthly and typical program with David's charge to Solomon, and with the transfer of all the measurements and patterns which he had received by the Spirit of God, concerning the temple of peace, and rest, and glory that was to be built. For the palace,” as he says, “is not for man, but for the Lord God,” who was coming to take up His abode in their midst. Nor can David happily close his eyes upon that day and generation until he, as the head of Israel, unites with the chief of the fathers, and with the princes of their tribes, in offering their gifts of gold, and silver, and precious stones, to make the place of the Lord's feet glorious in that hour of their morning As the sweet psalmist, under the anointing oil, he exceeds them all when he sings or plays upon the harp, touching their bright millennial day; or

when, as a worshipper before the ark, he dances on its way to the place of its rest; or as now joyfully making preparations for the temple to receive it. How excellent is he, too, as the leader of the prayers and praises of the great congregation: “Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name….O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.....And all the people blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the King.”

The first book of genealogies, and its arrangements of order and service for the throne and the kingdom, together with the magnificent architectural plans and buildings, with its yet costlier gifts and preparations, is in manifest distinction to their accomplishments and construction in the Second Book of Chronicles. Who can measure, for example, the contrariety and the distances between the opening verses in each book? Or who would attempt to fill in the immense gap of time and circumstance between them, by a narration of the historical facts, except as gathered from the word of God? It is like coming up out of the night of chaos into creation again, with a new company, as we open the first book, and read of an “Adam, Seth, and Enoch,” who was translated that he should not see death. Nor is this feeling of surprise lessened when we open the Second Book of Chronicles, to read, as in the morning light, “that Solomon, the son of David, was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly.” What a tremendous chaos is thus being filled up by God in history! It is like a new beginning in the midst of other and elect creatures, and of a better creation, so that one scarcely knows where we are in this new genealogy, which has given birth, by the letter and order of the first book, to such a man as this Solomon of the second; and yet a man endowed with wisdom such as never had been, or shall be; and invested with honor and power, by the hand of the living God, such as Adam had not before the fall.

Within the beauty of this enclosure, too— “Immanuel's land” —one might ask again, “Watchman, what of the night?” and what has become of the curse on the ground, when all flows with milk and honey? In the presence of this Solomon, inducted into the highest place out of heaven, and invested with royal majesty as a king, before whom all other kings bow and pay tribute, and queens do homage, one may almost think of the fall, and of the man whom God drove out of Eden, as a bygone thing, a dream that is past away with the night, and obliterated in the peace and prosperity of this new center of the world's jubilee. The earth seems to invite the heavens to come out, and hail the new morning that is come, and make merry and be glad with the elect people whom God is leading into His “rest in Zion.” Moreover, Jehovah has left the tent and tabernacle, in which He dwelt and journeyed with the twelve tribes of these genealogies in the wilderness, and is ready to accompany them, and the ark of the covenant, out of the First Book of Chronicles into the Second, and to draw out the staves, when its final resting-place in the temple is completed. The Lord will Himself then appear, and fill the whole house with His glory, so that there shall not be room even for the priests to enter in, because God is in His holy temple.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 209

Watchman, What of the Night? 2

Isaiah 21:11

(Continued from page 110.)

The Second Book of Chronicles introduces us, in its early chapters, to scenes like these, and the whole world is wakened up, on this break of day, to lay bare its treasures, and mines of gold, and all the precious things in the depths of the earth, because God has risen up out of His place, and is coming in with the brightness of the morning into Jerusalem, to make it “the city of the great King.” What change—yea, what mighty revolution—in favor of mankind, can have come up before the God of heaven and of earth, that all kings and countries should be tributary to Him on this great occasion of His temple on Mount Moriah? Again, we may say, “Watchman, what of the night?” when Hiram, king of Tire, is a willing servant, and lays the forests of Lebanon at the feet of Solomon, with cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees in abundance. He provides also a cunning man, endued with understanding, who is skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber. In purple also, and in blue, in fine linen, and in crimson; for Jehovah was coming forth into this kingdom and its costly temple. “Likewise men to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device that shall be put to them, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father;” for this sun was to rise upon Solomon without a cloud.

What can such mighty changes mean between God and His creatures? What can they betoken, but that “the watchman's morning cometh in?” Is the Creator finding out a rest for Himself once more in the works of His own hands? and are men become so good, that He gives out patterns to them, and calls their cunning ones to be master-builders and artificers for Him? Are the plans and methods of the divine order so enlarging themselves, as that He who built all things above and below should ask men to build Him a house? And such a house Or, perhaps, wearied in maintaining righteous government in the midst of men upon the earth, is He about to forego the records of the cherubim at the garden-gate? Does He, not remember the destructive deluge, when a world that then was perished? or the cities of the plain which were burned with fire and brimstone, because of the exceeding wickedness of its inhabitants? Can He have forgotten Babel, and its city, and its tower; or the day when He confounded men's tongues, and set at naught their speech?

But there is no room for any such doubtful inquiries; on the contrary, it is in the full knowledge that Adam and Eden are gone forever, and that an end of flesh in the world before the flood had come before God, and perished, that He has thus divided a nation from the nations, and separated by genealogy a generation from the families of men; that His own purpose of grace by election might surmount the deluge and the flaming sword. He has therefore brought in promises, and a covenant, and a calling-out, and established these in Abraham and his Seed, which is Christ. He has also set up mediation by Moses, and priesthood in Aaron, so that the dark night of ruin might give place to the morning light, and the great day of atonement. God is adding the glory of kingship to these others, in the person of Solomon, whom He now sets upon the throne of his father David,

and establishes him over the kingdom of Israel. No, God is not unmindful of His judgments in the earth, but in the midst of them He remembers mercy, and works for His own glory.

Nor is He come forth to repeat Himself, or to inaugurate another beginning, with His creatures; but He is bringing out and completing in Solomon and a theocracy, all the reserves of wisdom and grace, which God had kept in His own power, and still postpones for manifested blessing, till the second coming of Jesus-Immanuel, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Solomon was responsible (like Adam) for maintaining these treasures which had been put into his hands, and for using them to the glory of God. Jehovah had thus given out all He had to bestow (except, last of all, His Son), and set up these resources before their eyes in Moses, and Aaron, and David, and the times that went over them. Now, “kingship” is to be displayed in Solomon, and the watchman's cry is heard again, “the morning cometh, and also the night.” And is this what God is doing with the elect king, in the midst of His elect nation? Is He in very deed making one more display of Himself, and one more appeal to them, and this almost the last, before the night, that terrible night, comes again, and He sets the best thing aside that He can do for the welfare of His earthly people? Is all this to share the same fate as Eden, and must God come into it all one day, and profane His sanctuary, and His throne, and His kingdom by casting all down to the ground? Alas! He has done all this, and Jerusalem “is trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” What a lesson does this historical picture present to Judah and Israel, and the civilized world, in their forgetfulness of God, and in this day of their boasted progress and prosperity, whilst they are in a mistaken defiance, making out histories for themselves by their self-sufficiency.

But the judgment of God, by driving out or casting down, plucking up or cutting off, never comes in to take revenge on departure from Himself, and what He creates or bestows, till He can say, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” If we repeat the inquiry in the light of this patient consideration of God, and yet of human responsibility, under such accumulated grace and outward prosperity, as marked the ascent of King Solomon to the throne of his glory, the answer must be plain. And what would this answer be but this—that the moment of his grandest elevation was the one of his greatest danger, and the ripest hour of his vast power and dominion was but the precursor to his declension and downfall. And why? Because, though an elect vessel, like the nation was an elect nation, yet was he but a man in the flesh, and still in a sinful nature, outside Christ and the Holy Ghost.

The time was not come for them to stand before God, as we now do, upon the ground of accomplished and eternal redemption by the work of Christ upon the cross. Nor could “they reckon themselves dead unto sin,” and to the law, by the body of Christ, and be thus made “free to be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that they might bring forth fruit unto God.” However favored Solomon might be, and was, yet it was by endowment; whilst as the head and king of Israel, he was responsible by his own obedience, in the position he held, for maintaining them in unbroken relationship with Jehovah, their Lord. These great drawbacks, as to his manhood, made him a celebrity by what God had heaped upon him, and not because he had earned them, or was competent to retain them as part of his own being. There is only One—the Son of God—of whom it can personally be said, “Thou art worthy to receive all wisdom, and glory, and riches, and power,” and He had not yet come into this world (though promised) by the mystery of the incarnation. A heavy thousand years had to roll round, weighted by the saddening tale of the

decline and fall of a theocracy, in the midst of Israel; and made sadder by their rejection of the marvelous ministry of the prophets (even though accompanied by their lamentations and tears), before the fullness of the time came for God to send forth His Son. The Messiah, their only Savior and Deliverer, will then be the light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

The first man, Adam, in innocency, and in the image of God (before history had began), was at home in an unspotted creation, with Him who made it; yea, God walked with the creature He had formed for His delight in the cool of that unclouded day. When all this was lost, and marred by Satan and sin, and it repented God that He had made man upon the earth, and the world that then was perished by a flood, God, in His sovereignty, called out one and another to walk with Him, upon promise, and blessing, and future happiness to be established in an elect seed, according to covenant. What else could He do in wisdom and grace, when all present and created good, even a paradise, had been forfeited, and the gates of Eden closed—yea, man driven out; and God had retired into His own place to consider, leaving a curse behind Him, in righteous judgment, upon a groaning creation? Adam's world has been since buried by the waters of a deluge, weighed down, moreover, by the violence and the corruption of the millions who inhabited it. In this world, since the flood (or Noah's world), God formally called out Abraham to begin this new line of His election, as the genealogies of the First Book of Chronicles have taught us. These have given birth to, and perhaps close up, this illustrious line of elect vessels with Solomon, till Matthew and Luke add the generations which bring in the Immanuel.

We have taken this short review of two worlds, in order to give weight, or prominence to Solomon, the man of endowments and attainments, conferred upon him by God, in contrast with all who ever were before, or shall come after him; and it is with this wonderful Solomon, in whom the expectations of the world culminate, the Second Book of Chronicles begins, with its bright morning in Jerusalem, followed by its dark night of captivity in Babylon. He is before the world, and before the heavens, and all who dwell in them, to stand or fall in the place where never man was seen before, in royal majesty and imperial power. He is responsible for their use to Him who bestowed them; and yet, having this unheard—of opportunity of bringing glory to God, and blessing to the ten thousands of Israel and the nations, by their rightful exercise, what a new era in the history of God and mankind is in view, and depending on the fealty and obedience of the only competent man, too, upon the earth, for he has not his fellow Adam was perfect as a created being, and a creation hung upon his allegiance to the Creator. Solomon is perfect, not as a creature, but set apart as an elect vessel to receive the favor of God, and to be enriched by him in mind, body, and estate, so that, by reason of his endowments and attainments, “he was wiser than all men, and his fame was in all the nations round about.” What an unparalleled hour in history! what an opportunity for the wisest of men! what an occasion for the world in its throes, and under the bondage of corruption, if it could be delivered by superhuman wisdom and power!

Nevertheless, in the counsels of the Godhead, this problem had to be wrought out, as to the competency, or incompetency of a fallen man, even when sustained and endowed to the utmost, to hold and to use what was entrusted to his hands for the glory of God, and his own happiness, and the welfare of his fellow-creatures? The great men of successive ages may well be dumb before this greater man of a previous age. The bold men of the nineteenth century may stagger, and bow their heads before the man “whom God magnified exceedingly” three thousand years ago, and respecting whom He said, there never again should be his like. It was God who brought

out this problem before the world (of the insufficiency of the creature), and that it might not be left an open question for generations which should come after, but be settled in the life-time, and by the living ways, of no one less than king Solomon and this most favored nation. If, besides all these endowments, men speak of genius, let them, but they must pale before him who uttered three thousand proverbs, and whose songs were a thousand and five. If they rejoice in the created works around, and think themselves masters of all the eye can see, or the heart desire—let them, but they must give place to him “who withheld not his heart from any joy.” He spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

Whether one sees him on the throne in government, and exercising justice and judgment; or in the temple, before the altar of the Lord; or upon the scaffold of brass, as an intercessor and a worshipper, between Jehovah and the commonwealth of Israel—all is as complete and exact as the laws of the sanctuary and of the kingdom demanded. Indeed these were the birth-place and great beginnings of a history, and of a name that rose up in its strength and brightness over the haze and darkness of a vast universal declension—like the sun that dispels the gloom, and drives away the mists, till it mounts into its own supremacy, and rules and makes the day. “Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh, and also the night.” God acknowledged and put His own seal upon all this opening prosperity, by the glory that dwelt in the temple, and filled the land. “And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand which is on the sea-shore.”

Who would think of, or dare to repeat, an Adam, sinless and in innocence, with whom God was so close, that there was no room for an intermediate providence, nor any necessity for its exercise? Are God and men still so one as to walk and be together, or have they ever since been separated off by sin in a fallen creation? Nay, not only has He closed up all such direct and immediate intercourse between Himself and the creature, but measured the distance, and maintains it still, as a God superintending all things by His providence. He is sitting in the heavens in His righteousness, and they upon the earth, with the curse and the sweat of the brow upon every child of Adam, and the groaning of a blighted creation all around. Moreover, who would think of, or dare to repeat, a Solomon, not sinless like Adam, but sinful in his nature, as born of the men who fell, yet made illustrious, and made a celebrity, by conferred gifts and endowments which he received of God, and which were commanded in a moment of time to rest upon him, in answer to his prayer?

Men may possess the same faculties, but where and when have any stood forth as he, to be wondered at, not because of their attainments, but some who were not a Solomon one instant, and became one the next, by having had to do distinctly and directly with God? May it not be said, yea, must it not be admitted, that first-class education, and its necessity in the nineteenth century, cannot measure the distance, much less do away with the gulf, between those who are under its high pressure, and an endowed Solomon; just as, for other reasons, a kind and a merciful Providence maintains a distance now between the Creator and His creatures? Did Solomon become one under tutors and governors, and by the slow and measured steps of examinations, and degrees, and honors, as the hardly-won fruit of collegiate study, which are accepted in the present day as the high road to advancement and preferment, for place or power, in the world as it now is? No; he was the wise man, made such out-of-hand, by God, in a moment, just as truly as

when He breathed into Adam's nostrils, and he became a living soul—the image representation of God in manhood; but where and what is he? In due time Solomon closed up the progressive history of this elect people according to the flesh, in the generations and genealogies of the First Book of Chronicles. But who and what was he in the Second Book? The morning cometh, it is true, but also the night. Alas “the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.” The allegiance which was due from the creature to the Creator, in the creation, but which was violated and broken up by Adam's sin; is come to naught a second time in Solomon, who was seated in glory and power upon the throne of God's government in the earth. The crown has fallen from his head, and the scepter from his hand, and the kingdom from under his feet, and the two staves of beauty and bands has God broken asunder, “for Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.”

An important interval, or dispensation, yet remains to be noticed in the history and ways of God with men, between Acjam, without any government, before government (like Providence) could have any place; and Solomon, as the representative and administrator of a theocracy in the city of the Great King, where government in righteousness was indispensable, on account of the holiness of God, as well as of sin and the flesh. Intermediately the law was given by, Moses, and proclaimed, yea, established the claims of Jehovah upon the elect nation for the worship and devotion which were His due. Besides this, they were morally responsible for obeying and loving Him for all the goodness and mercy which, as the God of providence and the Jehovah of Israel, they had known, together with their fathers, all the way from the house of bondage to the Canaan of rest, into which He had brought them. At any rate, if this were a problem, it had to be wrought out into proof, like the others; for they had entered into covenant with God, and had returned their answer by Moses, at Sinai, “All that the Lord hath commanded us, we will do.” This was, in fact, the time of the world's probation, brought to light, it is true, in a handful of people and a sample nation, but under all the advantages and encouragements to love God, and their neighbor as themselves, which He could introduce by outward prosperity and plenty, and by calling them up to Jerusalem, that they might keep “the feasts of the Lord” with Himself, and find their joy in His presence. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit, wherefore He was turned against them, and became their enemy; and now, what is become of this highly-favored and select nation, and when are the feasts of Jehovah kept, or with whom? and where is Jerusalem, the city of the Great King? Alas! Ichabod is the sole epitaph, and the one record of forfeited blessing, and of departed glory—from the drawn sword in the hand of the cherubim at the garden-gate, to the trodden-down Jerusalem by the feet of the Gentiles.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 210

Watchman, What of the Night? 3

Isa. 21:11.

(Concluded from page 110.)

It is time to ask now, what is the solemn result of these trials and tests of such a distinguished man, and what our lessons by God in this history, and of His ways with a nation, in the brief record of his reign? Or rather, what should be the effect of this great proof in such a king, and of an elect people, when gathered round God Himself, with His glory in the temple, and this endowed man upon His throne, as the guarantee (if there could be one outside Christ) of permanent and universal blessing? Ought not the leaders and great men of modern times to allow such an one to challenge them all by the question, even if they do not like to answer him, “What can the man do that cometh after the king?” Nay, is it not presumption, if not a presumptuous sin, for the men of this period to suppose the problem of what man is, and is worth, in his relation to God, and to his neighbor, and to the world, to be an open question still, and left for them to solve? This, too, in the face of the prophecy which challenges all, “What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have not done?” Do any of them come up to Solomon, or can they excel God? Will the scientists, and the men of mark and renown, say they are at an advantage, because experimenting amongst a non-elect people, instead of an elect one, which was so beloved, and placed under law to God? Will they tell us it is better to begin the problem in the midst of Gentile nations, with whom God does not stand in any relationships of this kind, than with the nation which He chose, and brought to Himself?

Do they think it in their favor to make laws of their own, and establish various forms of government, and set up thrones of their devising in their modern cities, rather than to bow their heads, and learn their lesson from the ruins of Jerusalem, and the cast-off people they are treading under their feet? Do they judge it to be in their favor never to have had a Solomon, qualified and endowed as he was, and under the direct guidance of God, that so they may be free of Him, and be left to their own intentions and expediencies, under Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon? If the reigning emperors and kings, with their empires and dynasties, are agitated and perplexed, or sometimes overthrown in the struggle between absolutism and democracy, or betwixt imperialism and a republic, do they think this uncertainty an advance upon the theocracy of the God of Israel? They will do well to remember that the divine form and principles of political economy, and of jurisprudence, were long ago determined by God, and are indelibly written by His finger in the Pentateuch; as well as the patterns and form of the temple, and its priesthood and worship, in the two books of Chronicles. Neither the throne nor the altar has been overlooked. Be it so, that all this greatness and magnificence have come to naught, with an elect people, who had God in their midst, and as a wall of fire around them; what can those do who come after? Is it better to be without Him, and safer and wiser to take counsel with their own hearts, that their dignity and honor may be publicly, and far more fatally, seen to proceed from themselves?

If it be further said, Yes, but this Second Book of Chronicles ends with the captivity of the people, the carrying away of all the golden vessels into Babylon, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the transfer of governmental power from Israel to the Gentiles, and “the morning cometh and also the night,” is fulfilled in their history; be it so. But what, I repeat, is such a lesson for them “who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, and without God in the world” —who are non-elect, unendowed, and uncovenanted? Will such come out into history at a premium on their predecessors? We shall gee. In the meanwhile the elect nation and her kings are set aside by Jehovah.

If we here close up their two books of Chronicles for another and a brighter day in the millennium of their history, and go with the children of the captivity, it will be only to see that God abides faithful to His own, and advances Daniel into a new place in this strange country. He becomes the prophet of woe to Babylon. The captive Israelite is the one who is anointed by Jehovah to reveal to the great king Nebuchadnezzar, as the head of the Gentiles, all the secret of his dynasty, and its destiny and doom. The four grand divisions of the golden image, which troubled the monarch in his night visions; and which include what is now called “the civilized world,” but which none of the wise men could divine to their master, are brought to light by this child of the captivity. It is Daniel's hand which thus early writes “Ichabod” upon all the grandeur of the king and his kingdoms. So distinguished is this elect vessel in a strange place.

The man who shines brightest among the nobles, and imports a grandeur and a glory into Babylon to which it was a total stranger, is this Israelite; for Daniel stands in a holy luster, be it in the palace, or at the gate of the king, or when in the lions' den. This is the great charm in their opening history, that Daniel eclipses all. The transfer of power from Jerusalem, or rather the use of it when thus committed to Nebuchadnezzar, put the sentence of death upon his palace and his kingdom, and indeed upon himself. It was but taking Jonah into the ship. God was angry with him for his pride, and sent him into the fields to eat straw like an ox, till his nails became as birds' claws. In like manner the transport of the golden vessels from the temple of Solomon to Babylon, and their profanation at the feast of Belshazzar, brought out the hand-writing upon the wall, “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin,” which put the sentence of death into him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed. So, again, when the king of Babylon had set up the idol-image, and the fiery furnace was prepared for any who refused to fall down and worship it, the three elect children of the captivity were thrown therein, but only to be joined by another, and that one like unto the Son of God. The sentence of death was transferred from the three elect ones, who were in the flames, but not burnt, and gave birth to the decree, that whosoever spake anything amiss of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, should be cut in pieces. Alas for Babylon and its great idolatrous king at the commencement of this history, and for his non-elect and unchronicled descendants! Thou art this head of gold, and that crowned head driven out of the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and debased to the level of a beast!

But perhaps, as an empire, their future is brighter, though he must be a bold man, and something more, who would stop us to raise such a question upon the four beasts, or the ten toes of Daniel's prophetic image, in this nineteenth century. Such an one must be forgetful of their great iron teeth, devouring much flesh, to which all the newspapers bear witness, and which all the world knows. Only let them look at the future in the records of Daniel, or in the Apocalyptic visions of Johns and demand in their turn, “Watchman, what of the night?” as being their two books of Chronicles—and

what are they? The hand-writing in detail of that selfsame finger which wrote their history in brief upon the palace-wall of Belshazzar says, their “morning cometh, and also their night.” They rise up as a great host of people, “without God,” at their beginning in Babylon, and “without hope in the world,” at their close. Idolatry, maintained by absolutism, was the rise of the power, in the hand of the great monarch, at the first, and proved by the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up, and commanded all people to worship.

But perhaps, religiously, their future is different, and they may call on the living and true God, and be better at the latter end—nay, vain is any such expectation, for Rev. 13 says, “He had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” Blasphemy and profanity were in the palaces of Babylon at the first, when the finger wrote upon the wall, and at the close, the hand-writing in Rev. 13 declares, “He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” Their last end is even worse than the first.

But perhaps, politically, the history of imperial power in the hands of the four great empires, of gold, silver, brass, and iron, may bring up some correctives; not so either, for these metals, in their fourfold character, prove the deterioration of delegated power, and at the close, a “stone, cut out without bands, falls upon the ten toes of this image, and it is destroyed—yea, becomes like chaff upon the summer threshing-floor.” But yet again, Babylon and its descendants may have “hope in their end?” Not so either, “for the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of burning” ascending up. “Without God” at the beginning, and “without hope in the world” at the close, embraces these nineteen centuries of Nebuchadnezzar power, or Gentile greatness. Their doom and utter destruction stand out in contrast with the chronicles and prophecies of the elect nation of Israel, “to whom still pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever.”

If we now turn from these prophecies to their present history, it yet remains to see how Israel and the Gentiles answered God, when He woke the world up once more by the light of “the day-spring from on high,” and by the songs of the angelic hosts at the coming in of Christ, the Son of the Father, by the mystery of the incarnation. “Last of all he sent to them his son.” The question is no longer the competency of Adam to retain a paradise upon the sole condition of allegiance to the Creator; nor of the sufficiency of Solomon to govern the elect nation in Jerusalem, with Jehovah in covenant relation to the throne and the temple; nor of the Gentiles, in their use of power for the glory of God, when transferred to Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar; but will they reverence the Son, and welcome Him as the Savior, the King of kings, and Lord of lords? “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to men,” was the new song given out from the heavens to the earth when Jesus was born. Another morning is come; must another night succeed this? Deliverance and blessing were to issue forth from heaven, seeing that all hands were incompetent below to keep what God had bestowed, or to retain the place of honor and power in which He had set them for His glory. The groan of creation—the captivity of Israel—the idolatry of Babylon—left no hope in the world. The cry of the oppressed once more went up to God, and so the multitude of the heavenly hosts brought in their melodious anthem, and piped unto them of the Child born—would

they dance? God had yet one Son, and He so loved the world He had made, and the men in it, that He sent Him forth as the Redeemer of Israel, and the Savior of the world.

The innocent first man—the endowed king—the elect nation, on the one hand; or the head of gold, and the image, in its continuation of silver, brass, iron, and clay, on the other; had forfeited their thrones and dominions, their kingdoms, and their scepters and crowns—can they appreciate deliverance, or will they yet do worse? Yes, far worse than all, for when they saw the Son, they said, This is the heir, come, let us kill Him, and seize upon His inheritance. And so they cast Him out of the vineyard and the world too, vociferating up to God, We will not have this man to reign over us, and that man the Son of the Highest—yea, God manifest in the flesh. The whole world had grown so old in wickedness, that it could not estimate such an intervention in supreme goodness as God sending forth His Son to save the lost and the undone. Herod, the king, was troubled by tidings of the birth of Jesus the Savior, and all Jerusalem with him. The high priest, Caiaphas, rent his clothes, and Pilate washed his hands of innocent blood, when his lips had given sentence against Him. The Son of God, the incarnate One, come down to walk with men upon the earth, and to go about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, has been refused, cast out, and crucified. The trial and the test at this time were not, “Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart, and thy neighbor as thyself,” but will men consent to be loved by Him who has come after them in love? Alas! they refused to be loved by God, and compel even Jesus to say of them, “For my love they are my adversaries.”

They take Him out of the manger, and lead Him to the brow of the hill, and then to the cross, where they crucify Him between two thieves; and God has looked down upon all this. Yet the earth moves upon its axis still, and a God in providence makes the sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust. What a God He is! If mankind ever had the sense of what was righteous and true in His sight, they would have accepted the sentence of death in Adam's transgression, when confirmed by the flaming sword at the garden-gate; and if they carried the sense of grace, they would cling to the promise of deliverance through the Seed of the woman, and shadowed forth by the coats of skin which God made, and wherewith He clothed them. But it was not till four thousand years had told their sad tale to the heavens, and all who dwell therein, of the growing distance and enmity below, that the cross bore witness against the world itself by the rejection of Christ as its king, and of Jesus as the Savior come to seek and save those that are lost. The earth and its inhabitants had long ago broken down, when tried representatively, before the law, and the kingdom of Israel. Then God called it out into His presence, to learn its insufficiency for restoration and re-establishment under such a government as He had set up in Jerusalem. The world itself, and all its pretensions (and at their highest and best too), had suffered collapse, when its representative man and representative nation failed towards God, and wrought no deliverance in the earth.

Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, with the ten toes, may deny this great and summary collapse as conclusive, and expand and inflate themselves and their kingdoms, as they have done, and are still doing, but only to suffer a heavier judgment and doom by their experiment, and break down finally under the responsibility of power in their own hands. Worse than this, far worse; for it was under the power and rule of the fourth beast of the image that Caesar's representative acted, and that the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus with his spear. Human enmity came forth, instead of love to God, and wickedness had found its victim at last in the Son of God's grace, and their

common outlet at His cross and in His blood. This was the crisis, and a night of darkness. What must the Judge of the earth do now? Can there ever be a morning again? Will He submerge the world by water a second time, in righteous anger? or will He destroy it by fire? God had a remedy after the deluge, and brought in the law, and an economy by Moses, whom He installed as the mediator between God and men. Has He yet a resource? Besides this, it was the school-time, when the Levites taught the people, and instructed them in the right ways of the Lord. Israel was at school, and under its schoolmaster. After (or rather with) an elaborate and wondrous system of education in this sample and elect nation, He established government by a theocracy in the midst of this experimental people. The best that God could do with men as they were, and the choicest sample of mankind too, came to naught, and they were driven out of Canaan. Neither education nor government availed. After Jerusalem came Babylon and the Gentiles, and their one only point of agreement, as determined by Caiaphas and Pilate, was to condemn Christ, and crucify Him. This was the cross, where the whole world, which had broken down morally, rose up in defiance and rebellion against God, and against His Anointed. Wickedness and hate have overstepped themselves, by reason of Him who was their object and victim.

A climax has come, and the whole world is in blood-guiltiness before God; but He will not, yea, cannot, determine this new enormity by water, as He once did, nor by melting fire, as He will do at the last day. And why? Because He had His purposes of grace and redemption to bring to light at the cross, and by means of the precious blood they had shed. That act, which was the outlet of man's hatred of God and of Christ, becomes the door for the inlet of His infinite love to sinners. He will not take up the crucifixion of His Son as a murder at His cross, though it be so horrible, nor be ruled by it in vengeance to-day, but use it as a door into the acceptable year of the Lord. By means of the cross God call proclaim forgiveness to the betrayers and murderers, in proof that, high as the world's hate rose, His love was yet higher, and overreached it, even to pardon it, through faith in the atoning blood, which was the very proof of their guilt. In this forbearance and grace the Father and the Son are one; for, as when the woman whom the Pharisees brought to Jesus in her sin—in the very act, as they said—to be stoned, and He would not condemn her, but stooped down, and wrote on the ground, as though He beard them not; so has God, in grace, been acting during this long day of patience and long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance. After the blood-guiltiness at the cross God comes out in grace, beginning at Jerusalem; and this is indeed as the light of another morning— “a first day” —and becomes the time of salvation, through the blood and death of Christ, during which God refuses to hear the accusation, or enter into judgment upon this sin with mankind. There is an alternative still between God and man at the cross—salvation or judgment, and herein is wisdom, to be of one mind with Him, and thankfully accept justification by faith in the blood of Christ; and eternal life, through His death and resurrection to the right hand of God as the head of the new creation. Union, by the Holy Ghost, with the Son of man there, and in the glory, is the new position which the gospel of God proclaims and offers to the chief of sinners. Christ is gone!

In conclusion, we may and must ask, Is this alternative accepted for “the obedience of faith among all nations?” Are they rejoicing in the glad tidings of God's salvation, and looking for the second coming of Christ, to take all those who believe up to the Father, as redeemed by the blood of His Son, and to be manifested as the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ? The Lord and the glorified saints are the appointed kings and priests unto God, and they will order and put the world

all right, when He takes to Himself His great power, and reigns on the throne of His glory, as the greater than Solomon, to establish His interests in righteousness and peace on the earth.

“The morning cometh, and also the night,” and it is at the dawn of another and a new dispensation from above, by the coming of the Lord; and in the face of such an administration as this will be, it is that the antagonistic path completes itself, into which the god of this world has led the counselors and the great men of these nineteen centuries. Do any inquire, as the watchman bide them, what the night-time is of this nineteenth century? and what is the fatal and final night? The answer is this: “So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” Moreover, “she had a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations, and filthiness of her fornication.” Isaiah's watchman cried out in his day, “If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come;” and Daniel the prophet, as well as the Apocalyptic apostle, the two watchmen who chronicle the approaching end of this age to us, cry, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear,” for the time is at hand l John, who describes the depth of the darkness of this horrible night-time, as well as its coming and closing judgments, cries out, “The ten horns which thou sawest upon [and] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” Once more, the watchman cries, “And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

In the by-gone chronicles of God's actings with men, probation and their education were His own care, till they “changed the truth of God into a lie,” and then, judicially, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge.” These, as well as the theory and establishment of government and rule over the nations, are things of the past, and on the page of history; and yet these are the very subjects which the senates and parliaments have re-commenced, and which occupy them in their midnight sessions, as if they were out upon a voyage of discovery. How tedious and disappointing they find it, none knows so well as themselves, as one premier supplants his fellow and forms another cabinet, or dissolves the existing house of assembly and introduces a different policy; nor will we stop to inquire, for pity's sake. Enough for us to know they are in the darkness of the night, and laboring for very vanity. They have the wrong man in hand to make better, and the wrong world to garnish—the Cain, who went out from the presence of God at first, and, lastly, Barabbas instead of Jesus, when they cast Him out and killed Him—the God who came back into it in the person of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. Woe be to the world that refused the mystery of the Child born and put Him into a manger, and, when wearied of Him, took Him down from the cross, and offered Him a sepulcher! Life and peace to a world, in which redemption out of its ruins is preached through the death and resurrection of Christ, is God's only remedy, by the Holy Ghost sent down from the Father and the Son in heaven, in the gospel of His grace, and in which world a free pardon is proclaimed through faith in the precious blood of Christ which they shed.

This refusal of God's only resource, as the Judge of the whole earth, is like demanding a new trial (if one may thus speak) at the throne of His Majesty, where the rejected Son is sitting, “till his enemies are made his footstool.” This demand is boldly maintained, moreover, by a refusal to accept the humbling fact of the worthlessness of man, as proved by his breakdown educationally in the school of Moses, or under the economy in Immanuel's land, when King Solomon reigned over the nations; or, finally, by the enmity and outbreak of the civilized world against God and His

Anointed at the cross. In their eyes He is still without form or comeliness, for man and the world and the devil are the same; neither is there any beauty in the Son, or value in His work of redemption, that they should desire Him or it. If any think it may be otherwise now, and that national Christianity, together with the pretentious Congress in eastern and western Europe, may yet float these nations; or give them favor in the sight of God by the mockery of their established but contradictory religions; one only need point any such to the boasted “union” of the Church and State throughout the Roman earth, to falsify every expectation of “a morning without a cloud” from the mother of harlots and her daughters in these alliances with the beast. “Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!” J. E. B.

Chapter 211

Wherefore Comfort One Another With These Words

1 Thess. 4:18.

The blessed and animating hope of the Lord's return for His saints is so definitely marked in scripture, in varied and striking ways, that its super-eminent importance cannot for a moment be contested by any one who is truly subject to the word. With it is bound up the fulfillment of God's eternal purposes, for the glory of Christ and of those who are His at His coming. And by it, as a motive and object before the saints, the Holy Ghost seeks to make good to our souls all the present ways of God—detaching our hearts from every un-Christ-like thing, and connecting our affections with Himself in always-increasing conformity to His own image, till He come. No object could be more blessed, as an object, than this consummation in glory then, and no motive, as a motive, more powerful in swaying the affections and the life now. It eclipses by its unique blessedness to the heart, every other desire that the revelation of the glory has formed in the soul of the saint, and it equally transcends in its present spiritual power every other means of practical sanctification to God.

This being established in our souls, there is little difficulty in apprehending why the Spirit of God has given such limited instruction upon the state of the disembodied spirit of the believer.

Man in innocence was in his full perfection and maturity as a creature, body, soul, and spirit, in an earthly paradise. Man in glory will be equally in the full perfection and maturity of his new order of being, body, soul, and spirit in the paradise of God. Of the former of these, Adam had experience as the first man, but only for a brief moment; of the latter, the second Man is now the ever-living witness, the glorified One for eternity!

These two things are normal states or conditions according to God, and everything else abnormal. Man's state as a sinner in the world alive in the body, is an anomaly; and equally so, if he have died, that he is not yet in the lake of fire. On the other hand, the saint alive in the body in a world like this, is an anomaly; and equally so, if he have fallen asleep, that he is not yet in the Father's house.

Body, soul, and spirit in the lake of fire is no anomaly to the sinner who has perished in his sins, or to God, who, in holy horror and judgment of thorn, has cast him therein. Solemn thought!—the anomaly ends there The rationalist and the skeptic may reason as they will that an eternal hell is an anomaly and a blot in the ways of God; the truth is that the anomaly ends where they say it begins. And so for us, beloved reader, the anomaly of divine life as now exhibited where the curse prevails, and that other anomaly of unclothed spirits not yet clothed upon, these alike end in the glory which comes to us with the coming of Christ, and in the crowning blessedness of the Father's house.

Presuming that our first parents became believers, they only of the human family will have passed through all these four states of condition of blessing: (1), innocent beings in Eden; (2), believers in the world; (3), unclothed spirits with Christ; (4), glorified saints with the Father. None but they

passed through the first; many since then have passed from the second into the third, and are waiting for the fourth; while we who are now in the second are looking for the fourth, but may have to reach it through the third. We know, however, that some will not—even those who will be remaining alive when the Lord comes, and who will undergo that instantaneous change from the image of the earthy to the image of the heavenly, which will translate them from the second to the fourth, in the same moment, and by the same resurrection-power and sovereign grace as will lift the sleeping saints from their graves, uniting the spirit with the body, the latter thus passing from the third to the fourth, or final, perfect and eternally glorified condition of the believer. For this, our true and proper hope, we wait and we watch, having the eye now filled with the beauty of those cheering rays which reach us from “the bright and the morning Star,” passing through the night's long vigil as “they that watch for the morning.”

When this is fully understood, no surprise will be felt at the Holy Ghost's measure of silence upon the subject of the condition of the saint's spirit after leaving the body; for clearly that condition is what may be termed abnormal. Moreover, the uniform design of the Holy Ghost since Pentecost being to foster and encourage in the soul as a cardinal element in Christianity, a salutary sense of the proximity of the Lord's coming to take to Himself all those who are His, it would have fatally marred the desired effect had more than passing reference been made to the disembodied state. Be it noted, therefore, that it forms no subject of special teaching by the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, nor of the Holy Ghost since He was glorified; but what we gather is of an incidental character, yet of precious and inestimable value. In whatever is said, there is everything to sustain and solace the hearts of those saints who appear to be about to leave the body, and to cheer and comfort those who are, or probably are about to be, bereaved mourners refusing every consolation that is not drawn from purely divine springs.

The apostles had looked for the Lord to come in their lifetime, and when they left the body, transmitted the same sublime hope to those who came after. Thus this precious heirloom has continued to cheer, more or less, the hearts of fifty or sixty successive generations of saints, carrying its benignant and sanctifying effect all along its course to these last days, culminating in the midnight cry, “Behold the Bridegroom,” which went forth some half-century ago, re-awakening in the hearts of the saints what is due to the Person of Christ, and then necessarily the transcending blessedness of His return to receive His heavenly ones to Himself.

But as each succeeding generation has augmented from its ranks the imposing company of those who have died in the Lord, there cannot but be a deepening interest in their state, and it becomes us, while refusing all the sentimentalities and vapid conceptions of men's minds, to accept with thankfulness whatever may be found in, or soberly inferred from, the word of God. Two reasons hate already been adduced, and others may possibly occur to the reader, why so little direct teaching has been given us upon this subject—first, the anomalous character of the condition in question; and, second, the nearness of the Lord's coming, as the commanding thought of the Spirit of God, forbidding any such diversion to this subordinate and temporary state as would be calculated to weaken the hold of the soul upon its true and proper hope—the greater and more magnificent thing, glory together with Christ!

There are two errors, opposite in their character, which may here be fittingly noted: one is, that on the death of the believer the spirit sleeps until the resurrection morning; the other, that the spirit

passes into glory at once, as Toplady sang,

“More happy, but not more secure,

The glorified spirits in heaven;”

or, as our Wesleyan brethren say, “sudden death, sudden glory.” But scripture never speaks of spirits sleeping, nor of spirits glorified. The sleep of the saint is the sleep of the body in the grave, and the glorified saint is a glorified body re-united to the spirit when the Lord comes to raise the dust, or change the living bodies, of His redeemed ones.

Meanwhile scripture affords more than sufficient evidence that the disembodied spirit is by no means in a state of torpor, apathy, or oblivion. It is simply monstrous to maintain, in the teeth of the Lord's word to the thief, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” that when relieved of this “cumbrous clay,” and our ransomed spirits with Christ, they will be oblivious of the untold blessedness of being in that new and singular way present with aim. Were it so, it were altogether preferable to abide in this scene, but how, then, could Paul have said, to depart and to be with Christ is eversomuch better than even a life on earth which “is Christ"? Then, on the contrary, the spirit will be in a state of blessedness, far, very far, transcending our present blessing, and, if not in that rapturous bliss which belongs to glory, will be in the happy serenity and profound quietude of an eternally-unruffled peace, having, above all, the joy and the gladness of the Lord's own presence, Without a distraction from within or without. Here we are absent from the Lord, there should be present with Him. Here at home in the body, there at home with the Lord. Here our spirits enjoy communion with Him, despite the character of this sinful scene and the poor sinful bodies in which we tabernacle—how much more in that secure retreat where it will flow on without let in unimpeded and unbroken current. Every bit of knowledge of Himself gained here, every bit of likeness to Him acquired in the scene of His refusal (the hindering body having been put off), will be qualification for enjoying with enhanced susceptibility to every spiritual emotion, and therefore more blessedly than ever before—Himself and the joys and secrets of His loving heart. Oh, what blessed confidences are shared, and what bosom-joys are found, in the unclouded presence of our adorable Lord and Christ, when every hurtful, hindering thing, as to ourselves and our surroundings, has been swept away forever!

How graphically does the apostle speak of his own estimate of the dead weight the body imposes, when he says that in our earthly tabernacle-house we groan, being burdened (2 Cor. 5); this is the language in which the tell-tale spirit speaks of the encumbrance which we carry about in earth's dense atmosphere; how it longs, too, to be invested with its house from heaven when mortality shall be swallowed up of life! For this there was ardor of desire—ardently desiring to have put on, or clothed ourselves with, our house which is from heaven. (The English reader may possibly demur to the apparent clashing of the two different figurative thoughts concerning the body, it being here regarded at the same time as a suit of apparel we wear, and as a house we occupy; but when it is observed that the expression used in the first verse denotes that our present bodies are but temporary dwellings, tabernacles, or tents, and when it is known that the camel's-hair cloth of Cilicia of which tents were made was often used for clothing, the incongruity disappears.) But between these two states, the groaning burdened one, and that of being invested in the glorified body, is the disembodied or unclothed state, concerning which the apostle says, “We do not wish for it.” Reflecting that with this state is connected blessing to the saint, rather than glory to Christ,

and that every demonstration of His victory, and its triumphant results to Him and to us waits for the day of glory, we see how fittingly he centers his desire upon the investing of the spirit with its glorified body, when, and not till when, “mortality shall be swallowed up of life!” Yet, though he speaks so clearly as to this, he could not lose sight of the fact, that, so long as we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord; nor does he suppress the deep feeling of his heart, that he would be pleased rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. That this was his deliberate judgment is conclusive from what he writes to the Philippians, that, though living was to him expressed by one word— “Christ” —yet, nevertheless, to die was gain; and blessed as it was to live to Him and for Him, engaged in that wonderful service with which he was entrusted, and which was beyond compare, yet, to depart and to be with Christ was, as to himself, far, “very far, better.” But, being put to the test (as to continuing or departing), he gives the opposite solution to his case, for his devotedness and his self-denial were such, that his choice was governed by what was due to the interests of Christ and the beloved saints, rather than by any interests of his own.

And if to represent and serve Christ in this world in a way suited to His own heart, be indeed the common, but surpassingly wonderful, dignity and privilege of every saint of God, it is clear that where this service is really fulfilled, it is gain to Christ that it should be continued, and every true-hearted, self-denying one may well say, “Be it mine to represent and serve Him here a little while longer, and more efficiently, even until He come.” But if the interests of the saint alone be considered, the conclusion is inevitable, it is very far better to be with Him!

And so, one by one, day after day, from Abel downward, has He aggregated the vast company of His sleeping saints, taking their emancipated spirits into the retirement of that serene enclosure where (1) they participate in the unwonted blessedness of His uninterrupted, unclouded presence; where (2) the highest joy which our spirits have ever yet experienced—their enjoying Himself, is their unbroken, blest employ; and where (3) the brightest anticipation that ever gladdened our hearts here—that of the rapture of our glorified bodies into the presence of the Lord on high—continues to be their blessed hope, but heightened and enhanced a thousandfold. Let the soul select the brightest moment in her history, yet “absent from the body, present with the Lord” will outstrip its blessedness; let the saint recall his richest, sweetest experience of communion with the Lord, or with His saints, yet his new experiences of the presence—joys of Christ will transcend it supremely.

Surely all this is fall of sweetest solace, consolation, and refreshment of spirit for the departing, as well as for any are in trembling anticipation of the poignant sorrows of bereavement. The coming of the Lord is the one bright pole-star in faith's horizon, towards which, as the only luminous point, every such feeling should inviolably converge. The departing one is not entitled to say, “You will meet me where I am going,” for that may never be, but rather, we shall meet in the clouds, and together be welcomed by the Lord Himself in the air. The bereaved one is not entitled to draw his comfort, as David in his day fittingly did, from the reflection, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,” but in the blessed apprehension of what “is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel,” should find his comfort rather in this, that “if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” Sweet, sweet thought! When God brings the Lord Jesus into the air, He will also bring us together to meet Him there, our body of humiliation transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, “into conformity

to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has, even to subdue all things to Himself." "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." R.

Chapter 212

The Lord's Table, and Its Place in the Church

The Epistle to the Romans lays the foundation of Christianity. There, first, we see man, whether Gentile or Jew, a guilty sinner under the judgment of God which awaits him, and God as a justifier through Jesus and His blood; secondly, man, connected with Adam, born in sin, and God a deliverer through the same Jesus, whom He gives as His gift of eternal life. (Rom. 1-7) The fruit is that the Holy Ghost is also given to him that believes, and Rom. 8 shows his full place as being in Christ, and Christ in him, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. In this position he waits for his body of glory, and the deliverance of creation by the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.

1 Corinthians follows in beautiful order. The individual place of the Christian having been settled, his corporate place in the church of God is then seen. We have there the internal condition of an assembly of God laid before us, and the true place the church holds in the midst of the world explained. It is addressed to the assembly of God at Corinth, which is looked at under two aspects, namely, the body of Christ and the temple of God. In chapters i.-x., the church is looked at as the temple of God, and in chapters x.-xiv. as the body of Christ. This double portion is seen in the first few verses, where the saints are first looked at as sanctified in Christ Jest's, and then as those who in every place called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (See chap. i. 1-8.)

The first great point in the epistle is to bring out the three great foundations on which Christianity as a corporate thing is founded; to correct that human wisdom which was acting amongst the saints, and creating Paul, Apollos, and Cephas into heads of schools of opinion, and thus forming sects. These three great foundations of corporate Christianity are, first, the cross of Christ as the judgment of everything of man as looked at in the flesh. (See chap.. i. 18-29.) Second, Christ in glory made unto us wisdom, righteousness, justification, and redemption. (Vers. 30, 31.) Third, the Holy Ghost come down here as the Revealer and Communicator of that wisdom of God, which was written in Spirit-taught words, namely, the scriptures. (Chap. ii. 6-16.) This is Christianity in its foundation-principles as contrasted with the world's wisdom and power.

The fruit of these three great principles that make up Christianity is seen in chapter 3. The temple of God is formed by Paul, the wise master-builder; God had handed over the work of His temple to him to lay the foundation, namely, Christ Jesus, and to other Christians as the builders to build upon it. The walls were being built of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, bay, stubble; and the builders were warned as to the material with which they would build it; but the assembly or the temple was God's, and God the Holy Spirit dwelt in it. All this is brought in as a corrective to the evil of divisions, which was the fruit of that human wisdom that created great philosophers in Greece, as the heads of human opinion and schools of thought. This leaven was working among the saints at Corinth. The true corrective power was for the saints to see that the vineyard was God's, that the building was God's, that they were the temple of God, and that God the Holy Spirit dwelt amongst them as in a house. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were but laborers in the vineyard and in the temple, servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God; but the assembly was His,

not theirs.

Thus we see that, Christ having been rejected of the world, it has been judged by His cross; and God having exalted Him to His right hand in consequence of His obedience unto death, the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and baptized all believers into one body, and builded them together on earth to be His habitation, His temple. How important, then, for the saints in these last days to gather on these principles, to realize the judgment of the flesh, their place in Christ where He is, and their union with Him by the Holy Ghost come down, as members of His body, builded together as God's temple and under God's rule.

It is only as thus gathered that God can in any way own a remnant as His assembly. For where the people of God are united together in any other way than to Christ, the Head of the church in heaven, and where they submit to human rules and ordinances, instead of the Holy Ghost, they are verily a sect; they are not gathered as God's assembly, and He cannot own them as such.

Now the church set up in its responsibility to God is the way in which it is looked at in the Epistle to the Corinthians, especially in the first ten chapters. It is looked at in chapter 3 as the temple of God, founded by Paul, built up by Christian builders, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in it. In chapter 12 it is the body of Christ, as we shall see further on.

Chapter v. introduces us to the assembly of God gathered together to exercise discipline, and the Lord's table is introduced as the place on earth from which the evil that had got into the assembly was to be put away. (See vers. 4, 5, and 7, 8.) Consequently the Lord's table hold a special place, as it were, in God's temple, that is, the then gathered assembly; just as the feast of the passover had its place amongst the Israelites as the memorial of their redemption out of Egypt. At that feast the lamb was slain, the blood was sprinkled, and each household fed on the roasted lamb inside their house, under the shelter of the blood, and at the same time put away all leaven out of their house. So Christ, our passover, has been once sacrificed for us on Calvary's cross, and Christians gather to the Lord's table, on the ground of the blood of Christ, to remember this, and feed on the Lamb slain, which they see by faith in the memorials spread before their eyes, baying put away all evil from amongst them, of which the leaven was the type. (See vers. 6-11.) If any Israelite ate leavened bread, he was cut off from the congregation of Israel; so a Christian who eats the Lord's supper, having fallen into sin morally or doctrinally, ought to be put away from the assembly.

Thus we see that the Lord's table holds a most important place as the gathering place for the assembly of God. It is the memorial of redemption from sin, Satan, and the world, and consequently sin and untruth can have no place there. If it enters as a public known thing, it must be judged and put away, as the leaven was put away from the houses of the children of Israel when they kept the passover. Thus the death of Christ holds a double place; whilst it is that which saves and redeems us, it is at the same time that by which all evil is judged.

Thus the temple of God is kept clean; thus the assembly preserves its character of being an unleavened lump. (Vers. 6, 7.) Formed by the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God on the ground of redemption, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the assembly was a new creation outside the world; it is called practically to walk up to its standing, by exercising discipline and putting away manifested evil from the midst.

This the assembly at Corinth were not doing. A man had committed adultery among them; and, instead of mourning that such a sin was there, and that it was not taken away from them, they were puffed up, and glorying in their gifts. The apostle, therefore, writes to them, and connecting the holy name of Christ with the assembly, and bringing to their remembrance His power for the judgment of the evil, he forces them to do it, not for the destruction of the man's soul, but on the contrary for the destruction of the flesh; the outside thing which he would not judge, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

All this brings out that God's assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth. The world is outside, and God will judge it in the day of judgment; but the responsibility of the gathered assembly is to guard the Lord's character and doctrine; hence discipline must be exercised. There, also, difficult cases amongst the saints should be settled by some wise brother or brethren; for saints should never take their causes before the world's law-courts. (See 1 Cor. 6:19.) The world's law-courts are the place of judgment for the world; but the assembly of God, of which the Lord's table is the place of gathering, is the place of judgment for the children of God.

Chapter 10: 14-22 brings out the more blessed place the Lord's table holds in connection with the communion of the saints, and the unity of the body of Christ. It is the place where the fellowship of the saints with Christ, and His death, and with one another, is exhibited, and that on the ground of the unity of the body of Christ.

The assembly is the body of Christ. (See chap. 11: 12, 13.) The Lord's table is the place where that unity is exhibited by the members, all partaking of the one loaf, the symbol of unity. (See chap. 10: 17.)

This is put in contrast with Israel, and the Gentiles, in chapter 10:18-22. The Israelites, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on the altar of Judaism, showed their fellowship with that system of worship. The Gentiles, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on their altars, showed their fellowship with that system. But they offered to demons, consequently it was fellowship with demon worship.

At the Lord's table the Christian exhibits fellowship with the Lord, and His altar, His death, and that as a member of the body of Christ with the others gathered on that ground. This would show the Corinthians the utter impossibility of mixing up fellowship at the Lord's table with fellowship with devil worship. Thus we see that the Lord's table holds the very central place in Christian worship; so much so that if saints are not gathered as members of Christ's body to that table, there is no exhibition of the church of God in the place. The Lord's table is where the members of Christ are gathered as members of one body, to show it by partaking together of the one loaf, which is the symbol of unity, and where the authority and claims of the Lord are owned. It is the Lord's table. The Lord therefore invites; the assembly, as representing Him there, receives in His name. (Rom. 15:7.)

In chapters 11-15 we have an orderly exhibition of the assembly and its working. Chapter 11: 1-16 gives the introduction to it, in showing God's present order in His creation, and the place the man and the woman hold in regard to it. Thus whilst these verses go wide of the assembly, yet they bring out the place the man and the woman hold in it. And this, too, explains why there are regulations about the praying and prophesying of the woman with her head covered, this having

reference to her place in creation; whilst, inside the assembly, there is the absolute prohibition, in other places, to speak when the assembly is gathered together.

Chapter 11: 17-34 shows plainly that the Lord's supper is the assembly meeting, though the apostle would not allow that the way in which they were celebrating it was to eat the Lord's supper. They were mixing it up with a common meal, and making it a time of feasting, forgetting altogether its real import.

To correct this the apostle lets us into the secret of having had a spiritual revelation from the Lord in glory in reference to the administration of the Lord's supper. Before leaving the world (we know, in fact, before the Lord's death) He instituted the feast, putting it in the place of the passover, which was the memorial of Israel's redemption out of Egypt. But the full revelation of Christianity had not been brought out then. But now the Lord, having been finally rejected by Israel as a nation, had taken a new place at the right hand of God, so that not only was the kingdom of heaven set up in a new form, but the assembly of God, the body of Christ, was formed. The special revelation of this mystery was given to Paul, namely, that Jew and Gentile were not fellow-heirs, members of one body, common partakers of God's promise through Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3) and the Lord's table was the place where the truth was exhibited, as we have seen in chapter x. In the kingdom the Jew always had the first place, and the Gentile was to get the blessing sent through him; but in the body of Christ there is no difference—Jew and Gentile are quickened out of a state of death together with Christ, are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. The cross of Christ ends the enmity; the law of commandments contained in ordinances that kept them apart is abolished, and one new man is formed, united together on earth by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and to Christ the Head in heaven.

The further revelation connected with the unity of the body of Christ did not annul the former institution as given us in Luke by the Lord Himself. In fact we have it renewed from the glory in almost the identical words that we have it in Luke, only with the further light which had come in since the rejection of the Lord. Thus the individual remembrance of the Lord, which is so precious in the original institution, is still there. The little photograph, as it were, of our absent Lord, as pictured in the broken bread, and poured out wine, is handed round to each one. “Do this in remembrance of me,” comes out in all its original freshness. But, besides the original thought of the Lord's absence, is brought in the blessed thought of His coming. “As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” It is the gathering of the family of God at the Lord's supper to remember their absent Lord, to remember His death for them, to show His death till He come. The aspect of the Lord's death is rather His death for us here, which seals to us all the blessings of the New Testament, though also we show His death, which leads us on to the judgment of the flesh. (See verses 26, 27.) In chapter 10 it is fellowship with the sacrifice—we participate together as members of the body of Christ in His death; but here it is more individual—we remember the Lord dying for us, we show His death till He come. But this last thought, as I said, leads us on to the judgment of the flesh, for the flesh killed the Lord; to allow it at the Lord's table, to eat and drink in an unworthy manner, is then to allow that which killed the Lord, and to be guilty of His body and blood. Thus we are led to individual self-judgment. And where there is not this in exercise, the Lord's hand is laid on us in chastisement, sickness or even death, to the end that the flesh in us may be judged.

Chapter 12 brings out the truth of the presence of the, Holy Ghost in the assembly, and His workings in the several gifts He gives to men; then the unity of the body, formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and its working in the members. Thus, the Lord's supper being the great assembly meeting, we are prepared to see there how the Holy Ghost works in the assembly, which is now wholly viewed as the body of Christ, not using one member only (for the body is not one member, but many), but working in the unity of the whole body which should be there exhibited; many members, and yet but one body. Thus the principle of one-man-ministry and many different bodies is entirely set aside. The double principle in the order of God's assembly, is many members, yet working in one body. Chapter 13 shows the true character of Christ and the Spirit, which is love, the true bond of union of the members. Chapter 14 regulates the working of the assembly, for the Corinthians had turned the liberty of the Spirit into license. But all through the principle is, the reality of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, His free workings in the members of the body which He Himself formed, and His character love, which should mark each member. In the assembly the women were to keep silence, for it was not permitted to them to speak.

Thus we have seen in this blessed epistle the assembly in its double aspect of being the temple of God, and the body of Christ. In the former aspect it was the fruit of the wisdom of God in contrast with that human wisdom which was forming sects and parties, following leaders. It was founded on the cross of Christ which judged the flesh, Christ Himself in the glory, God's wisdom and the Holy Ghost come down here as the Revealer and Communicator of that wisdom. In chapter 5 the Lord's table is seen as the gathering place of the assembly on earth, a place from which all evil must be put away, as the leaven from the houses of the Israelites when eating the passover. Thus the assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth, where also amongst wise brethren any difficulties among the saints may be settled. (Chap. 6.) In chapter 10 the Lord's table is seen connected with the thought of the assembly being the body of Christ. There the saints have communication together over the Lord's death. There they exhibit the unity of the body. This also guards them from fellowship with any other false system of worship. In chapter 11 we see the Lord's supper plainly flown forth to be the assembly meeting, yet seen rather in the family aspect of the supper, the saints there individually remembering the Lord's death till He come, and exercising themselves in habitual individual self-judgment before they come there, so that the flesh might not dishonor the Lord. The great thing to realize is that it is the Lord's table—the Lord's supper. The Lord is present in Spirit, though actually absent in body. His authority, therefore, should be owned there. According to the word in Eph. 4:4, 5, there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The ground of gathering is the unity of the body, the center of gathering is the Lord's person, the place of gathering on earth is the Lord's table. Here the Christians gather to be occupied with the Lord Himself, to break bread (Acts 20:7) in remembrance of His death, and to worship the Father through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:6.)

Nay the Lord bless these few thoughts to the reader, that he may be enlightened both as to the true place the church holds, and as to the place the Lord's table holds in connection with it.

A. P. C.

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