BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 15

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 15, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

201 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 15

On 1 Timothy 1:1-4

Of the so-called Pastoral epistles the First of Timothy now claims our attention. It is a solemn charge of the apostle to his young fellow-servant in that place of rule which had been assigned him. Timothy was not an elder, but set to guard the doctrine, order and conduct of the elders as well as of the saints in general. But so distinct is his position from all the modern as well as possible arrangements of Christendom, that one wonders how an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian, or a Congregationalist, can venture to appeal to it. And yet in their opposing systems, they all do cite it with similar confidence, but this, it would appear, proportioned to their failure in intelligence to see its bearing. Men are apt to be more arrogant where they have least reason.

For what analogy can honestly be traced between Timothy's position and that of a diocesan bishop, not to speak of a spiritual baron with claim to control hundreds of clergy in a given area? Development is not faith, but the avenue to corruption, and thus becomes the ruin of that which bears the name of the Lord. Again, Presbyterianism is even more distant than Episcopacy from the church in apostolic times, because it denies or dispenses with a superior authority to ordain, losing sight of the evident truth that power comes from above. Thus the Lord who chose the apostles invested them with title, themselves or by delegates where fit or when requisite, to choose elders for the saints, and appoint deacons chosen by the saints. Never in those days was such a thought as a mere elder ordaining elders. More remote still from the divine idea and primitive practice is the congregational plan of the people choosing their own religious official. All alike depart from the truth in setting aside, not only the direct and constant supply of gifts from the Lord as distinct from local charges, (if these were ever so duly appointed, whereas they are all wrong as we have seen), but the actual presence and free action of the Holy Spirit in the assembly. This they agree to count by-gone state of miraculous power, instead of owning His being with us forever and the consequent abiding responsibility of the Christian body, as long as it goes on here below.

Timothy's charge was in its measure that of an apostolic delegate, besides doing the work of an evangelist or discharging ordinary ministerial functions. He was not only to teach, but to enjoin others not to teach strange doctrines. This is so indelibly graven a frontispiece in the epistle that the difficulty is in understanding how it could be overlooked, if one did not know the eagerness with which men neglect plain truth and catch at appearance to justify themselves in that strange anomaly, unknown to God's word, the minister of a church. Scripture speaks often and seriously of ministry, and we, as believers would honor gift for the Giver's sake, value itself for its exercise of love, and hail it as a priceless blessing for souls. But beyond doubt a minister of Christ and the church is alone according to its spirit and letter; and his responsibility is immediate to the Lord Jesus the Head, though no one ought to question his liability to just scriptural discipline (like other members of His body) for walk or doctrine. But when that innovation came in, it drew another dark shadow with it, most offensive to a rightly taught spiritual mind, that a certain circle of the assembly is his flock, and he is their minister. Man's thoughts always fall short of God's word, and his will recklessly cuts through the most sacred obligations to his own loss and the Savior's dishonor. For the gifts are distributed in the one body, and the elders or overseers set in the flock or church of

God, not each church having its own minister and each minister his church: an arrangement probably framed to correct the jealousy of the minister and the avarice of the flock. It may have been as ancient as you will: what matter if it were of the second or even the first age, if it were not of the Lord through His apostles in His word? Ministry like the church is a divine institution, and therefore is not to alter from its original. We may not have all the church once had; but therefore should we reverently cherish all that remains, which we may be assured is all that best suits our present condition and the Lord's glory, who regulates all in wisdom and love. If the church is morally a ruin (and who that knows what it was would deny the sin and shame of its present state?) He abides ever faithful and true, with all the resources of love, in the seat of power and glory. He will never abdicate, nor even relax, His functions while we need Him. People forget or never knew that He only became Head of the church since He sat down at God's right hand in heaven; and no change has ever since passed over Him, nor can whilst the work of gathering the church is in hand. But it is very and sadly different with the church as His word warned that so it should be; for departure from the faith was to set in, as grievous wolves would also, not sparing the flock; the mystery of lawlessness was to work, men were to have the form of piety denying the power thereof, evil men and imposters would wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Hence we ought to be not at all surprised if even good men be drawn away by their dissimulation, as Barnabas and even Peter in a measure in the very earliest days.

And these pastoral epistles let us into the confidential communications that passed between the wise master-builder and his associates. For government supposes the evils and disorders which need to be checked or exposed, and shows us, not so much what the assembly has to do in such circumstances, but the duty of a man of God like Timothy or Titus. It does not follow that these epistles were at once the common property of all saints. They were addressed to individuals in a special place, and may only have been copied and circulated later on when the difficult and delicate matters which drew them forth had passed away. The truths and exhortations would always abide, even if no one could claim the peculiar place to which prophecy designated Timothy as it had Paul and Barnabas in their place before him.

“Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus according to command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy genuine child in faith: grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ver. 1, 2.)

The character of the epistle accounts for the expression. Paul is a “called” apostle, as in Romans, as in 1 Corinthians; nor this “by the will of God” nor as in the varying forms of his other letters, but it is “apostle according to command of God.” The holy propriety of the language is plain when we remember that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in words taught of Him; that it was for others rather.

It is important to heed and understand the way in which God is here presented, as in the epistle to Titus— “God our Savior,” a blessed title of relation to all mankind. Without this, church government ever tends to be dry and narrow. Timothy was to regard God thus that his heart might be kept large and fresh, notwithstanding the details of care for the assembly in general or for individuals, whatever their position, around him The coming, and above all the cross, of Christ has revealed God in a love that rises above the sins of rebellious and lost man, as decidedly as above the trammels and ordinances of Judaism. Till the people under the law had manifestly and totally

failed, the way was not clear for the full revelation of His grace toward man as such. The middle wall of partition stood; the veil was not yet rent. The death of Christ not only broke the last tie with the Jews but opened the door of faith publicly to Gentiles no less than Israel. There is no difference, as in their ruin, so in His grace and redemption for sinners that believe in Him. The law by which He governed Israel tended to give Him the semblance of a national God who cared only for the chosen people. The gospel of His grace makes plain that, after that grand moral experiment for man to learn what he is, He is now displaying in Christ what He is Himself; and He is God our Savior. It was good for Timothy as it is for us to weigh this blessed character of God. It might have seemed to the superficial spirit of man more consistent to have here employed an ecclesiastical title, as rule in that sphere was to occupy the Epistle so fully; but it is not so; and God is as good as He is wise. He, whose authority works by desired and chosen instruments, would have His character to the world shown as Savior. Not of course that all men are saved, but that believers are, and that all are now called to believe on the Lord Jesus and then be saved.

Thus, if there be command flowing from divine authority (and what is there of good without it? see John 12:50; 14:31), there is His character of love toward man which flows from the depths of divine grace, sovereign and full, and hence in a call of glad tidings to every creature on earth. It is the activity of His nature, now righteously able to work far and wide, in everlasting salvation, whatever His special design for those who are saved; it is authority which insists on ways consistent with His word and nature, resenting a pretension to superior holiness, which, despising God's order, becomes a prey to Satan.

But salvation known even now and here is not all. We have Him by whom it came as “our hope,” even Christ Jesus, who will present us in the glory of God commensurately with His salvation. O how that blessed hope has been lowered!

In presence of such things (and there are far worse now) Timothy had need of “mercy” as well as of grace and peace. And the apostle greets with prayer accordingly.

“Even as when setting out for Macedonia I besought thee to remain in Ephesus, that thou mightest charge some not to be strange teachers, nor to pay heed to fables and endless genealogies, the which furnish questionings rather than God's dispensation that is in faith” (ver. 3, 4). To teach different things from the Word of God is to be a strange teacher. What hypotheses are to the man of science speculations are to the teacher; snares to take away from the divine deposit of revealed truth. True science bows to facts and seeks to discover their general principles or associations, which it calls laws; so does the believer and the teacher. To go beyond the written Word is to stray and mislead.

But when men begin to be teachers of strange doctrine, they ever venture into the region of the fabulous and give heed to myths and interminable genealogies. So early did the love of the marvelous work among Christians. Imagination is never faith, which, as it delights in knowing God and His will, so trusts in nothing but His word, however thankful for such as minister it. Imagination is the natural resource for those who know not the truth: the truth in Christ is the only perfect preservation from it. We are not distinctly told whether these faults here warned against had a Gentile or a Jewish root: if like those denounced in the epistle to Titus, they were Jewish. From either side they issued in the Gnostic reveries and wickedness of a later day, which were especially opposed to the O.T., whereas these apparently made much though wrong use of it. The

“endless genealogies” were a vain effort to solve without Christ what is otherwise insoluble, and thus be lost in wandering mazes of the mind, apart from conscience, the one inlet by grace into all truth. For conscience alone gives God His place and takes our own effectually before Him. Without conscience the heart may be attracted, but can never be trusted till it find its rest in God's love and truth, the very reverse of a vain confidence in self. Then with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. And the known grace which forgives every sin takes away all guile from the spirit: for there is no more to conceal, all is judged and gone. One can then pray and praise; one desires teaching and guidance, and can call on others for and in fellowship of joy in the Lord. How dismal the descent to human speculations with its shadowy myths, and endless genealogies, occupation for the restless mind which knows not the truth—alas! which now turns from it to these husks for swine.

The apostle does not finish his sentence. Timothy would understand without question; so ought we. But he lets us know his judgment of speculation as productive of barren questionings for the mind. God's dispensation is on the contrary in faith. It is faith that He uses both to dispense and to receive.

On 1 Timothy 1:5-11

The notion that “commandment” here has anything to do with the law has wrought widely and disastrously, not merely so as to lose the true scope of what the apostle urges on Timothy, but alas! to insinuate the direct reverse of the truth. If the word had meant “command” or “injunction” as in ver. 1, there would not have been one whit more of real ground for dragging in the law: only those carried away by sound would have thought of it. For even “command” there is in relation with God, not as Judge according to law, but as our Savior in mercy. It is well accordingly to adhere to the strict expression in 5, as it stands related to verses 3 and 18, which it would be absurd to connect with the law. It is rather in contrast, as an evangelical charge on which the apostle insists with his wonted force, and incisive keenness, and antithetical manner, which go for nothing where the ordinary confusion prevails. For thereby the blessing here and truly bound up with the gospel is attributed to the law. The apostle is really explaining, in connection with his charge to Timothy, how God's dispensation that is in faith, acts.

“Now the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned; which things some having missed, turned aside unto vain talk, desiring to be law-teachers, not understanding either what they say, or whereof they affirm” (ver. 5-7).

The apostle is setting the face of Timothy against those who would put the Christian under law. He does not allow their motives to be good in guarding souls from evil ways, nor does he fear their outcries against his teaching as antinomian. He maintains that the end of the charge he is giving is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith. These are the effects of the gospel brought home to the believers: of which things the law is essentially incapable. It may convict of the enmity and impurity of the heart; it may prove that the conscience is evil; and it is not of faith in any way, as we are told expressly in Gal. 3:12. The law works out wrath, not grace, and thus becomes death, not life; not because it is not good and holy, but because man is evil, ungodly, and powerless. It is by faith that the heart is purified (Acts 15:9), in virtue of obeying the truth unto unfeigned brotherly kindness, that we may love one another out of a pure heart fervently; and so it is through the word of God, but it is the word that is evangelized, not the law, but the gospel contrasted with it.

Those whom the apostle characterizes were Judaizing adversaries; and he tells them plainly that they had missed their aim. Could they really pretend to a pure heart, or a good conscience, or unfeigned faith? They were manifesting not love but vain talk. Through Christ the feeblest Christian walks in truth and love. Being loved perfectly we love; the heart is purged according to the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, as the conscience is made good by it; and faith, knowing that all the evil and ruin are fully met in Christ's death and resurrection, now rests at ease without feigning anything, because all good is truly given of God and secured in His Son.

But, cries a would-be law-teacher, does not Rom. 13:10 identify the “charge” here with the “law” after all? The very reverse is proved by it; for the Christian, in the new nature which characterizes him now, does love, not as requirement under law, but as the outflow of his life in Christ. Love

worketh no ill to his neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment, or full complement of law, but this by being under grace, and not law. The interpretation of too many, ancients and moderns, is the very principle here denounced. Their ignorance, according to the apostle, is complete. They understand neither what they say nor the question on which they thus dogmatize. At the same time grace, while it detects and rejects the misuse of law to puff man as he is and obscure the intervention of divine mercy in Christ, vindicates its true place as a matter of spiritual knowledge of which all Christians are conscious.

“Now we know that the law [is] good if one useth it lawfully, knowing this that law is not laid down for a righteous person, but for lawless and insubordinate, for ungodly and sinful, for unholy and profane, for smiters of fathers and smiters of mothers, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, menstealers, perjurers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I was entrusted” (ver. 8-11).

The fables of human imagination were evil and incapable of any profitable use. Truth is the answer to the wants of a troubled heart and the questionings of an exercised conscience; but endless genealogies were trash and could only give rise to questions.

But there was another and more subtle danger—man's misuse of God's law, which has misled more widely and permanently, and alas! godly souls too often. But this is not God's dispensation, which is in faith, any more than it is the end of the charge to Timothy. Yet the law is good, if one uses it lawfully. Have the misusers the inward consciousness that law is not made for a righteous man but for lawless and unruly, &c? Far different was their thought. Herein, then as now, men betray their inability to discern God's revealed mind. Law does not contemplate the good—but the bad. Law is enacted to detect, convict, and punish. Law never made a “just man,” still less “the good” man, if one may cite the distinction in Rom. 5:7. It is a sharp weapon to wound and kill transgressors; it never was designed to form motives of integrity or a walk of true righteousness. Its excellence lies in its unsparingness of evil, and man is evil; and this by nature. Grace, not law, saves sinners. Not law but grace teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Here theology revolts from the truth, and even good men ignore the source of all that made them what they are, through the redemption that is in Christ and the faith that casts them thus on God. It matters not that the apostle elsewhere declares that by law is knowledge of sin, that it works wrath, that it is the power of sin, that it is a ministration of death and condemnation, that as many as are of its works are under the curse, that it was added for the sake of transgressions. They will have it that the law was made for the righteous as a role of life, though it is the plain unavoidable inference from the words before us that this is precisely what the apostle explicitly denies of all law. It is Christ who above all acts by faith on the believer's soul. Hence he needs the word of God as a whole throughout his life, and the Spirit helps him to apply it in practical detail. Such is the Christian's secret of true morality; which in divine wisdom binds the heart up with the Savior habitually, and makes the written word to be matter for constant pondering, for comfort and conscientious application in the Spirit, but all in the sense of the true grace of God in which we stand and are exhorted to stand. For such exceeding privileges are meant to deepen our dependence on God and confidence in His love day by day.

Entirely is it not admitted only but insisted on, that the Christian is bound to do the will of God at all cost, and is never free to gratify the flesh. He is sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ no less than to the sprinkling of His blood. Self-pleasing is Satan's service. But the law is not the measure of God's will for the Christian. It was for Israel; but we, even if by nature Israelites, were made dead to it through the body of Christ, that we should belong to Another—Him that was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God. This is the method of divinely wrought freedom from the law, only to obey God with a nearness, fullness, and absolute devotedness unknown to a Jew.

Can anything be less satisfactory, yea more nugatory, than the ordinary assertion of the divines that Paul still leaves it open, so far as the scripture speaks, for the law to be the directory of Christians, and that he simply means to exclude it from justifying the soul? Now it is undeniable that in Rom. 6, 7 he is treating of Christian walk, not of believing in order to justification; and he there lays down that we are not under law but under grace, and this as a principle of dealing on God's part, the expression of which is therefore put anarthrously, so as to go beyond “the” law, though fully including it. It is just the same here; so that Dean Alford errs in thinking that verse 9 does not go farther than 8 where the article appears. It is not “the” nor “a,” but “law” as such; and the o■ negatives any such thing as law being enacted for a righteous person. Against the fruit of the Spirit, as the same blessed apostle writes in Gal. 5, there is no law. The general form is intended in all cases with or without prepositions, where the article is not. Winer has misled people by his list of words (Ch. 3, 19), which really fall under rule. Bishop Middleton was nearer the truth, though he mistakenly made prepositions exceptional.

But it is a mere assumption, not only groundless but anti-scriptural, that law is made for a righteous man as well as a sinful, so that “the apostle's meaning doubtless (!) is that it was given, not for the purpose of justifying the most righteous man that ever lived, but for restraining the wicked by its threatenings and punishments.” (Macknight's Apostolical Epp. 512. Tegg, 1835.) This is to subvert, not expound, scripture. Nor is Whitby in the least better, who takes it as “to condemn the righteous.” Justification and condemnation are out of the question here, where the Apostle speaks of the object contemplated in the enactment of law, and declares it to be, not for righteous, but for sinners.

And is it not painfully instructive to see how an error once let in works to ungodliness? For those who so strenuously contend against the uniform doctrine of the New Testament, and place the Chris tine under law as his rule of life, contend that, if he offend as we all do too often, he is not under its curse! Is this to establish the law, or to annul it? If Christ died and bore its curse, and we too died with Him and now are no longer under law but under grace, the truth is kept intact, the authority of law is maintained, and yet we who believe are in full deliverance. If we were really under law for walk, we ought to be cursed, or you destroy its authority; if we are not under it, the true provision for one's sin is Christ's advocacy with the Father, which brings us to repentance, by the washing of water with the word.

Law then is established for lawless and unruly, ungodly and sinners, unholy and profane, beaters of fathers and beaters of mothers. Such are the pairs in this dark list of human depravity first, the inner spring of self-will and its more open insubjection; next, irreverence God-ward, and evil man-ward; thirdly, impiety and positive profanity; fourthly, insolent violence towards parents,

without going so far as killing. Compare Ex. 21:15. For this last extreme introduces the general group, wherein one follows after another—murderers, fornicators, sodomites, men-stealers (or kidnappers), liars, perjurers, and if anything else is opposed to the sound doctrine.

Truly the law is a ministry of condemnation: what then can minister life, righteousness, and the Spirit? The gospel of salvation based on Christ and His work, which faith only receives; “and the law is not of faith” as we repeat from scripture. Blessing is inseparable from Christ; and it is of, faith that it might be according to grace. They then that are of faith, whose principle is faith, are sons of Abraham, and blessed with the faithful Abraham. Those that speak of law may speak out of the abundance of their heart, as they certainly do out of want of faith, never show the good works for which they call, but prove the wretchedness of slighting Christ. For the Spirit is sent to glorify Christ, and will never decorate or deceive self by vain hopes of amelioration.

But the Apostle is careful to add the concluding clause, “according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I was entrusted” (ver. 11). The glad tidings may not assert man's condemnation which is assumed in the strongest way. It is occupied with good for the worst of sinners, for it is the message of grace from the God who was glorified in the Son of man and has now glorified Him in Himself, before the kingdom comes wherein He will display His power and glory to every eye. The gospel only went out in all the creation under heaven, after the proved guilt and irremediable ruin of all mankind; so that, as God's righteousness is therein revealed from faith unto faith, therewith is revealed, not such temporal judgment as we see under law, but God's wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. For it is the gospel of God's glory, not “the glorious gospel,” as the Geneva V. led the way unhappily for the Authorized, but, as Wiclif, Tyndale, and all others, “the gospel of the glory.” Such is the hope in which we rejoice, and such the standard by which He would have us measure and reject all evil: a standard therefore which suffers no compromise in view of man's hardness of heart, as the law did, but is absolutely intolerant of all that is antagonistic to God's nature and presence on high. And God is now revealed as “the blessed God,” because He speaks to us, not in Sinai's fire and darkness and tempest and words yet more awful, but in the fullness of grace and truth of Him who declared Him on earth and is now set down in the heavenly places where we who believe are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Him. The atonement once accomplished and the Savior gone up into glory, God was “happy” in acting freely in love to the lost; for grace could then reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Such is the gospel which the apostle (here and in Titus 1:3) says was entrusted to him; as in Gal. 2:7 he says it was and is, the abiding state and not the fact only, which now sufficed. The Authorized Version alone of English versions is accurate in this.

Chapter 3

On 1 Timothy 1:12-17

The gospel with which the apostle was entrusted gives occasion to the words that follow down to the end of ver. 17. It is singular that this is one of the passages on which a distinguished rationalist rested to impugn the genuineness of the epistle; whereas in fact the remark goes to prove the blindness of unbelief. It attests the incapacity of the doubting school in general (Schleiermacher being one of their ablest minds, and perhaps the least objectionable in his ordinary tone) to seize the admirable links, and not least such as do not lie on the surface but reveal themselves to those that search the word as God's word and feel the truth as well as understand it. The apostle had given emphatic expression to himself as entrusted with the glad tidings of the glory. Light from Christ's glory had, even literally, shone on, and into the heart of, Saul of Tarsus. Hence it is not doctrine here, but an outburst of thanksgiving, which breaks forth and links together his own case, as the readiest and deepest and most conspicuous object to be found of sovereign grace, with the message he was called to deliver.

Perhaps it was the wish to connect these verses with the foregoing, from lack of the spiritual insight to discern their intimate connection without any outward mark, which added the copulative ("And") of the common text. The most ancient copies and version do not countenance it. Nor is it needful to begin, a doxology, which could not be repressed from a heart over-flowing at the recollection and in the present enjoyment of the Savior's grace.

"I thank him that strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that he counted me faithful, appointing me unto ministry, though I was a blasphemer and persecutor and doer of outrage. But I had mercy shown me because I did [it] ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love that is in Christ Jesus. Faithful [is] the word and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. But for this cause mercy was shown me that in me, as chief, Christ might display the whole long-suffering for an outline sketch of those that should believe on him unto life eternal. Now to the King of the ages, incorruptible invisible only God, be honor and glory unto the ages of ages. Amen" (ver. 12-17).

The heart of Paul glows in thanksgiving to our Lord for the inward power conferred on him. Not only was he called to be a saint but appointed to service, for that Christ deemed him faithful. It was immeasurably enhanced by another consideration never to be forgotten—what he was when thus called: he had been before this a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insulter, which all persecutors might not be. It was therefore no merely high coloring but the genuine feeling of his soul, that he was foremost of sinners: and no man who ever lived was more competent to form an adequate judgment of sin. He knew what sinners were, in as large an experience as any man could grasp. Yet did our Lord call him, he, as he says himself, even compelled the saints to blaspheme, who was exceedingly furious in persecuting them outside their own land, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter in his insolent hatred of the name of Jesus; which gave him power to go forth and persevere in an endurance, beyond what this world has ever seen, in not labors only but sufferings for Christ. The Lord did indeed account him faithful, and this from the day of his

conversion, an elect vessel (He said) to bear His name before both Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel, in that astonishing path of trial for His name, of which the apostle says nothing, but only when it was as it were wrung out, in his “folly” as he calls it, by the bad state and real folly of the worldly-wise Corinthians.

For the love of Christ proved its own strength in appointing to His service, not merely one apostle (whose confidence in his own affection for Christ met with a speedy and most overwhelming humiliation, that so he might by grace be a strengthener of his brethren, and a bold preacher of the glad tidings assured even to those who denied the Holy and Righteous One), but another arrested in the mid-career of unmitigated hatred of His name—and haughty contempt of His grace, whom He was calling to the highest and largest conceivable place of service, minister of the assembly His body, and minister of the gospel proclaimed in all the creation that is under heaven (Col. 1:23-55). Who but “Christ Jesus our Lord” would have felt, thought, acted thus toward either? Such a Savior and Lord was He to both, and thus were they each fitted to give the best effect to the testimony of His grace, without the smallest palliation of their sins respectively.

“But,” says the one before us, “I had mercy shown me, because I did it in unbelief.” Assuredly there was no lack of sincerity; not a doubt clouded his conscience. He thought he ought to do much against the name of the Nazarene, armed as he was with the authority and commission of the chief priests, confident in the strictest Pharisaic orthodoxy as well as scrupulous practice, and satisfied of an unbroken succession in the religion of the true God from its enactment at Sinai, not to say from the garden of Eden.

Still the power and glory which struck all down as far as concerned Saul in his person, and revealed to his soul in a light beyond the sun at noonday that the crucified but glorified Jesus was the Jehovah God of Israel changed all in an instant, and without a question proved all he had loved and venerated to be in hopeless enmity against God's grace, truth, glory—all centering in Him who, in convicting him of the worst sins, saved him to be His servant-witness, while taking him out from among the people and the Gentiles to whom He thenceforward sent him on the lifelong errand of His own matchless mercy. No doubt he was ignorant, and unbelief was the root of it; and it is a different state from that of those who, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, sin willfully or fall away to religious forms, in preference to Christ and the Spirit's testimony to His work. The heavenly Christ was Jesus whom he had been persecuting in His members. It was all over with himself, as well as with, his religion: Christ was all to him, and Christ he owns in all who loved Him, whose name he had till that moment anathematized. It was his ever after to live and die for Him who died for all, that they who lived should no longer live to themselves but to Him who for them died and rose again. It was sinful unbelieving ignorance. “But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love that is in Christ Jesus,” the contrast of unbelief and hatred when he only knew the law. And so he can commend to others with the deepest feeling his own compressed summary of the gospel: “Faithful is the word and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” but, he adds, “of whom I am chief.”

In vain do men seek to limit either “sinners” on the one hand, or “chief” on the other. The apostle knew the truth incomparably than they, be they Fathers of old or modern Germans, Catholics or Protestants. The very aim is to sweep away all comparison, to overturn all self-righteousness, and to meet all despair, laying man in the dust and exalting only the Savior, who abased Himself and

saves to the last degree those that disobey not “the heavenly vision.”

Nor was it only a question of mercy in saving the foremost of sinners; there was a purpose of grace toward others. “But for this cause mercy was shown me, that in me, as chief, Jesus Christ might display the whole long-suffering, for an outline sketch of those that should believe on Him unto life eternal,” It is impossible to exceed the energy of the expression. Nor need we wonder, if his case was to be a standing pattern or delineation of divine love rising above the most active hostility, of divine long-suffering exhausting the mast varied and persistent antagonism, whether in Jews or in Gentiles at large; for who had in either exceeded Saul of Tarsus? How will not the Lord use the history of his conversion to win the hardened Jew by-and-by! How does He not turn it to the account of any wretched sinner now! And how does the apostle delight in that grace which can thus make the pride and wrath of man praise Him, both at present and in the future day, through the faith of our Lord Jesus, without whom all must have been only ruin and wretchedness, closed by everlasting judgment. “Now to the King of the ages, incorruptible invisible only God, [be] honor and glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

As those that believe on Christ unto life eternal are not a mere people under earthly government to enjoy and attest the blessings of a jest rule and a divine ruler, so God is here owned and praised as King of the ages, in His supremacy above all passing conditions and circumstances of the creature here below. But He is also confessed as “incorruptible” in face of that which has shamelessly departed from Him in heaven above and on the earth beneath, turning even His dealings and revelations into self-aggrandizement or self indulgence to His dishonors; as “invisible,” where unseen powers have availed themselves of what is seen to play into the idolatry of the fallen heart and evil conscience; and as “only” or “alone,” where the world's wisdom freely gave its worship, begrudged to the alone true God, to created objects on high and around and below which excited its admiration, hopes, and fears, and so was led on by Satan to deify him and his hosts under names which consecrated every lust and passion to man's own ever increasing degradation. “To Him that is King of the ages, incorruptible invisible only God, be honor and glory,” not now merely as the basest rivals may have been, but “to the ages of the ages” —time without end. “Amen.” The Authorized Version is here inaccurate; and so is any commentator that carps at Bp. Middleton's just and necessary correction. The article really goes with θ. “God,” binding together all between as descriptive, If ■φθαρ. κ. τ. λ. were in immediate concord with τ■ β., they could not be anarthrous.

On 1 Timothy 1:18-20

The “charge” here clearly, connects itself with ver. 3 and 5, which refer to the same thing, not to 15 in particular however momentous; the practical purpose follows to the end of the chapter. The man of God must be prepared to war the good warfare.

“This charge I commit to thee, child Timothy, according to the prophecies on thee going before, that by them thou mightest war the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust away made shipwreck concerning the faith; of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may be taught not to blaspheme” (ver. 18-20).

As the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them (probably through one of the prophets at Antioch), so it appears that Timothy had prophecies leading the way to his work. Indeed in the case of the apostle the Lord had revealed his mission from his conversion. That the prophecies were uttered over Timothy at his ordination is absolute assumption. It was certainly not a part of the service whence the first and greatest of those sent to the Gentiles went forth recommended to the grace of God by the laying on of their brothers' hands. The prophecy preceded and led to that separation for gospel work; and so analogy, if not express intimation here and in chap. iv. 14, compared with 2 Tim. 1:6, might give us to infer.

It is no mere battle but a campaign that the apostle puts before his “child” and fellow-laborer. He must war the good warfare, but he is not asked to go at his own risk. The Master had given the word: if ever so gentle, sensitive, timid, he might trust Him, who by His servants had prophesied about Timothy. There is no necessity, nor sufficient reason, to understand with the grammarian Winer that in these prophecies lay his spiritual protection and equipment, the armor as it were in which he was to wage his good warfare. This is to narrow and emphasize unduly the force of the preposition. The English Authorized and Revised Versions seem to me more simple and correct. So again the transient form of the verb (adopted by Tischendorf and Tregelles on the meager authority of the first hand of the Sinaitic and the Clermont MSS.) does not commend itself in comparison with the ordinary text (as in all other copies) which has the present. Observe also that “faith” as an inward state is different from “the faith” or truth believed.

But condition of soul has much to do with warring the good warfare. Faith must be kept up, bright and simple and exercised, the eyes of the heart ever on the things unseen and eternal. Withal a good conscience is imperative. For if faith bring God in, a good conscience judges self and keeps sin out. This, of all moment for every Christian, is pre-eminently needful for him who is devoted to the service of Christ. There is nothing which so hardens the heart as the continual giving out of truth apart from one's own communion and walk. Take the extreme case of Judas falling under the power of the Devil; but look also at Peter, who was far from a traitor, himself betrayed into the denial of his Master. Here, however, it is the maintenance not only of faith, but also of a good conscience, “which some having thrust away made shipwreck concerning the faith.”

Rarely, if ever, does the heterodox soul maintain a good conscience; and as there cannot be a good conscience without faith, so on the other hand, where the conscience becomes practically bad, the faith is lowered, and it is well if it be not at last wholly perverted. A man is uneasy at continuing burdened with the sense of his own inconsistency. He is thus tempted to accommodate his faith to his failure, and what he likes he at last believes to the destruction of the truth; or, as the apostle puts it here, “some, having thrust away” a good conscience, “made shipwreck concerning the faith.”

The apostle gives examples then living; “of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may be taught not to blaspheme.”

This is not ecclesiastical discipline, or excommunication pure and simple, but the apostle's own act of power. Indeed it is questionable whether the assembly ever did or could, without an apostle, hand over to Satan. Certain it is, that in 1 Cor. 5 the apostle connects himself with a similar exertion of power: “For I, as absent in body and present in spirit, have already judged as present as to him that so wrought this thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (ye and my spirit being gathered together with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ) to deliver him, being such an one, to Satan, for destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

So another apostle exercised the power given him of the Lord, to deal extraordinarily with Ananias and Sapphira when they sinned unto death. The Lord, it would seem, thus by His servant judged them by so solemn a chastening, that they might not be condemned with the world.

But if, according to scripture, the assembly be not invested with such power, it is none the less under obligation to purge out the old leaven, “that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened.” The standing is the ground of responsibility. If unleavened by and in Christ, we are bound to tolerate no leaven. Practice must be conformed to principle, and so the Spirit works by the word; not high or heavenly principle brought down to low and earthly practice. “For also Christ, our passover, was sacrificed for us; wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” If the assembly cannot and will not judge those that are within, it forfeits its character as God's assembly. Hence, even in the lowest condition, that which claims to be God's assembly is bound to put away the wicked person from among them. Responsibility to put out of church communion is the inalienable duty of the Christian assembly, whenever a professed member of Christ can be justly designated as a “wicked person.” But this is a distinct thing from the apostolic power of delivering over to Satan, which might or might not accompany that extreme act of the assembly.

It is well, however, to notice that even the apostle's act of delivering over to Satan, here spoken of, apart from the assembly, had the merciful as well as holy object in view, “that they may be taught not to blaspheme.” It is a consoling thought, that even such evildoers are not irrecoverably beyond the reach of divine grace. The terrible sentence which befell them was, on the contrary, to teach by discipline those who refused to be taught by the truth, whose unjudged evil led them to depart from the faith which condemned them. Even Satan's power in dealing with the outer man, and perhaps in the infliction of anguish of mind, may be used under the hand of God to bring down the haughty spirit and make past blasphemy to be seen in all its offensive pride and opposition to God.

It is singular that Calvin, on this passage, chooses rather to explain it as relating to excommunication, of which not a word is said, though probably this may also have been the fact. But the opinion, as he calls it, that the incestuous Corinthian received any other chastisement than excommunication, he ventures to say, is not supported by any probable conjecture. Now this confusion we have seen to be in direct opposition to the plain declaration of 1 Cor. 5, which distinguishes the apostolic energy and its effect from the inalienable call of the assembly to put away those who cast deliberate and manifest affront on the Lord's name. It is only when Paul joins himself to the assembly that he speaks of delivering to Satan. When he treats of their purging leaven that had entered, he speaks of putting out, and not a word more.

In short, then, delivering over to Satan was not a form of excommunication from the church, but an act of apostolic power, which might or might not accompany the act of putting out, and manifested its effect in bodily pains or even death itself. The distinction is of importance for this reason among others, that we can see clearly how the obligation abides to purge out the leaven that has got in; whilst it would be unbecoming to arrogate to the assembly that which scripture never speaks of apart from an apostle's power. Those who have Christ that was sacrificed as their center cannot escape from the holy responsibility of keeping the feast with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, purging out what practically denies and dishonors Him. Power is another element, and as distinct from form as from duty; and, power or no power, we are bound to do our duty, as in the end of 1 Cor. 5 it is no less obvious than momentous, if indeed we are Christ's.

Chapter 5

On 1 Timothy 2:1-4

From those who had been within, now so solemnly delivered over to Satan, the apostle turns to our relationships with those outside, especially such as are in authority.

“I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men, for kings and all that are in high rank, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all piety and gravity. For this (is) good and acceptable before our Savior God who desireth, that all men should be saved and come unto full knowledge of truth” (ver. 1-4). It is not here the counsels of God in all their immense extent and heavenly glory, but rather what is consistent with the nature of God revealed in Christ and published everywhere by the gospel. Such is the character of our epistle, and the ground on which the apostle insists upon a spirit of peace on the one hand and godly order on the other. In accordance with this he exhorts that the saints should be marked by a desire of blessing for all mankind: the very reverse of that proud austerity which the heathen bitterly resented in the later Jews. It was the more important to press this gracious attitude, inasmuch as it is of the very essence of the church to stand in holy separateness from the world, as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ. With light or harsh minds this separation easily degenerates into a sour self-complacency; which repels from, instead of attracting to, Him whose rights over all it is the prime duty of the church to assert, whose glory and whose grace ought to fill every mouth and heart within. From a misuse of his privileges a Jew was ever in danger of scorning the Gentile, and not least those in high place, with a bitter contempt for such of their brethren as served the Gentile in the exaction of tribute, the sign of their own humiliation. In their national ruin they had more than all the pride of their prosperity, and judged their heathen masters with a sternness ill-suited to those who had lost their position, for a time at least, through their constant yielding to the worst sins of the Gentiles.

The Christian is in no less danger for on the one hand he is entrusted with a testimony of truth far beyond what the Jew had; and, on the other, his separation does not consist so much in external forms. Hence he is in continual danger of making good separation to God, not in the power of the Holy Ghost in truth and love among those who cleave to the Lord, but in peculiar abstinences and prohibitions, in an effort to differ from others, and so in the claim of superiority for themselves. This evidently exposes the unwary to self-deception, as it tends to build up that which is as far as possible from the mind of Christ. A bitter though unconscious sectarianism.

Here we see how the Spirit of God guards the saints, so that their separation however holy, may savor of God's grace and not of man's pride. Supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, are to be made for all men. It is not only that they ought always to pray and not to faint; nor again that they should only pray for all saints and especially for those identified with the testimony of Christ. But here we find an exhortation to every variety of prayer on the broad basis of God's relationship with all mankind. The saints have to answer to this if they would not be false to the truth. They, too, have a corresponding relation. The very gospel by which they were saved should remind them of it; for if the church in its union with Christ, or rather if Christ and the church, be the

special witness of divine counsels, the gospel is no less the standing witness of God's grace to the world. The saints therefore, knowing both, are responsible to bear a true testimony to the one no less than the other. And in practice it will be found that exaggeration in one tends not only to lose the other, but to corrupt that which becomes the exclusive object. For Christ is the truth; neither the gospel nor the church has a right to our love undividedly, but both in subjection to Christ. And we are called to bear witness to “the” truth as we are sanctified (not by this or by that truth, but) by the truth.

Such is the danger to-day as it was of old. Saints like other men are apt to be one-sided. It looks spiritual to choose the highest line and stand on the highest point, and fancy oneself to be safe in that heavenly elevation. On the other hand, it seems loving to steer clear of the church question so constantly abused to gratify ambition if not spite and jealousy (and thus scattering saints instead of uniting them holily around the Lord's name), and to devote all one's energies, in the present broken state of Christendom, to the good news which wins souls to God from destruction. But this is to surrender the nearest circle of Christ's affections and honor. The only course that is right, holy, and faithful, is to hold to all that is precious in His eyes—to love the church with all its consequences on the one hand, and on the other to go out to all mankind in the grace that would reflect the light of a Savior God. As in Ephesians and Colossians the former truth is most prominent, so here is the latter. Let us seek to walk in both.

The Authorized Version wrongly connects “first of all” with the making supplications, &c., as both the Syriac, Chrysostom, Theophylact, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Estius, Bengel, &c. So had Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Geneva; not Wiclif nor the Rhemish (cleaving as usual to the Vulgate), nor Beza. For the apostle means that he thus exhorts, as first of all in his mind for his present purpose. The exhortation had a great importance in his eyes who would have God's character of grace truly presented in the public as well as private intercourse of the saints with Himself The God who gave His own Son to die for sinners in divine judgment of sin could not be taxed with slighting sins, whether of corruption or of violence; but O the love of Him who gave His Son to die for sinners that they might be saved through faith in Him! Therefore does His servant first of all exhort to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings for all men, but specifying “for kings and all that are in high rank.” So the godly in Israel had prayed for the city which chastised them for their sins, and sought its peace; whereas the false were habitually rebellious, save for occasional gain or other selfish ends. But now that God had fully shown Himself out in Christ, what became His saints in presence of all men, and especially of sovereigns and rulers? The continual going forth of earnest love on behalf of all men, for which they should ever be free who are delivered from dread of evil and a bad conscience, who are peaceful and happy in their own near relationship with God as His children, who can therefore feel truly and deeply for all that are far off in unremoved death and darkness, and as ignorant of their own real misery as of the blessed God Himself. The exalted place of those in authority would only make such the more especial objects of loving desire, that sovereign goodness might control them and their officials, in order that the saints might lead a quiet and tranquil life in all piety.

The reader will notice the abundance and variety in the expression of the saints' prayers. “Supplication” implies earnestness in pressing the suit of need; “prayer” is more general and puts forward our wishes; “intercession” means the exercise of free and confiding intercourse, whether for ourselves or for others; and “thanksgiving” tells out the heart's sense of favor bestowed or

counted on. Of all interpretations perhaps the most singular is in Augustine's Epistle to Paulinus (cxlix. Migne), where the four words are assigned to the several parts of the communion service. Witsius, on the Lord's prayer, is nearer the mark than any other I have noticed. From first to last the terms bespeak the overflowing charity of the saints who know in God a love superior to evil, and withal never indifferent to it or making light of it, (which is Satan's substitute), a Father who makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. It is of all moment that the children keep up the family character, and that love should be in constant exercise to His praise. What can men think, feel, or do, about such as love enemies and pray for those that use them despitefully? Paroxysms of persecution pass quickly, and the saints are let live peacefully in all godliness and gravity; for nothing makes up for failure in piety before God and a practically grave deportment before men.

“For this [is] good and acceptable before our Savior God, who desireth that all men should be saved and come to full knowledge (or, acknowledgment) of the truth” (ver. 3, 4). The spirit or the gospel the apostle would have to permeate the conduct as well as the heart of the saint. Activity in goodness becomes those who know our Savior God, Whose own heart goes out in compassion toward all men, not alone surely in present mercies without number, but also that they might be saved. This however cannot be unless they come to the knowledge of the truth. Hence the gospel is sent out to all the creation. Here human weakness, if it be not worse, betrays itself. Those who believe in the large grace of God too often leave no room for His positive and living links of love with the elect, once children of wrath even as others. Those who are sure of the special nearness of God's family as often overlook, what is patent here and elsewhere all over scripture, that love which Christ made known personally and proved triumphantly in His cross, whereby it is free to flow out in testimony to all the world. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” Now that His character as Judge of sin is vindicated in the expiatory death of His own Son, His love can freely go out to men on the express ground that they are ungodly, enemies, and powerless (Rom. 5). He is both able and willing to save the vilest, but not without acknowledgment of truth. Therefore He commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel; and the saints, while walking as members of the one body of Christ, are called to walk in love toward all and to testify the love that can save any by the faith of Christ. If men are lost, it is through their own will opposing the truth; it is not God's will, who, desiring their salvation, gave His Son and has now sent His own Spirit from heaven, that the glad tidings might be thus declared by them in the power of God, our Savior.

Chapter 6

On 1 Timothy 2:5-7

This gives occasion to a broad and weighty statement of divine truth.

“For there is one God, one mediator also of God and men, a man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony in its own times, to which I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I speak truth, I lie not), a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth” (ver. 5-7).

The unity of God is the foundation truth of the Old Testament; as it was the central testimony for which the Jewish people were responsible, in a world everywhere else given over to idolatry. We must add that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was that one Jehovah, His proper name in relationship with His people on earth. “Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and beside me there is no Savior” (Isa. 43).

But during the Jewish economy God, though known to be one, was not known as He is. “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.” He dwelt in the thick darkness, even where He surrounded Himself with a people for a possession, and a veil shrouded what display there was of the divine presence; so that the high priest approached but once a year, with clouds of incense and not without blood lest he die. It was only Jesus that made Him truly known, as we see (where it might least have been expected) by that act of incomparable grace in which He was fulfilling all righteousness when baptized of John in the Jordan. There, as the Holy Spirit descended on Him, the Father from heaven proclaimed Him to be His beloved Son. The Trinity stood revealed. It is in the persons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that God, the one God, is really known. Without Jesus this was impossible; when He takes the first step, the Trinity in unity shines out—love and light, wherein is no darkness at all. How infinite is our debt to the Word made flesh, who deigned to tabernacle with us, Only-begotten Son who declared God and revealed the Father.

Thus, as we need, we have an adequate image of the invisible God; and this Jesus is “mediator of God and men,” though mediation of course goes farther than representation. For there are two parts in it, His manhood and His ransom, both of special moment if God is to be known and if man, sinful man, is to be suitably blessed in the knowledge of God.

The mediator is a man, that God may be known of men. The Absolute is divided from the relative (and we, indeed creatures universally, are necessarily relative) by a gulf impassable to us. But if man cannot himself rise to God, and those of mankind who are by grace righteous would most of all repudiate and abhor so presumptuous a thought, God can and does in infinite love come down to man, to man in his guilt and misery with an endless judgment before him.

This however does not meet all that is wanted, though it blessedly manifests the love of God in the gift of His own Son that we through faith might have life, eternal life, in Him. Yet even this free gift, immense as it is, does not suffice, for we were lost sinners; and so we need to be brought to God, freed from our sins, and cleansed for His presence in light. He therefore sent His Son as

propitiation for our sins. Herein indeed is love, not that we loved Him (though we ought to have so done), but that He loved us, and proved it in this way, divine and infinite, of His only-begotten Son sent to suffer unspeakably for our sins on the cross, that we might through the faith of Him be without spot or stain before God (where otherwise we could not be), and might know it even now on earth by the Holy Ghost given to us. So here it is said that He “gave Himself a ransom for all.”

Hence, as God is one, it is important to remark the unity of the Mediator. Here the Catholic system, and not Rome only, though Rome most, has sinned against the truth. For the oneness of the Mediator is as sure, vital, and characteristic a testimony of Christianity as the oneness of God was of the law. It is not only that Christ Jesus is Mediator, but there is this “one” only. The introduction of angels is a base invention that savors of Judaism. And who required it at their hands to set the departed saints, or the virgin. Mary, in the least share of that glory which is Christ's alone? Head of the body, as also of all things, can admit of no fellowship. He only of divine persons is Mediator; and though He is so as man, to claim partnership for any other of mankind (living or dead makes no real difference as to this), is not short of treason against Him. Not only is it not true that any other in heaven or earth shares in mediation, but the assertion of it for the highest of creatures is a lie of Satan, as subversive of Christianity as polytheism was the direct and insulting denial of the one true God.

And most solemn and affecting it is to see that, as the Jew (called to bear witness of the one God) broke down in the foulest adoption of heathen idolatry, so Christendom has betrayed its trust at least as signally in the especial point of fidelity to its transcendent treasure and peculiar glory. For the Greek church is in this respect only less faulty than the Romish; and what are Nestorians, Copts, Abyssinians, &c.? The Protestant bodies are doubtless less gross in their standards of doctrine; but the present state of Anglicanism shows how even its services admit of an enormous infusion of objects before their votaries which detract from the glory of the Lord Jesus.

There is however another and an opposite way in which professing Christians may be false to the mediation of Christ, not by adding others which practically divide His work and share His honor, but by supplanting and in effect denying it altogether. It is not open Arians or Unitarians alone who are thus guilty, but rationalists of all sorts, whether in the national bodies or in the dissenting systems. The incarnation, if owned in terms, is really robbed of all its glory and blessedness; for if Christ Jesus were but “a man,” why or how could He be mediator of God and men? Superiority in degree is no adequate basis. It is His divine nature which makes His becoming man so precious; as it is the union of both in His person, which gives character to His love, and efficacy to His sacrifice, and value to His ransom. Here the faithlessness, not of the party of tradition, but of the school of human reason and philosophy, its antipodes in Christendom, is as painfully conspicuous. God is only an idea and therefore unknown; as He who alone can make Him known or fit man to serve and enjoy and magnify Him, the one Mediator, Jesus, is ignored in His divine glory, His manhood being cried up perhaps, but only, if so, to set aside His deity.

Thoroughly in keeping with the large character of the Epistle, it is said that He “gave Himself a ransom for all.” It is not special counsels, which cannot fail of accomplishment, as in Eph. 5, where Christ, it is said, loved the church, or assembly, and gave Himself up for it; and so the apostle goes on to say, as he does not here, that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, having no spot or wrinkle, or any of

such things, but that it might be holy and blameless. Here the same apostle treats of the answer in the Mediator's work to God's nature and willingness to save, in face of man's will who, as His enemy, expects no good from God, and believes not the fullest proof of grace in Christ's death, nor would be persuaded when He who died in love rose in righteousness from the dead to seal the truth with that unquestionable stamp of divine power. It is “a ransom for all,” whoever may bow and reap the blessing, which those do who, renouncing their own proud will for God's mercy, repent and believe the gospel.

“Its own times” came for “the testimony” when man's wickedness was all out in its hatred, not merely of God's law, but of God's Son. As long as it was but failure in duty or violation of commands, divine patience lengthened out the day of probation, whatever the enormous provocation from time to time, as we see in the inspired history of the Jew. But the cross was hatred of divine love and perfect goodness, God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses; but Him even thus, yea perhaps because it was thus, they would not have Him at any price, hating Him without a cause, hating Him most of all for a love beyond all.

Thus was man, not Gentile only but Jew if possible yet more, proved to be lost; and on this ground the gospel goes forth to all, “the testimony in its own times.” It is salvation for the lost as all are, for him that believes; God's righteousness (for man universally had been shown to have none)—God's righteousness unto all (such is the aspect of divine grace) and upon all that believe (such is the effect where there is faith in Jesus). Therein God is just and justifies the believer.

Here it is “the testimony,” and accordingly the direction or scope “unto all,” rather than the blessed result where it is received in faith. And therefore to “the testimony” it is consistently added “to which I was appointed preacher (or herald), and apostle,” giving the first place to that which was not highest but most akin for proclaiming it, though not leaving out but bringing in for its support the apostleship. For indeed the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel, but emphasizes clearly his own full and high relation to it ("I speak truth, I lie not"), and closes all up with the title of (not a prophet to Israel as in probationary times but), “a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth.” For now sovereign grace was not only the spring but the display in Christ Jesus the Lord. Where sin abounded, grace over-abounded; that, even as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

On 1 Timothy 2:8-10

The call to prayer for all had brought in as its basis the character of God as Savior as shown in the gift and mediation of Christ, the testimony of which goes forth at this time to all mankind; as none could so well bear witness as the apostle Paul, and this in the Gentile field so emphatically his own, alike for preaching and teaching.

This naturally leads to the detailed injunctions that follow, gracious interest about men with God, guided by competent wisdom, power, and authority from Him who appointed him to the testimony.

“I will then that the men pray in, every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting; in like manner also that women in seemly deportment adorn themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with braids, and gold or pearls or costly apparel, but, what becometh women professing godliness, by good works” (ver. 8-10).

It is not merely gracious acquiescence but active wish or will. It is apostolic direction. “I will then that the men pray in every place,” not all the constituents of the assembly, but the men in contrast with women. This is of great moment. Title to pray belongs to “the men” as a whole, not to women; for public prayer is in question. There is no thought of a particular class among the men; yet is the apostle regulating the house of God. Prayer, then, is not restricted to the elders, even when elders were in full form. It belongs to “the men.” Nor has it only to do with gifts, though of course gifted men might form a large part of such as prayed. And this is so true, that the apostle adds “in every place.” It may be that there is no allusion to a different practice among the Jews or the heathen. Certainly there is no trace of polemic purpose. Nevertheless Christian practice is most evident in the words—the fullest liberty for prayer on the part of “the men,” and this not in private only but in public.

The direction entirely coincides with the spirit of 1 Cor. 14 Only there the assembly is prominent which had been shown in chapter xii. to be formed by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. Here the ruling of the apostle is more general, as marked by “every place.” It would be a false inference, instead of holding both, to set the one (as people often do) against the other. There is complete liberty for “the men,” but absolute subjection to the Lord who acts by the Spirit and leads thus to the glory of God. Man is incompetent to guide the assembly. The Lord ought to be looked to, and in fact is “in the midst” of those gathered to His name, as Matt. 18:20 shows: another scripture of the highest importance for the saints, as the resource of His grace for even “two or three.”

Not that the Jews were so restricted in the synagogue as many suppose. Scripture furnishes proof that in the early days of the gospel considerable latitude was left to take part in reading or speaking, and it is to be supposed in prayer. But Christianity, while it supposes liberty, brings in immediate responsibility to God as it was founded on the Divine presence in a way altogether unknown to Judaism, not to speak of the heathen. It is most instructive therefore to observe that, where scriptural order is laid down most precisely, the apostle himself rules liberty for “the men” to

pray “in every place.” Who abrogated it? It is impossible to deny that this apostolic direction has no place in Christendom. It would seem disorder on the most important occasions. One official has the title ordinarily in every place. He may associate with himself one or more of a certain rank ecclesiastically. Hence it is not open to “the men” to pray “in every place;” and accordingly no man of right feeling would think of invading the imposed regulations of such societies. Nothing therefore can more distinctly demonstrate that a revolution, somehow or another, has intervened; for modern order is irreconcilable with apostolic. And this is quite independent of “gifts,” for prayer is never in scripture treated as a question of gift. Undeniably our Epistle treats of godly order, when it was in all its purity and fullness, when apostles were on earth still, and elders were or might be in every church, and “gift” abounded in every form; yet prayer “in every place” was open to “the men.” Now, on the contrary, the exercise of such a title would utterly clash with the order of every denomination in Christendom. The question therefore is one of the greatest importance, not practically alone, though never was prayer more needed, but as a matter of principle; for surely all Christians are called to walk according to the latest revelation of truth. We ought every one of us to be where an apostolic direction, plain beyond controversy, can take full effect.

What can be thought of the statement that “it is far-fetched and irrelevant to the context, to find in these words the Christian's freedom from prescription of place for prayer"? It is far better to own the truth, like Chrysostom and Theodoret, etc, of old, or like Erasmus, Calvin, etc. in Reformation times, even if it condemn our ways. “Far-fetched” it is not, but the unforced and sure meaning of the sentence in itself, whatever be people's practice. “Irrelevant to the context” it is not; for what can be more proper, after exhorting prayers to be made of whatever character, to lay down liberty of praying for at least “the men” “in every place”? The scriptural doctrine of the church, and its history in apostolic times, confirm not its relevancy only, but also its immense moment, and prove that such a practice must have been until the habits which sprang up at a later post-apostolic date made it seem disorderly. Prayers on public occasions were thenceforward confined to the ordained officials. But from the beginning it was not so: as we read here, it was the apostle's will that “the men” should pray “in every place.”

(Note: Neander (Church Hist. i. 253) lays down emphatically that “the monarchical form of government was in no way suited to the Christian community of spirit"; but what is it if the Spirit form the saints in continual dependence on Christ? Is this not essentially theocratic? It is quite consistent with godly order, and with a system of gifts, as well as with unity.)

But right moral condition is carefully maintained, “raising up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,” or perhaps “reasoning.” The holiness expressed is that of pious integrity, not of a person set apart, ■σ■ους not ■γ■ους. It did not become men at the time conscious of evil not duly judged to take so solemn a part, if any, in the assembly. Again, if the evil were known to others, such a part taken must be an offense to their consciences. But the highest motive of all is that which should never be wanting, sense of the presence of the Lord, and of the state which befits each of the saints so sovereignly blessed in His grace. Hence “wrath” too is expressly forbidden. Unseemly if it intruded into any action of a Christian kind, it was peculiarly unbefitting for one who was the mouth-piece of all in prayer. So also “doubting” was most unseasonable there, being more or less a contradiction of the dependent confidence which is expressed to God in prayer. If souls lay under any of these disabilities, it became them to seek restoration of communion with God: else public praying might become a positive snare through a hardening of

conscience in such circumstances. Thus subjection to Scripture in the church, where duly carried out in private and public, ever tends to true happiness and holiness; which form is apt to destroy, especially when the form is based on tradition opposed to scripture.

“In like manner that women also adorn themselves with modesty and sobriety.” The Lord in no way ignores women as the Rabbis were apt to do; nor were they pushed into an unseemly or even shameless prominence as in heathenism. Public action was not their place. The word is that they should adorn themselves “in seemly deportment,” which includes not dress only but bearing. And hence it is added, “with modesty and sobriety,” that shamefastness which shrinks from the least semblance of impropriety, that self-restraint where all inwardly is ruled. The apostle does not hesitate to deal plainly and unsparingly with the common objects of female vanity in all ages, “not with braids (that is, of hair), and gold or pearls or costly array.” This ought to settle many a question for an exercised conscience. Take the last only. How often do we not hear a plea for the most expensive attire on the ground of its economy in the end! But those who are waiting for Christ to come need not look so far forward. Negations, however, do not satisfy the mind of the Spirit; “But what becometh women professing godliness, by good works.” Such is the adorning that the Lord approves; and women have therein a large and constant sphere, δ■ ■ργων ■γαθπων “by means of good works,” not here καλ■ν (honorable, right, fair) as in Matt. 5:16; Gal. 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:21; but ■γ. as in Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 5:15, of which we have an instance in Dorcas (Acts 9:36). Where intelligence takes the place of this activity in good, sorrow soon ensues for others, and later on shame for themselves. Real spiritual power would have hindered both; whereas vanity likes and encourages this practical error, to find its intelligence all wrong in the end. If blind lead blind, both will fall into a pit.

Chapter 8

On 1 Timothy 2:11-15

The apostle now turns to further details which correct female tendencies of quite another kind, but not a whit less important to heed if as Christians they seek to glorify the Lord. Perhaps they are even more called for in these times, as men growingly lose sight of the divine order in their craving after the imaginary rights of humanity. How many nowadays are in danger from a misdirected zeal or benevolent activity, without due reference to the written word! To such finery in dress might be no attraction, nor the frivolous changes of worldly fashions. Their very desire to abound in good works, by which the apostle wished them to be adorned, might expose them to a snare; and the more, as no fair and intelligent mind can doubt that women (to say nothing of natural capacity or culture) may have gifts spiritual as really as men. It was of moment therefore to regulate the matter with divine authority, as he now does.

“Let a woman in quietness learn in all subjection. But to teach I permit not a woman nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman quite deceived is involved in transgression; but she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with sobriety” (ver. 11-15).

The apostle had already laid down most salutary principles in 1 Cor. 11 whence he had deduced that the man is woman's head, and that the head uncovered became him, as the covered head became her. He is called of God to public action, she to be veiled, for man is not from woman but woman from man, though neither is without the other in the Lord, while all things are of God.

Again, in 1 Cor. 14 is laid down the imperative regulation, that the women are to keep silence in the assemblies, “for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law.” They were forbidden even to ask their own husbands there. If they would learn anything, let them ask at home; “for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.” What can be more distinct and peremptory than this? The ingenuity of will, however, has found a supposed loop-hole. The word “speak,” say they, means only to talk familiarly or chatter. This is wholly untrue. It is the regular word for giving utterance, as may be seen in 1 Peter 4:10, 11. Here, “as each hath received a gift,” they are called to minister it as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; and the distinction is drawn between gifts of utterance and those of other spiritual service. “If any one speaketh,” he is to do so as God's mouthpiece, “if any one ministereth,” he is to do so as from strength which God supplieth, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” Now here it is the same word for “speaking” as is forbidden to the women in the former scripture. It is speaking in public, not prattling. The prohibition therefore is complete. Woman's place is a retired one; she is to learn in quiet with entire submissiveness.

But there is more here. “I permit not a woman to teach, nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in quietness.” This clearly is not limited to the assembly; as the apostle traces the ground of it in the constitution and natural character of woman. “For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” Her subsequent formation out of the mauls never to be forgotten by such as fear God and believe His word. All other thoughts are presumptuous theory in forgetfulness of the truth which goes up to the

beginning. An individual woman may be comparatively able and well-instructed; but under no circumstances is leave given to a woman to teach or to have dominion over a man; she is to be in quietness. Thus absolutely does the apostle guard against any reaction from the abject place of women in ancient times, specially among the heathen; or any imitation of the peculiar prominence given to her sometimes in oracular matters, as among the Greeks and especially the Germans of old.

Had then women no seemly or suited, no good and useful, place in Christianity? None can deny that they have, who see how honored were some of them in caring for the Lord Himself in His ministry (Luke 8), who know how He vindicated Mary that anointed Him when the apostles found fault under evil influence. Certainly He put no slight on Mary of Magdala, if His resurrection interrupted the plan of those who brought their spices and ointments after His death. Not otherwise do we find the action of the Holy Ghost when the Lord went to heaven. Mary the mother of John Mark gives her house for the gathering together of many to pray, and the four daughters of Philip were not forbidden to prophesy at home, though even there authority could not be rightly exercised over a man. Lydia is a beautiful example of Christian simple-heartedness and zeal; her house too has honor put on it for the truth's sake. Nor was Priscilla out of place when she with her husband helped the learned Alexandrian, mighty in the scriptures, to know the way of God more thoroughly. Rom. 16 pays no passing honor to many a sister, from Phoebe who served the church at Cenchree, commended to the saints in Rome, as a succorer of many and of Paul himself. Prizes or Priscilla again is coupled with her husband as his fellow-workers in Christ, who not only for his life laid down their own necks but opened their house whereever they went for the assembly. But need we dwell on all the cases and the beautifully discriminating notice taken of them? We may say of Evodia and Syntyche that there is not the smallest reason for conceiving them preachers, because they shared the apostle's labors in the gospel. That they joined their efforts with Paul in that work is no warrant for the inference that they preached. In those days a woman's preaching must have seemed far more egregious than her venturing to say a word hi the assemblies of the saints. Even in private where they might exercise that which was given them in the Lord, they must never forget the form and the reality of subjection. In public all teaching was forbidden. Such is the testimony of scripture, and nowhere with greater precision or breadth than here.

The apostle adds another reason, “Adam was not deceived; but the woman quite deceived is involved in transgression.” The man may have been in a certain sense worse. He followed the woman in wrong against God, where he ought to have led her in obedience; and he did it knowingly She was beguiled outright; he was not. Her weakness therefore, and its dangerous effect on man, are urged as an additional plea, why she should be in quietness, neither teaching nor ruling; let her own sphere be at home (1 Tim. 5:24).

The next words have suffered not a little through speculation. Some have yielded to Wells, Hammond, Kidder, Doddridge, Macknight, &c., and endeavored to invest them wit's a direct reference to the Incarnation. But there is no sufficient reason for any such thought. The Authorized Version gives substantially the true sense, which is also maintained by the Revisers, although they affect a more literal closeness, which, tempting as it may be, seems really questionable here and unnecessary. For there is no doubt that in the apostle's usage as well as elsewhere, the preposition with the genitive (as with the accusative also) may mean “in a given state,” no less than the more common sense of the instrument used or the medium passed through.

Dean Alford's remarks are as unhappy yet characteristic a specimen of his exegesis habitually as could be desired: “saved through (brought safely through, but in the higher, which is with the Apostle Paul the only, sense of σ■ζω, see below) her child-bearing (in order to understand the fullness of the meaning of σωθ■σεται, we must bear in mind the history itself, to which is the constant allusion... What then is here promised her? Not only exemption from that curse in its worst and heaviest effects; not merely that she shall safely bear children; but the apostle uses the word σ. purposely for its higher meaning, and the construction of the sentence is precisely as ref. 1 Corinthians [3:15].” Now we may well agree with him that Chrysostom’s interpreting τ. of Christian training of children, as others of the children themselves, is beside the mark and indeed Unfounded; but so is his own confusion of the government of God with the “higher meaning of eternal salvation, which is not here in question. This very epistle (4:10) furnishes decisive proof that the preservative goodness of God in providence is fully maintained in Christianity, though His grace in the gospel goes deeper, higher, and forever. Dean Alford enfeebles the “higher meaning” by misapplying such an assurance of providential care as the text before us supplies. There is no doubt of saving grace in Christ for the believer; but to turn this word aside from its obvious relation deprives us of the very object in view, the comfort of knowing that while God does not set aside the solemn mark of divine judgment from the first in the pangs of child bearing, it becomes in mercy an occasion of His providential intervention. Redemption clears away the clouds, so that the light may shine on all the path of the saint; and woman meanwhile shares the suited blessing in the hour of nature's sorrow. The forced elevation of scripture not only fails in power of truth, but darkens or takes away its precious consolation for the pilgrim now on earth.

The promised succor however is conditioned by abiding “in faith and love and holiness with sobriety.” One feels how important such a proviso is, at a moment when human and even worldly feelings often encroach even on children of God. Where is family pride here? where the gratification of the wish for an heir of filthy lucre, of the hope of wide spreading influence in that world which crucified the Lord of glory? Nor need one doubt the wisdom of the peculiarity in grammar which gives individuality to the deliverance vouchsafed in mercy, while it urges (not on the “children” as some have thought, nor yet on the husband and wife as others, but) on Christian women generally the qualifying call to abide in all that fits and strengthens the sex for the due and happy and godly discharge of their momentous duties. It is continuance in faith and love and holiness “with sobriety,” which is pressed on saintly women; who doubtless could already say with Christians generally that God had saved them according to His own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before time began.

Chapter 9

On 1 Timothy 3:1-7

The character and qualifications for the local charges of bishops and deacons, are next laid down. Timothy, though not an apostle, had a position superior even to the higher of the two, and is here instructed in that which was desirable for each. The prohibition of women from the exercise of authority naturally led the way, when their case was fully disposed of, to the due requisites for such as might desire the good and weighty work of overseeing the house of God. It is a question of government here, rather than of gifts, whatever the importance of gift for the right discharge of the office. Women were excluded: but all Christian men were not therefore eligible. Certain weighty qualifications, and circumstances morally clear, were to be sought in such as desired to do this excellent work.

Hence one sees the mistake such as Calvin make when they talk of “ordaining pastors.” For “pastors and teachers the apostle treats in Eph. 4 as Christ's gift for the perfecting of the saints. Ordination there was where either government or even service in external things was the object; and the only lawful authority descended from Christ through the apostles whom He chose (or apostolic delegates, such as Timothy or Titus, specially commissioned to act for an apostle in this respect) to appoint the bishops or elders and the deacons.

No doubt apostles hold an unique place. They stand the first in point of gifts (χαρ■σματα, 1 Cor. 12; δ■ματα, Eph. 4); but they were also the chief of appointed authorities with title to appoint subordinate authorities in the Lord's name. Hence they, and they only, are seen in scripture appointing presbyters and deacons, either directly or through an authorized deputy in a given sphere like Titus. Never is such a fact heard of as a presbyter ordaining a presbyter or a deacon. It destroys the whole principle of authority descending from above as in Scripture; but, whatever else may or must go, scripture cannot be broken.

If we are familiar with scripture, we shall soon learn that evangelists, and pastors and teachers, are simply Christ's gifts, without question of ordination any more than prophets, whom none (but fanatics that neglect scripture for their own quasi-divine communications) would think of ordaining. They are all alike bound to exercise their gift in immediate responsibility to Him who gave and sent them for ministerial work, for edifying the body of the Christ.

Ye men who call for order in this matter, why do ye not heed the order of the Lord, alone recognized in holy writ? Is it that you are so prejudiced as to see nothing but the traditional order of your own sect? Beware of giving up all principle, and if you know your own order to be scripturally valueless, of being content with any order, provided it be human and contrary to God's word. I am grieved deeply for you, my brethren, if the only order you decry is that which is solely founded on and formed by obedience to scripture, alike in what is done or not done. Search and see where you are as to this good work; search the scriptures whether these things are so. God caused His word to be written that it might be understood and obeyed.

The Catholic error is the confusion of ministry and rule with priesthood, and this error is fundamental. It flows from ignorance of the gospel, and is of either Jewish or heathen extraction; where the living relationship of children reconciled to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is unknown. All Christians are priests (Heb. 10; 1 Peter 2; Rev. 6). Nor is it a question of words or title only, but of fact. They are brought nigh to God by Christ's blood. Having a great high-priest they are exhorted now to come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb. 4) yea into the holies by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil. None but a priest of the highest dignity could do so, tremblingly and once a year; whereas “brethren” as such are free to do so habitually. But all Christians are not ministers in the word, only those to whom the Lord by the Spirit has given the gift. Having gifts then differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy,” &c. (Rom. 12).

The Protestant mistake is the confusion of gifts with offices or charges. The gifts were in association with the body of Christ, as we see wherever they are spoken of. Local charges are never found mixed up with gifts, though individuals might have both. It was when Christ ascended on high that He gave gifts, some beyond controversy to lay the foundation, as the apostles and prophets; others, as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to carry out the work in its more ordinary shape. Such is the true source and character of ministry in the word. For ministry is serving Christ the Lord in the exercise of whatever gift may have been given for any purpose of His love. Hence, even in its humblest form, it is essentially in the unity of His body, and not limited to this or that locality: whereas local charge, which has government for its aim, is based on the possession of qualities chiefly moral (with or without specific gift in the word) which would give weight in dealing with conscience, or righteous aptitude in the discharge of external duty. The importance of the distinction is great because men quite ignore the real permanence and universal character of gifts, and merge all in the local charges, which have come to be regarded as inalienable and exclusive fixtures, one of them the minister, the other (singular or plural) being a subordinate office, and in some places the noviciate to the higher grade. The truth seen in scripture is that where the assemblies had time to grow up a little, the apostles used to choose elders or presbyters for the disciples (never the disciples for themselves); which as clearly shows, that there were assemblies which as yet had them not, and might, as some, never in fact have them, for want of apostolic authority (direct or indirect) to appoint them: a comforting consideration for those who cleave to scriptural order and shrink from make-shift, believing that the Lord who so ordered things is worthy of all trust, without inventions of our own in default of that order.

“Faithful [is] the word: if any one is eager for oversight, he is desirous of a good work. The overseer [or bishop] therefore must be irreproachable, husband of one wife, temperate, sober, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, but gentle, not contentions, not fond of money, one that ruleth well his own house, having children in subjection, with all gravity, (but if one knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he care for God's assembly?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the devil's charge [or judgment]. But he must also have good testimony from those without, lest he fall into reproach and a snare of the devil” (ver. 1-7).

“Bishopric,” or “office of a bishop,” misleads here; because the modern office, with which most are familiar, so greatly differs from the primitive reality. For there were in each assembly several, with co-ordinate governmental duties of a circumscribed nature, however valuable and to be honored in their place. Hence it appears best and wisest, as well as most consistent, to call the function

“oversight” and the functionary “overseer,” in accordance with the Authorized Version of Acts 20:28, where the elders of the Ephesian assembly (ver. 17), who met the apostle at Miletus, are so designated. There it will be observed that it is not episcopal rulers of many dioceses, or of separate assemblies, still less the several chiefs! that are styled and called presbyters, because they must have been of the lower grade to attain the higher. But the elders, or presbyters, are called “overseers” or bishops; and this of the single assembly in Ephesus.

What honest man of intelligence can deny that this passage is incompatible with either Episcopacy, or Presbyterianism, or yet Congregationalism, the three distinctive claimants of Christendom? For it is death to “the” minister of the two latter no less than to the “prelate” of the former. They are, all of them, manifest inventions since apostolic times, in collision irreconcilable with the plain facts and the all-important principles of the days when the divine word regulated those who called on the name of the Lord. And wherein is antiquity to be accounted of, if it be human? What are they but shades of contending earthenware, a pretender higher than any of these, the Papacy, being by far the weakest and the worst of all spiritually? Other scriptures as Acts 14:23; 15 Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1 might be readily enforced in confirmation; but to an upright soul I feel it enough to stand on the footing of a single passage of God's word, and so no more is added now. The scripture, we repeat, cannot be broken.

The formula with which the apostle here opens recurs in this epistle, though found but once respectively in the Second to Timothy and in that to Titus. Here it appears three times, on the first (i. 15) and third (iv. 9) occasions with the suited addition, “and worthy of all acceptation,” which could not properly be in the case before us, any more than in the Second Epistle, or in that to Titus.

It is a question of government; and faithful the saying: whoever is eager for oversight desires a good or honorable work. Moral qualities, not gifts, are the requisite; and personal or relative circumstances of good report. Hence to be husband of one wife was sought as well as a character free from reproach. How many evangelists God has deigned to bless, who had been shameless sinners in violence, or in corruption! Not such could the overseer be. Again, if a man had more than one wife, he was (not to be then refused fellowship; for many a Jew or Gentile so situated might believe the gospel; but) ineligible to be a holy guardian of order according to God among the saints. Self-restraint and moderation and modesty or good order were sought in one set over the rest: else the appeal to others must be undermined by his own shortcomings. It was also of moment that active love should be proved in hospitality, as well as intelligence or aptitude to teach, if one were not necessarily a teacher. Yet sitting over wine, and the quarrelsome character it breeds, could not be tolerated for this work, but a gentle uncontentious spirit, free from the love of money, and used to rule well his household, with children subject in all gravity. For there too practical inconsistency would be fatal; and so much the more, as God's assembly needs far more care than one's own house.

Further, one newly come to the faith, “a novice,” was objectionable (not of course for the exercise of any gift confided by the Lord, but) for this delicate position in dealing with others, “lest being puffed he fall into the devil's charge (or judgment, κρ■μα). “Condemnation” is too strong an expression and not the sense intended. The allusion appears to be to the remarkable passage in Ezek. 28 where the King of Tyrus is set forth in terms which seem to reflect a still more exalted

creature's fall through self-complacency and self-importance. The whole is wound up by the demand that he should also have good testimony from those that are without “lest he fall into reproach and a snare of the devil.” This has nothing of course to do with creature vanity or pride, occupied with its position as compared with that of others. It points to the danger from an ill reputation; for if not kept in the presence of God, (and how hard is this in having much to do with others!) what advantage the consciousness of that would give to the enemy, both to calumniate and to entangle! For one in so public and responsible a place, if the report be not good, Satan knows how to cover him with shame, in his desire to avoid hypocrisy, or to lead into at least the semblance of hypocrisy, if he shrink from shame.

It is not an ordinary saint who suits the serious and honorable work of overseeing; nor can one be surprised, unless vitiated by ecclesiastical tradition or the pride of man unjudged, that an apostle, or a specially qualified apostolic man, is the only one seen in scripture competent to nominate presbyters. Never was the assembly, whatever the piety or intelligence of those who made it up, entrusted with a choice so difficult to discharge. Such are the facts of God's word; which entirely fall in with the principle that authority does not come from below, whatever may be the theories of men ancient or modern, but from above. It is from Christ the Lord, who not only gives gifts as Head of the church, but is also the source and channel of all true authority, as has been already noticed.

Chapter 10

On 1 Timothy 3:8-13

It is generally assumed that “deacons” or “ministers” (as some prefer to translate, in order to guard from confounding them with the lower or earlier grade of clergy, so familiar in modern times) answer to “the seven” (Acts 6, 21) who served tables in the daily ministration at Jerusalem. It is true that “the seven” are not so styled; and that elsewhere there is no thought of “seven” deacons. It is also true that in Jerusalem at the first prevailed a state of having all things common wholly peculiar to that place and time, which created the necessity for the apostles to appoint the same, both to allay murmuring of others, and to allow themselves leisure for continuing steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word. Admitting however all due to the early Jerusalem form and order, I agree with others that substantially the same office is in view. “The seven” served as deacons in the circumstances proper to that day; as others served elsewhere in a more ordinary way. In Jerusalem at least they were chosen by the disciples, and the apostles laid their hands on them with prayer.

“Deacons likewise [must be] grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of base gain, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also be first proved, then let them serve as deacons, being blameless. Women likewise [must be] grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of one wife, conducting their children and their houses well; for those who have served well as deacons gain for themselves a good degree, and great boldness in faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

Manifestly the requirements for the deacons are not so high as those for bishops or overseers, though there be somewhat in common. Their duties are of a lower character. Gravity was sought as well as the absence of deceit. These would naturally be required even in the commonest intercourse of life; and failure in them would bring contempt upon their office. For if every Christian is called to walk after Christ, surely not less is a deacon to reflect His light even in the commonest things he has to do. Again, he must not be given to much wine, nor be greedy of base gain: either would be ruinous to the due fulfillment of his functions and to the confidence which he ought to inspire in others. Far fuller we have seen to be the demand for the bishop who must be without reproach, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; which are not said of the deacon save so far as gravity may approach. In this they do strongly meet, that as the bishop was not to be long (or quarrelsome) over wine, so the deacon was to be not given to much wine.” And as the deacon was not to be greedy of base gain, so the bishop was to be no lover of money. There is no question of aptness to teach for the deacon as for the bishop, but even deacons must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. So indeed is it binding on every saint; but if laxity were allowed in office-bearers, what could more stumble the world, grieve the saints, and dishonor the Lord?

It may be worth while to remark than mystery, as it never means what is unintelligible, so it is never applied to an institution or sacrament. “Stewards of the mysteries of God” means those called and responsible for bringing out the special truths of Christianity. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are

never so described; and the term cannot be with propriety predicted of them as rites but only at most of the truths represented by them. Deacons, however, are not called “stewards” of the mysteries of God, though they must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, that is, the distinctive truth of Christianity. Of course the Old Testament abides of divine authority for every conscience and of exceeding value for every Christian. But we have further revelation in the New Testament, and that of truth wholly unknown to saints before Christ. The mystery of the faith expresses the truth which had never been revealed before, the general system of that which is commonly called Christianity beyond what was known of old, though of course confirming it in the most interesting manner and in the highest degree. That truth deals with the conscience in the closest way and purges it. But it is also possible that high truth might be held with habitually low practice. This could not be in a deacon, as it is unworthy of any Christian. He was called to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Others might not be able to judge directly of the state of his conscience, but an irregular walk is the clearest proof that a man's conscience cannot be pure. Where that was evident, it was permitted yea bound, to judge this.

Even here there was to be care in the gradual introduction of them to their duties, “and let these also first be proved, then let them serve as deacons, being blameless.” Proving them first might bring out their unfitness for the work, for there are many saints even, who cannot bear a little brief authority, and that which outwardly raises such soon exposes to moral degradation. To walk blamelessly in the least of such new duties was no small testimony of their fitness to serve in all.

Women in the nearest relationship with them are not forgotten. They in like manner “must be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.” The duties of their husbands would give them opportunities of knowing much of a delicate nature; they were therefore to be both grave and not evil-speakers, sober or temperate, faithful in all things. None but such could help their husbands aright; those who were otherwise would not only hinder but lead to constant difficulty and scandal.

Nor was it only that the bishop must be husband of one Wife, deacons must be the same. Polygamy was thrill being dealt a death-wound. No matter what might be the qualities and competency of a Christian, he could not even be a deacon if he had, like many in those days, more than one wife. This was strictly ruled for all who held office in the assembly, whatever might be the forbearance of grace whilst the powers that be tolerated things otherwise.

Further, like the bishops, deacons must rule their children and their houses well. It was not allowable in those that served even in outward things that disorder should reign among their children or in their households. The assembly of God is set in this world till the Lord come to manifest His will and please Him.

But deacons, like the seven, were not tied only to that service which they were appointed to fulfill; for those who have served well as deacons gain for themselves a good degree and great boldness in faith which is in Christ Jesus. So we see in both Stephen and Philip who were of the seven: the one being greatly honored of God as a teacher of the truth; the other being largely used to spread the gospel where it had never yet penetrated. This was to gain for themselves a good standing, and no one who reads the Holy Spirit's account of their testimony and its effects can doubt their great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 11

On 1 Timothy 3:14-15

The presence of an apostle was an incalculable boon both for founding and for building up the assembly in any place. But what do we not owe also to his absence? Therefore he wrote, as here to Timothy, so at other times to this or that assembly, so as to give us in a permanent form the mind of the Spirit as applied to the instructive wants, difficulties, and dangers of the saints here below.

“These things write I to thee, hoping to come unto thee rather quickly. But if I should tarry that thou mayest know how we ought to behave in God's house, seeing it is a living God's assembly, pillar and ground-work of the truth” (ver. 14, 15). Thus the loss of the apostle's presence is turned to profit, not of Timothy only but of us also. From detailed duties we are now in presence of the great truth that God has a house on earth where each Christian has to conduct himself aright. Our relationships are always the measure and mold as well as the ground of our duty. How solemn, yet how precious it is to know that God has His dwelling place on earth with which every believer has to do in faith and practice. No doubt this was meant to act on Timothy's soul; but the form of the phrase indicates that it was not limited to Timothy; it is so expressed as to take in any and every saint in his own position. It is no longer now an overseer or a deacon, or their wives. All is on the broadest ground, yet what could act more powerfully on conscience than to find oneself called to behave suitably to God's house? All the English versions from Wyclif to the Authorized refer the call to Timothy only and his personal duty. I cannot but agree with the Revisers that the application is purposely left more general. Perhaps however “how men ought to behave themselves” is hardly so happy as “how one ought to behave oneself.” It seems too vague, as preceding English Versions are rather too limited.

In the Old Testament God had His house on earth. It was not so always. In the earlier dealings of God with man He had no such dwelling-place here below. There was none when man was unfallen in the brief sojourn of Eden; still less was there during the long sorrowful years of fallen man's history till the flood. Nor was it a privilege vouchsafed to Noah when God established His covenant and “set His bow in the cloud for a token between Him and the earth.” Not even the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had it yet vouchsafed to them, though Jacob did say in his fear, “how dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” More correctly did he add “This stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house.” As yet, God had not actually any house which He could own on earth, though faith might anticipate it.

On what then is God's house based? On redemption. Hence as Exodus is pre-eminently the book of redemption, it is precisely that book of the Old Testament which first and most fully treats of God's house. For the second book of Moses naturally divides into three parts: first, the evidence of the people's need of redemption; secondly the accomplishment of redemption in all its fullness; thirdly, the great consequence of redemption in the founding and ordering of God's house or tabernacle with all the appurtenances, and the surpassing glory of His presence filling that in which

He was now pleased to dwell.

But, in accordance with the general character of the Jewish economy, the dwelling of God was but typical, manifesting itself after an external sort. And as the law was the ground-work of God's government of His people, so the glory that dwelt in the sanctuary had a judicial character, whatever the long-suffering that bore with a stiff-necked and guilty people from generation to generation. When patience with their idolatry, in the people, the priests, the kings, even of David's house, must be, if continued longer the sanction of their apostasy and of His own dishonor, that very glory judges them by the power of Babylon (mother of idols) and is seen slowly departing from their midst, though not forever, but assuredly till He come whose right it is to restore this, as all things. Compare Ezek. 1-11;40-48

Meanwhile, Christ has come; but the people would not have their King; the anointed of God. For the time they have forfeited all, having both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and driven out the apostles, “pleasing not God and contrary to all men, forbidding the Gentiles to be spoken to that they might be saved, filling up their sins always, so that wrath is come upon them to the uttermost..” But their greatest evil is the occasion of God's greatest good to man. Israel's rejection of the Messiah has brought about the redemption that is in Christ Jesus through His cross, blood-shedding, and resurrection! And now God deigns to dwell not merely in the midst of a people externally, but most really and intimately in His own and with them forever by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. “Ye are God's building” says Paul to the Corinthian assembly, “know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you”? (1 Cor. 3:9-16. Compare also 2 Cor. 6:16). The same truth applies also individually as we have seen it collectively. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). In both cases God's dwelling-place is maintained by the presence of His Spirit, not by a mere outward display. “Ye also are builded together for God's habitation in virtue of the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22), the reality and permanence of which indwelling is measured by Christ's having obtained an eternal redemption. What a call to holiness, not only in personal walk but in our joint responsibilities. Those who truly believe and appreciate this incomparable favor are of all others under the deepest obligation to behave accordingly.

But the apostle adds “which” (or “seeing that it") “is a living God's assembly.” This description gives great force to God's house, and in direct contrast with a dead idol, the boast and shame of all Gentiles everywhere. Form without life is valueless under the gospel; though life acts and shows itself in forms for which scripture is the only adequate authority, for it is God's word and not man’s. What is He to be accounted of? Nor does a dead assembly suit a living God. But the point above all remains—not what they are, but what He is. It is His assembly: let them never forget it.

Further, it is characterized as “pillar” and “groundwork,” or support, of the truth. Christ is the truth, and so is the written word, as well as the Spirit. They are the—truth, either objectively, or in power. But the assembly is the pillar on which the truth is inscribed and upheld before the world which believes not in Christ, receives not the word, and neither sees nor knows the Holy Spirit. The truth is not in faithless Judaism; nor, is it in Mohammedan imposture; if possible yet less in the abominable vanities of heathendom. The church is the responsible witness and support of the truth on the earth. There only could men see the truth (compare 2 Cor. 3:2, 3), if they could not

read a letter of the scriptures. Alas! how great the ruin, if we judge the privilege and the responsibility of the church by the word as it bears on its actual state. He who so weighs all before God will never take things lightly, but will search the same word in order to find how grace provides for the path of the faithful in such circumstances; so that one may neither acquiesce in evil nor give way to unbelieving despair, but judge oneself as well as the departure, in order to do God's will in faith.

There is not a single good reason to sever the last clause from the assembly, and to connect it with “the mystery of godliness,” as is done chiefly by Germans of the 17th and 18th centuries (including even Ben-gel). Not only do I agree with Alford and Ellicott in their rejection of a dislocation so abrupt and artificial, but I maintain that it would strip the assembly of its essential place here defined, and that it would detract from, instead of adding to, the true dignity of the mystery of godliness. It is a construction therefore burdened with almost every conceivable objection, without one genuine merit, and in my judgment the offspring of not ignorance only but deplorably low and wrong views of the church's place and duty here below. Scarcely better is the reference to Timothy as by some ancients and moderns. To the assembly alone is the true application.

On 1 Timothy 3:16

The assembly, or church, of God then is in no way the truth, but its responsible witness and support on the earth before all men. Not the church but Christ is the standard and expression of what God is, and of man and all else, as revealed in Holy Writ, the one daily and perfect rule of faith, the word that abides forever. So far from being before the word, so as to formulate the truth, it was the word making known Christ which the Spirit of God used to quicken and fashion those who compose the church. Thus to the truth the church in God's grace owes its being; without the truth, or rather abandoning it (for, to be the church, the truth must have been possessed and maintained), the faithless church becomes not null only but the special object of divine judgment. Its privileges furnish the measure of its guilt; nor has anything more helped on its ruin than the fond assumption (in the teeth of Rom. 11, 2 Thessalonians and of many other warnings) that the ancient people were broken-off branches, that the now favored Gentile might be grafted in never to fail or be cut off, as rebellious Israel has been.

Hence the propriety of the striking summary which follows as the conclusion of the chapter: not the heavenly relationship of the church, but the fundamental truth set forth in the person of Christ, and graven, not only on the hearts of Christians as such, but on the assembly for its public confession, its habitual praise, and the practice of every day.

“And confessedly great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in flesh, was justified in Spirit, appeared unto angels, was preached among Gentiles, was believed on in [the] world, was received up in glory” (ver. 16).

The introductory clause is most instructive as well as impressive. “Mystery” means a truth fully divulged, never a sacrament, (though important in its place and for the purpose intended of the Lord). The secret (now revealed) of piety or godliness is the truth of Christ. He is the source, power and pattern of what is practically acceptable to God—His person as now made known. True life is living by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. To look on Him, or for Him as a Jew once might in faith, is not enough. Here He stands revealed in the great essential lineaments of the truth. The church lives, moves, and has its being in presenting Him thus to every eye and heart. Men may disbelieve or gainsay to their own destruction but to present the truth of Christ is, we may say, the reason of the church's existence, rather than the admirably good results which flow both for each saint within and for those without who come to believe unto their own eternal blessing.

Some doubtless will cry out as if “He who,” as in the Revised Version, grievously displaces “God,” as in the Authorized Version which follows editions formed on the more modern copies. But weigh well the better attested reading, and you may soon happily learn how much more exact is the relative in this connection, as it also really supposes the self-same truth in the background. For where would be even the sense of saying that Adam or Abraham, that David, Isaiah, or Daniel, or that any other human being, “was manifested in flesh” An angelic creature so manifested would be revolting for the end in view, and could no more avail than a man. If only a man, no other way than

“flesh” was open to him: the mightiest “hunter before the Lord,” the subtlest wit, the most consummate orator or poet or warrior or statesman, “he also is flesh,” no less than the least one born of woman. Not so the one Mediator between God and men; for though He deigned to become man, He was intrinsically and eternally divine. But for the counsels and ways of grace, He might conceivably have come as He pleased, in His own glory, or in His Father's, or in that of the holy angels, without emptying and humbling Himself to incarnation and atonement. Here the opening and immeasurable wonder of the truth is the glory of Him who was born of the virgin and thus manifested in flesh. So in the kindred passage of John 1 it is written, “The Word became flesh,” where it had been carefully laid down before that “The Word was God,” as well as “with God,” in the beginning before He made anything in the universe made by Him.

1. Not only is it a truth to test every conscience: what an appeal to the heart! what infinite love to ruined and guilty sinners, for whose sake He was thus manifested to the glory of God! He came to make known, as only He could, God as light and love, Himself the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man, Himself the Son of man that came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many Herein is love, not that we loved God (as we ought according to the law, but we did not, yea we hated both Father and Son without a cause), but that He loved us and gave His Son a propitiation for our sins. And herein was laid the new and everlasting ground of God's righteousness, where man was proved hopelessly unrighteous, in the cross and blood of Christ, that God might be just and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Here however it is not the work done in infinite love that God might righteously do His will in sanctifying us through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; it is His person in that state in which alone that work could avail, the Son incarnate, “He who was manifested in flesh.”

2. Next, we are told, He “was justified in Spirit." He was as truly man as any; but His state was, as that of no other, characterized absolutely by the Spirit of God, from the beginning right through life and death, in uninterrupted energy of holiness and incorruption till He rose from the dead and took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. His unvarying life was to do God's will, the only Man who never once did His own will. He felt, spoke, acted, uniformly in the Spirit: as He was conceived in the virgin's womb, so He was in due time anointed, and finally marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection. Compare Rom. 1:4, 1 Peter 3:18. It was His perfection as man in the midst of an evil ruined world to do, not miracles only, but everything in the Spirit's power; where we who believe have to follow in His steps, endowed with that same Spirit now given to us in His grace; but we, with our old man, which He had not save to die for it on the cross, and which therefore was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin, having died to it.

3. He “appeared to angels.” The Son of God was made visible to angels, not only on marked occasions as specified in scripture from His birth of woman till He ascended on high, but generally we may say through His incarnation. But is this all that the clause implies? May it not describe, what appears more characteristic, that, when He ceased to be seen among men on earth, not even the chosen witnesses beholding Him conversant with them more, He was an object of sight to. angels? The earthly scene closed, He certainly has to do most expressly with all the angels of God, seeing they worship Him. Nor can any condition be more outside the ordinary way in which a Jew thinks of the Messiah, even when glory dawns on Immanuel's land. However this may be, as to which I should not be too bold.

4. “He was preached among Gentiles.” Here it is not merely beyond habitual Jewish expectations but in contrast with it. They looked for Him to reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously, no doubt to have the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, but still set as Jehovah's King upon His holy hill of Zion, Israel the center of that wide circle of blessing and glory here below. Such is to be the display of the kingdom when He comes again and shall have cleared away the apostate and rebellious despisers. But here it is the secret which the Christian knows now— “preached among Gentiles,” instead of reigning over Israel. This indeed is the evident truth, and would be plain and simple enough to us, if Gentile boasting did not darken it by claiming Israel's place as now indefeasibly the portion of Christendom, to the denial of the ancient people's hopes, as well as the destruction of all right perception of our own, incomparably brighter, even as the heavens are higher than the earth.

5. So again He “was believed on in [the] world,” exactly describing the essential difference in this sphere from that which prophecy held out and God will make good in the age to come, when every eye shall see the Son of man, and a dominion be given Him, and glory, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: and this dominion an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away (as the old empires did), and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (as the last or Roman Empire must, though it be revived by the power of the pit, in order to meet the peculiar judgment of God on its surpassing lawlessness and self-exaltation in the last days). Christ now is an object of faith only, not yet reigning in power over the world, as Rev. 11:15 announces.

6. He “was received up in glory.” Such is the suited and worthy close of this concise but comprehensive form of sound words, so as to leave fresh on all souls that read it the bright impress of Christ in glory. For if He came down in love, as another admirably remarked, He went up in righteousness. The work given Him to do He had accomplished at infinite cost to Himself and perfectly to God's glory, even where all might have seemed hopeless—as to sin, and a world of sin; that the adequate answer to the cross of the suffering Son of man (who had thus glorified God) was that God should glorify Him in Himself, and that straightway. John 13 And this accordingly is the righteousness of which the Spirit when come at Pentecost afforded evidence to the world. The world had proved its unrighteous hatred in rejecting Him whom God raised from the dead and set at His own right hand. This is the righteousness which the presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven demonstrates: the crucified. Son of man sits on the throne of God. And here we have the same glorious fact which completes the circle of the truth embraced by the Spirit of God in the mystery of piety. How wonderful to find it all in a few facts of our Lord Jesus! But the wonder melts into worship, as we bear in mind that if He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill up all things. He that emptied Himself to become a servant was in Himself God and Lord. The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand.

Chapter 13

On 1 Timothy 4:1-5

The assembly, in its practical and responsible standing before men as the witness of God's revealed truth and will, naturally leads the apostle to treat of Satan's efforts to undermine and falsify, not without warning on God's part.

“But the Spirit saith expressly that in latter times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, by hypocrisy of legend-mongers, branded in their own conscience, forbidding to marry, [bidding] to abstain from meats which God created for reception with thanksgiving by those faithful and fully acquainted with the truth. Because every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through God's word and intercession” (ver. 1-5).

The mischief here set out is not the wider and later evil of 2 Tim. 3 when christendom would be but men professing the Lord's name, a form of piety with the denial of its power, no better than heathen in reality (compare end of Rom. 1), though with the semblance and the responsibility of God's final revelation of grace and truth in Christ. Still less is it the frightful apostasy of 2 Thess. 2 which is to close the age before the Lord Jesus be revealed in judgment from heaven to introduce the new age and the kingdom of God to be manifested in power and blessing universally over the earth. No such absolute or comprehensive enmity to the gospel and the Lord is seen here, but rather a sentimental and intellectual affectation of ascetic sanctimoniousness, the germs of which were even then at work and which were soon to develop into the Gnostic sects. It was human pretension, and not the faith of the holy communications of the divine mind nor the submission of heart to His will who cannot but direct us for His glory through the corruptions of a world ruined by lust.

Here the liberty which characterizes those who have the Spirit is supplanted by a systematic bondage of man's will, setting up to be holier than God, and founded on airy conceits which, being exaggerations of the imagination, are never the truth which in the highest degree they claim to be. It is not the ease but the pretentious effort of the flesh inflated by the enemy, which at a later day brought in the oriental error of two divine principles, an evil as well as a good: the good having to do with the soul and characterized by light; the evil with the body and characterized by darkness; the God of the New Testament in contrast with the God of the Old in its ultimate Manichean form of heterodoxy. The root of this is apparent here. Slight on the creatures of God issues in slight of the Creator. Nor is the error dead yet, though it may retreat into cloudy phrases, shunning collision with the truth. In our day it has taken the shape of death to nature and neglect of relationships. It is the same principle which the Holy Spirit denounces here as the denial of fundamental truth, with which the highest revelations are never inconsistent. He that wrote to the Romans wrote also to the Ephesians, and the same apostle is the author of the Epistles to the Colossians and to the Hebrews. So it will always be found that those who are most truly versed in the mysteries of God are careful to maintain the immutable truths of His nature and the due place of the creature.

Here all was at fault. “Some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, by hypocrisy of legend-mongers.” There are thus three parties in the abandonment of the faith; first, the victims of the errors, secondly, the unseen power of evil, the spirits or demons that misled, thirdly, the legend-mongers who were the medium. This shows the importance of a correct translation. For it is not meant that the demons were the utterers of lies in hypocrisy, any more than that they were branded with a hot iron in their conscience. And this probably led to the softening down of the true phrase. Restore the medium and any such necessity disappears. A man may utter falsehoods in hypocrisy. We can scarcely talk of a demon's hypocrisy; and scripture certainly gives no warrant for attributing conscience to a seducing spirit. But this is exactly true of the false teachers who were carried along by these unseen agents of evil. They were the hypocrites and they had “their own” conscience branded, in distinction from the unhappy but less guilty men who were led astray by their means.

They forbad to marry and bade men to abstain from meats which God created for reception with thanks. giving by those faithful and fully acquainted with the truth. There was the assumption of extraordinary purity. But the wiles of the devil were in it; for the assumption impeached God's institution of marriage, the bond of society here below. And God is not mocked. The result soon showed that the evil one was its author, for the deepest moral corruption was the consequence.

Grace may call a servant of God for special and worthy reasons to a path inconsistent with the married relation, because its duties could not be fulfilled with the due accomplishment of the objects of that path. So we see in the apostle Paul himself, as he lets us know in chap. 7 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. But this very chapter maintains the ordinary rule of the married estate, as elsewhere he exhorts that it should be every way in honor. Only the call of God is paramount. Yet he that is so called respects and never despises the ordinary rule because of that exception. Error lays hold of the exception (for even error cannot subsist without a scrap or show of truth) and converts the exception into a human rule. It is Satan occupying the place and rights of the Lord; his aim is to bring God into contempt and lead man dazzled with the vain hope of higher holiness into the depths of corruption. It is the truth (and no lie is of the truth which sanctifies).

So in bidding men to abstain from meats the same disrespect of God appears. He created them to be received with thanksgiving. No doubt all mankind were meant to share the benefit and do so in their measure; but many partake like brutes without real thanksgiving, often without even the form. The faithful thoroughly acquainted with the truth receive such gifts of God and give thanks. Satan exalts some to such a height of philosophic folly as to deny that they came from His hand who reconciled them to Himself by the death of His Son; then to imagine them to be the temptations of an evil being; finally to conceive that there is no such thing as creation or consequently a Creator. So that the error if a little beginning becomes the beginning of a very great evil. Here, again, the importance of fasting is in no way impaired by the thankful reception of daily bread. Rather do both things go together in every sound and godly mind. But the wiles of the devil were shown in availing himself of abstinence from food. Fasting is admirable in its own place and for special reasons from time to time as the grace of God may direct. Wholly opposed is the delusion of seducing spirits, which the legend-mongers turned into a law, as in the eschewing of marriage. “Because every creature of God is good and nothing to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through God's word and intercession.” Thus the ordinary prohibitions of the law disappear, for in this respect as in others the law made nothing perfect. The gospel, the full

revelation of Christ, whilst it rises to the glory of God in the Highest and stands in presence of the inscrutable depths of God's most holy judgment of sin in the cross, vindicates all the ways of God in creation as well as in providence. Hence the Christian, if not the Jew, can say that every creature of God is good and nothing to be rejected; but there is the proviso— “if received with thanksgiving.” An ungrateful saint is an anomaly. The simplest believer cannot more than the most intelligent overlook the kindness as well as the wisdom of God, that created all things and has Himself said, “I will in no wise fail thee; neither will I in any wise forsake thee.”

But the apostle adds a reason which confirms the thanksgiving of the believer; “for it is sanctified through God's word and intercession.” Thus is the use of every creature of God guarded. It is no mere indiscriminate license; but as the restrictions of a law for a circumscribed people vanished before the light of the gospel, and the goodness of God was heard declaring that He had cleansed what Jewish prejudice would have to be common (to the pure all things are pure), so the receiver proved his faith in “God's word” by the answer of his “intercession.” Not their will but His word sanctioned the use of every creature good for food; and their hearts, brought to know His grace in salvation, draw near in that free intercourse which is assured of, as it springs from, His love made known to us in Christ and His redemption. But it is an intercourse based on His grace, which takes in the least things as not too little for God, as it has learned in Christ that the greatest things of God are not too great for His children.

The word ■ντ. is here translated “intercession,” in order to keep up its specialty in accordance with its sense elsewhere as in chap. 2:1. “Prayer,” though seemingly less harsh and as in all the earlier English, so still in the Revision, is too vague to express the free intercourse which grace has opened with God for His children. I admit that “intercession” sounds inadequate; but I know no better counterpart in our language and therefore have ventured to explain what appears to be conveyed. If God's word communicated the reality and extent of His gracious will, the faithful can speak unrestrainedly their heart's sense of His loving bounty. Thus is all that is received “sanctified.” For, now that we know Christ dead and risen, here too we can say the old things are passed away; behold they are become new. And all things are of God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.

Chapter 14

On 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Thence the apostle turns to a more precise application and at the close to what is yet more strictly personal.

“Setting these things before the brethren, thou wilt be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith and the good teaching which thou hast followed rip. But the profane and old-womanish fables refute, and exercise thyself unto piety; for bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but piety is profitable for all things, having promise of life that is now and of that which is to come. The word [is] faithful and worthy of all acceptation; for unto this end we labor and suffer reproach, because we have our hope set on a living God who is Savior of all, especially of faithful [men]” (ver. 6-10].

The language employed is of studied moderation. Suggesting these things to the brethren Timothy would be a good minister of Christ Jesus. Dignity does not lose by lowliness in any: in a young man it is most becoming and gives the most weight to a solemn warning. The object of all ministry is the exalting of Christ, but this cannot be at the expense of truth or holiness. The substitutes of the enemy may look fair and certainly flatter the flesh; but God's word alone can be trusted. He infallibly secures not one thing only but all in the harmony of His revealed will. Human tradition is as worthless as human imagination, and both if accepted will be found in the long run only to supplant God's word, and play into the power of the enemy through yielding to the will of man. To lay before the brethren what the Spirit expressly speaks is good ministry—it is to serve Christ Jesus. So He Himself walked and served here below. His food was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work: What more blessed than so to walk and serve Him now? Men are best saved where Christ alone is the object, as He is the source of all power in the Spirit to guide and sustain. He called and He sent forth at His charges. How different the moral effect for the minister as well as for others of serving a society even if that society were the church of God, the mistress of the service! He who seeks to please men cannot be thoroughly Christ's bondman. We cannot serve two masters.

Timothy, in putting forth divine truth, would be a good servant of Christ Jesus. “Nourished in the words of the faith and in the good teaching which he had followed up.” This is of moment. To go on well in Christ's service one must be trained or nourished up in the words of the faith. To give out, one must take in. But the proper material is not the science or literature of men but the “words of the faith.” The good teaching which Timothy had already followed up closely, yields matter for the right service of Christ who repudiates the wisdom of this age. The words of the faith are ever beyond the age and above it. It is to Christ's dishonor to mingle with them the persuadable words of man's wisdom. The Holy Ghost has been given that there should be no lack through God's bounty and the most complete preservative against the seductions of the prince of the world.

What can be more contemptuous towards the constant snare of Jews as well as Gentiles than the apostle's exhortation! “The profane and old-womanish fables refuse.” So he characterizes that which takes the place of God's word, the food of faith. Where there is no healthy appetite of the

new man, fabulous dreams have ever an attraction for the heart and mind of man, which surely abound in proportion to distaste for divine revelation. They stimulate, they inflate, they in a measure satisfy nature. But the true God is not there, nor Jesus Christ whom He has sent, least of all where they dare most profanely to conceive and set forth either God or His Christ according to their own imaginings What can be more offensive than the pseudo-evangels about the Lord? How palpable the darkness in contrast with the true light which shines in Him according to the Gospels! How absurd, indeed, morally impotent, and positively mischievous the imaginary miracles of His childhood! How holy and wise and perfect the glimpses we have of the truth in the Gospel of Luke!

From oldwives' fables Timothy was to turn away. But “exercise thyself unto piety.” Service of Christ is admirable; but no greater danger if piety be neglected personally. This is of prime moment to be kept up in the soul as otherwise the comfort and joy as well as the sorrows and dangers of His service are most absorbing. The lightminded Corinthians were in great peril from the neglect of piety. The apostle had therefore transferred the exhortation and applied it to himself for their sakes, when he told them that he was in the habit of buffeting his body and leading it captive lest, after having preached to others, he should be himself reprobate or rejected. Not that he was careless of holiness and piety, but that they were. But he makes himself the example, unlike as it was to his way, that they might be warned of a very real danger for their own souls, not in distrust of God as to himself.

Here as in 1 Cor. 9 the figure appears to be taken from the public games, and the necessary preparation for them, so familiar to every Greek mind. Timothy was to be in constant training. “Exercise thyself unto piety, for bodily exercise is useful for a little, but piety is useful for all things having promise of life that now is and of that to come.” The allusion is evident. Outward exercise profits physically or as he says strictly, “bodily exercise is useful for a little.” Piety is spiritual exercise and demands as constant vigilance as holy self-restraint, as complete subjection to the revealed will of God, as training for the games called for habitual abstinence from every relaxing habit and daily practice toward the end in view. How little the latter! How transcendently the former! Piety is profitable for all things having promise of life that is now and of that to come. Christianity does not take tithes like Judaism, can allow no reserve though all be grace, has and from its very nature must have the entire man, dead to sin and alive unto God, right through the present life into eternity. And this practical scope of godliness is pre-eminent in these pastoral epistles; not so much heavenly privilege or dispensational peculiarity, as a sound and devoted life according to godliness. This the apostle presses on Timothy, as Timothy was bound to press it on others.

Hence the repetition of the formula so repeated in these epistles: “The word is faithful and worthy of all acceptation; for unto this end we labor and suffer reproach, because we have our hope set on a living God who is Savior of all, specially of faithful men.” It is no question here, it appears to me of Christ's work in the salvation of the lost who believe. It is of the living God as such, of whom the apostle speaks, in His character of preserver of men, as Job speaks (chap. 8:20). His providential care and government are before us, wherein nothing escapes His notice. So He clothes the herbage of the field and nourishes the birds of heaven which sow not, nor reap, nor gather into granaries. So He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. How much more are not His own better than many sparrows, even the hairs of their heads being all numbered! No Christian could forget for a moment the infinite privilege of eternal life and

redemption, of heavenly hope and everlasting glory; but, in presence of these unseen and eternal things, he might to his own great loss as well as the Lord's dishonor overlook the constant daily and special care of God in the ordinary matters of this life. Against such an error, verse 10 as well as the previous context would guard the soul. The highest truths do not supersede or even enfeeble the unchanging truth in its lowest range of application every day. It is the unfailing mark of the heterodox where it is so; and this let faithful men note well. It was never more rife than now. Grace never disparages law nor despises nature; but an intellectualism which avails itself of privilege to destroy responsibility and relationship.

“These things charge and teach. Let none despise thy youth, but be a pattern of the faithful in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the elderhood. Bestow care on these things; be wholly in them; that thy progress may be manifest to all. Take heed to thyself and the teaching; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt save thyself and those that hear thee” (ver. 11-16).

Here we have plain personal precepts for Timothy. Absence of assumption gives more, not less, weight to a solemn charge or a faithful teaching; and there was the more need as he was young, though he who despised on that account was inexcusable. But it was a serious reason for Timothy himself to cultivate such speech and manner of life, such love and faith and purity as ought to disarm even the naturally froward with whom he might have to do among the believers.

The adjoined terms give conclusive proof that the reading was not personal study but rather the public recitation of scripture for general instruction, for the exhortation and the teaching must refer to others; the importance of his own walk had been carefully insisted on just before. Hence, immediately after, he is reminded of that gift of grace which was imparted to him, the ground of his ministry: for no practical grace, however momentous morally and for God's glory, entitles a soul to go forward in Christ's service without such a gift. It was, as we are told afterward (2 Tim. 1:6), through the laying on of Paul's hands that the gift was in Timothy; but none the less were the elderhood associated with the apostle in the imposition of hands. They were its comely witnesses and his honored associates, though only to apostolic power under the Lord was the gift really due. And this is not more fully borne out by the facts and the language elsewhere than by the nice distinction of the prepositions in the account given by the two epistles to Timothy. So little are they to be heard who assume vagueness in a style strikingly precise, or, a love of mere variety without intentional distinction in phrases more exquisitely correct than in any work of any classic of antiquity however accurate. Here only, in inspired writ, can we be sure of the exact expression of the truth without affectation of any kind.

The connection of “prophecy” as well as of the “laying on of hands” is well illustrated by Acts 13:2, 3, where the Spirit designated Barnabas and Saul for the special mission to which they were separated; and their fellow-laborers thereon laid their hands on both, as conjointly commending them to the grace of God for the work they were about to undertake among the Gentiles. There is, however, this marked difference among others, that none of those who then laid hands on these already blessed servants of the Lord pretended to confer a gift on either. It was simply fellowship in commending men superior in position and power to themselves, and it seems certainly to have been repeated with Paul and Silas in Acts 15:40, as perhaps often. In Timothy's case through the

apostle was given a gift, which he must not neglect. Use of means is of moment that the gift be turned to the best account; but the gift from the Lord for ministerial work must be there as a foundation. “Bestow care on these things; be wholly in them, that thy progress may be manifest to all.” Diligent following up is called for, without distraction from other objects. Thus only is there growth and advance, which all fair men cannot fail to see.

But there is another caution of prime value, which if attended to entails rich blessing. “Take heed to thyself and the teaching,” and in this order. Vigilant and holy self-restraint is needed by no man so much as a teacher of the truth; for nothing corrupts one, to the Lord's dishonor and the stumbling of souls, more than a careless behavior combined with the highest doctrine. A consciously low walk ever tends to drag down the testimony in order to seem consistent; as the maintenance of the highest truth without a corresponding walk directly leads into hypocrisy. In doing aright in both, “thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee,” says the apostle. Salvation often as here means safeguarding all through.

On 1 Timothy 5:1-8

Having thus generally exhorted Timothy as to his own walk and work, reminded him of the gift conferred, urged on him practical piety and devotedness, and lifted him above all fear from his youth, the apostle goes into full details for his guidance in maintaining order among the saints so favored of God.

“Reprimand not an elder, but exhort [him] as a father, younger men as brethren, elder women as mothers, younger women as sisters in all purity. Honor widows that are widows indeed; but if any widow hath children or descendants, let them learn first to show piety toward their own house and render requital to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and left desolate hath set her hope on God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that devoteth herself to pleasure is dead while living. And these things charge, that they may be irreproachable. But if one neglecteth providing for his own and especially his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (ver. 1-8).

It is not the official elder who is here in view but any brother advanced in years. Of course the exhortation would apply if possible more to an elder in the official sense. But Timothy was not to speak harshly to an elder generally; he was rather to exhort him as a father. We can all feel how much is implied in this injunction; had we to reproach a parent about any fault, how much reverence would be due! What tenderness in touching that which we might rightly condemn! The humility of grace and respect alone would become us. Indeed love was to characterize his bearing towards younger men also. As brethren would he have him to regard them, and elder women as mothers. Younger women he was to view as sisters in all purity: such is the especial guard in the latter case.

This is practical Christianity in a servant of God, dear to the apostle, and particularly called to act when things were decaying. Order was not the less necessary because it was apt to be forgotten; the nearness of relationship into which the saints are brought by grace exposes to peculiar danger. Nothing more opposed to Christ than an official position without the need of the full flow of love; so that speech as well as conduct be always with grace seasoned with salt. And it was the more necessary in a comparatively young man. If no one was to despise his youth, Timothy was called to give no occasion of stumbling in anything. To this rule the apostle himself submitted that his ministry might not be blamed: “in everything,” says he, “commending our selves as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and true; as unknown, and well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and possessing all things.” Never did the apostle exact so much as, if we may so say, from himself. He is the best example in dealing with Timothy, of what he enjoins on Timothy

towards others.

Next comes the important case of those who had lost their husbands, and the more so as women were in the old world of that day. “Honor widows that are widows indeed.” Such is the introductory exhortation, and therefore the word is expressly of the most general bearing. Some if not many might not need material proof of care; but due regard was to be paid to all that were really widows. By this he means that they lived in a way which marked their habitual sense of loneliness and bowed to it as from God. The later ecclesiastical class may have been founded on such a passage as this; but no such thing really existed as yet so far as Scripture informs us. The context makes the meaning of the real widow plain. She had no immediate relations to take care of her, and therefore was to be the more an object of honor; and if destitute that honor would certainly imply support more or less according to her need. But it is a mistake to limit honor to such a provision, as many a real widow might have no such necessity. “Honor” here as elsewhere must be preserved in its own proper meaning.

“But if any widow has children or descendants, let them learn first to show piety to their own house and render requital to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.” Such a widow in distinction from those of verse 3 is commended to these immediate relatives, who must learn their duty if they did not know it. Singular to say, most of the ancient Fathers as well as some of the modern Germans including Winer, understand the widows to be the persons thus to learn: so Chrysostom, Theodoret and others among the Greeks, Jerome etc. among the Latins, and even Luther and Calvin of Reformation times. But the Syriac stands with others in the true view that it is the children or grandchildren who are called to learn, as best agreeing with the context, besides intrinsic soundness morally. Affectionate and pious respect was due from the younger to the widow of their family; and herein lay the strict sense of rendering requital. The church was never intended to swamp the family. Rather should the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ deepen the sense of every duty as well as enlarge the sphere of active love.

Among our English translators Wiclif of course is misled by the Vulgate. “But if any widow hath children of sones learne she first to gouern her hous” &c. Tyndale translated ■κγονα “neves;” and so is in the Protestant versions that followed down to the Authorized; which word at that day seems to have been used for grandsons or descendants generally, though now restricted to the issue of a brother or sister. It is no mistake therefore, but only an antiquated usage in the common translation, which seems best replaced by “descendants.” The Rhemish Version, as usual, cleaves to the error of the Vulgate: “let her learn first to rule her own house” &c. The true sense we have seen to be the duty, not of the widow, but of her immediate kin in descent, though as usual the apostle puts it in the largest possible form. If the ■κγονα or descendants were exhorted, it is not merely the χ■ρα or widow who is to be cared for, but of πρ■γονοι, the progenitors.

Only the Geneva V. among the English escaped the strange and general error of confounding piety or godliness with ruling one's own house; for which there is no real ground in the phrase or context.

“Now she that is a widow indeed and left desolate hath set her hope on God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.” Such is the picture that the apostle draws of the widow who is commended to the church's honor. “But she that devoteth herself to pleasure is dead while living.” The inconsistency of the habitual life in the latter case was most offensive to the apostle's

spirit, as it ought to be to all who feel what becomes the house of God in this world. We can never form a right judgment of becoming conduct if we do not bear in mind our relationship to God and the Lord Jesus. How unseemly to despise the chastening of His hand! Was a woman wholly to forget her desolation? Were she happy in the Lord (and this no chastening is intended to touch), the last thing she would indulge in is pleasure, Satan's sorry substitute in the world for happiness above it. Enjoyment of God and His Son only makes us realize the more the bitterness of a ruined world and of all real sorrow in it; but it lifts the heart clean out of it to the things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God. It was therefore of great moment to command these things, that the saints concerned might be without reproach.

“But if one neglect providing for his own, and especially of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Even nature teaches the contrary. What can be more distressing than, with the possession or even profession of Christian privileges, to fall short of ordinary righteousness or of family affection? To neglect care for one's relatives and especially for those that compose the household is in the apostle's energetic language to have denied the faith and to be worse than an unbeliever. Unfeeling selfishness is a denial of the faith; for what has not God given to us in His own Son? He who confesses such grace is bound to manifest fruit in accordance with the Christ in whom he believes. If he refuses, how many heathen would put such a man or woman to shame! It is usually an effort to lay one's own burden on others, without any adequate reason, and contrary to the strongest dictates of not love only but propriety. Certainly God's church was never meant to be a club for the exercise of covetousness, but to be a school of divine love, and of righteousness unto holiness. And woe be to those who despise the importance of these injunctions, whether the motive be the lowest personal interest, or the pretension be that Christianity is so high as to exclude these natural relationships! Self, and not Christ, will be found at bottom to be the root of the latter as of the former. Only He gives scope and force to all Scripture; whereas error may often hide itself behind one part of the word, which it misuses to deny another part. Faith welcomes and submits to it all. “By faith ye stand.”

Chapter 16

On 1 Timothy 5:9-15

Next the apostle treats of special provision for a widow who had none bound to care for her. Grace is the life-breath of the saint and of the assembly; but the grace is in harmony, not conflict, with righteousness. There are circumstances and limits which cannot be neglected without loss to man and dishonor to God.

“Let a widow be enrolled not less than sixty years old, wife of one man, witnessed of in good works, if she reared children, if she entertained strangers, if she washed saints' feet, if she relieved afflicted [persons], if she followed up every good work. But younger widows refuse; for when they wax wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having as accusation that they slighted their first faith. And withal they learn also [to be] idle, going about the houses; and not only idle but also tattlers and busybodies, speaking things that are not fitting. I will therefore that the younger marry, bear children, rule the house, give none occasion to the adversary for railing; for already have some turned aside after Satan. If any believing man or woman hath widows, let [such an one] relieve them, and let not the assembly be burdened, that it may relieve those that are really widows” (ver. 9-16).

Here is much more a widow in a privileged if not official position. But there is no indication of a diaconal class, the age being adverse to any great activity of personal duties of the kind; nor yet of a presbyteral sort, though the least limit of sixty years might be claimed in its support. But there is a total absence in the context of any such functions, whatever scholars may argue from Fathers, Greek or Latin, in order to confirm the idea that female superintendents are in question. The apostle appears simply to contemplate such widows as the assembly is bound to put on the list of its care and bounty, and hence speaks of past life and ways, not of future duties less or greater.

There is therefore a certain gradation in those described: 1st., widows in general; 2nd., widows really; 3rd., widows on the list of the assembly's special recognition. But no trace appears of an organized, still less, ordained, class of widows, known as it is to have existed afterward. There is first an age sufficiently advanced for the list, irrespective of any disabling malady which might commend the youngest person if destitute to gracious consideration. Next, it is required that she have been wife of one husband. With this may be compared Luke 2:36, 37, though it has no bearing on 1 Tim. 3:2, nor consequently derives any illustration from it. Then her general character in respect of reputable works is insisted on. Rearing of children (not necessarily her own) is not forgotten; as well as the exercise of hospitality to strangers. Even this alone would not bear the Christian stamp; and the apostle adds that lowly act, so consecrated to deeper meaning by our Lord Himself in John 13—washing saints' feet; which would be sure to receive an immense impulse from that blessed example, though alas! turned to vanity or a sectarian badge in days of degeneracy. Relief to distressed people in any form follows, and general diligence for whatever called for active benevolence. Widows known so to have lived were to be remembered especially by the assembly, without a word of investing them with ecclesiastical functions for the future. When cared for, they would not assuredly cease to care for others: godly and gracious habits do

not so change; and the assembly was not to neglect but honor widows of such a sort.

Younger widows on the contrary Timothy was directed to decline—certainly for the list of which we have just heard, like older ones suitable otherwise; and perhaps even more generally. The apostle adds a reason which would not fail to act on the sensitive spirit of the laborer he is addressing. It is of deep value to see how Christ, and not moral or prudential or personal considerations, weighs in the apostle's mind. So should it be with us. The young widows are judged according to their relationship to Christ. They of all perhaps might have been expected from their personal experience of sorrow to feel that the time is straightened, and that the fashion of this world passes. But they lose sight of Christ and His dealings with them and look out for themselves. Instead of seeking to please Him, they wax wanton against Him and cannot rest without a return to that estate which had just closed for them. Nothing of vows or of office appears here, but what became a younger widow looking for Christ, as all saints are called to wait.

Failure in faith entails serious consequences on those that bear the Lord's name. Others may be restrained more by character, value for social opinion, or other inferior motives though common in the world. But professing Christians, when they take a true position and swerve from it, fall lower than others; and none so much as those who pique themselves on their fidelity. Faith alone keeps up lowly dependence on the Lord. Those of whom the apostle treats, having cast off their freshness of faith, slip lower and lower. “And withal they learn to be idle, going about the houses,” i.e. known as of the saints generally; “and not only idle but also tattlers and busy bodies, speaking things not fitting.” It is severe but how true! was it not called for and wholesome? How often from what seems a little departure great evils ensues? To believe the word is to be warned and kept by grace.

Just as in 1 Cor. 7 while the apostle tells us what his judgment is, he lays not down all in the way of commandment. So here, “I will that the younger marry, bear children, rule the house, give no occasion to the adversary for railing; for already some have turned aside after Satan.” This was most painful to one that loved the assembly. “She is free to be married to whom she will—only in the Lord.”

It seems singular that the English Versions since Tyndale should have supplied “women"; for widows only are meant as Wiclif properly said. The Rhemish seems exact by expressing neither; but the Greek form precludes the necessity of adding females, and the context is decisive that the apostle speaks of none but those who had lost their husbands.

How different from scripture is the enforced celibacy of nuns, not to speak of monks and priests also! To what moral enormities, as well as wretchedness, this daring encroachment on God's prerogative has given rise for ages! Yet no doubt need be that it grew out of a desire for thorough devotedness. The due limits are laid down in Matt. 19:11, 12, and 1 Cor. 7 as well as here. The unmarried state has its advantages where grace gives the due inward condition, which would surely fit into suited external circumstances and issue in such a life and service as we see in the apostle himself. But to all this is not given, nor is it of man's will, but of divine grace. Make it a law, and the grace is destroyed; and a speedy result of sin, shame and misery, proclaims the wisdom of God's ways and of Christendom's folly. Presuming to do better, they have fallen notoriously not only into the violation of common morality but into unspeakable turpitude covered with the veil of hypocrisy to the ruin of souls and the present worldly advantage of those whose unswerving

instinct is doing evil that good may come, whose judgment is just.

The external authority for the shorter reading (ver. 16), πιστ■ (■ A C F G P &c.) with some ancient versions and Fathers, is so decided as to sway the chief modern critics, the Revisers, &c.; but the sense resulting is strange and unsatisfactory. Why should the support or relief of a young widow be cast on a believing woman peculiarly? Is this like the sobriety, the largeness, the wisdom, of scripture? That a believing man or woman should be appealed to on the behalf of such a needy connection is very intelligible; and the text which exhibits this is given by D K L and most of the cursives, with some ancient versions and Fathers. The direction in 16 is in no way a mere repetition of the principles laid down in verses 4, 8. In the earlier case (4), if a widow had children or descendents, they were, before others could be rightly called on, to learn pious care for their family in requital of their parents; and this is enforced (8) as a duty of providing so plain, that failure in it is denounced as a denial of the faith, and to be worse than an unbeliever. Then after describing a widow that is entitled, not here to respect simply as in 5, nor yet to censure as in 6, but to be placed on the list of the assembly's support (as in ver. 9, 10), we are confronted with the delicate question, especially for such an one as Timothy, of younger widows, whose dangers are set forth, answered by the apostle's will about them. This is followed by the call on any believing man or woman connected with such, that relief should be given to those that were truly widows. There is no question here of scandal or of unfitness for official duties: indeed the latter is nowhere, save in men's imagination now or in fact at a time posterior to the apostolic age.

Chapter 17

On 1 Timothy 5:17-18

As we had elders in respect of years (proved by the contrast of youngers, both of the two sexes) brought before us in the beginning of the chapter, we have here the apostle's injunctions as to official elders or presbyters.

“Let the elders that preside well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they that labor in word and teaching. For the scripture saith, An ox when treading out corn thou shalt not muzzle, and Worthy [is] the workman of his hire” (ver. 17, 18).

It is remarkable how much we may and ought to glean from these few words, decisive as they are of important differences among Christians, and not least of all since the Reformation. For the revival then lay more in shaking off the main hindrance in Christendom to free reading of the Bible, and in a measure to the recovery of the gospel, than in any real intelligence of the assembly or of ministry, &c. Men's notions got cleared of gross superstition, but church truth was the less learned, because it was assumed that there was little or nothing to learn; and so traditional error as to what is of such moment rests on the mass of Christians to this day.

The business of the elders was to rule or take the lead among the saints. They were responsible to see to godly order in public and private; and hence, as we saw in chapter 3, qualities were looked for which would give them moral weight, not only in cheering the weak and timid and tried, but in repressing the forward and rebuking the disorderly. They are therefore quite distinct from the gifts, of which we hear so much in Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4 and elsewhere. Hence we must distinguish, as scripture does, a pastor from an elder. For as the latter is never enumerated among the fruits of Christ's ascension, the former is incontrovertibly treated as a gift of His love, no less than apostles, prophets and evangelists, for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ.

The two might be united, doubtless, in the same person. But eldership was a local charge, which needed the authority of an apostle, or adequate person acting definitely under apostolic commission, to make the desired choice of fitting men. This is clearly shown in Acts 14:23; where, we are told, that Paul and Barnabas chose or appointed elders for the disciples in each assembly. That the disciples those elders, whom the apostles ordained, is a fiction, perhaps due to the wholly different case in chap. vi. of “the seven,” whom the saints at large did select and the apostles appointed over the business of the tables. The reason of this seems plain. The saints, as they contributed of their goods, were left most wisely to look out from among themselves brethren so endowed as to inspire the confidence of all. But the gifts are given by Christ, not by the church, and therefore in this case He alone chooses; and as authority also is from Him who invested the apostles with power to act for Him on earth, we see them, directly or indirectly, choosing elders accordingly. Hence Titus was sent for the purpose of appointing elders in every city of. Crete. Never was the assembly told in scripture to choose such. Directions also are here given to Timothy only, not to the assembly in Ephesus. Authority and power are from above.

So we see both gifts and elders not only subsisting, but this together, in apostolic times. Thus in Acts 15 we hear of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, and of Judas and Silas as chief men or guides among the brethren; but these are also described as “prophets,” and so they exhorted, freely at Antioch, and are never viewed as “elders.” Gift is in the unity of the body of Christ, and might therefore be exercised as freely in one place as in another. An elder was a local charge, exercised in the particular assembly for which it was appointed; and this, it would seem, not singly but more than one in each church. The distinction will be found sustained everywhere in scripture, and rests on the difference of principle already explained, while both might be found harmoniously working together, as was seen in early days. Let us be subject to the word of God.

The practical bearing of all this is as immediate as it is important. Men have confounded the local charges with the gifts to the immense dishonor of the Lord and to as decided loss of all concerned. Again, economic desires have concurred with the democratic principle (now more rampant than ever) to swamp both gifts and elders by that singular invention, the minister of a church, instead of that which is exclusively found in scripture—a minister of the church. And godly souls are so little versed in the truth as to imagine that this upturning of all ecclesiastical truth and order, as far as the subject is concerned, is so unimpeachably sound, that there is no sect at all where the like disorder does not reign: so ruinous is the force of tradition and habit against the confessed meaning of God's word.

It will be argued of course that we ought to have elders, though we have neither an apostle nor an apostolic commissioner to appoint them. But “scripture cannot be broken,” as it must be if either an assembly, or a person without the due authority, usurp apostolic functions. It would be holier and humbler to own that we lack apostolic authority as a living reality; and that therefore, though there are no doubt very many among the believers possessed of the qualities required in an elder, it would be more seemly to search the scriptures whether divine principle does not provide for godly order without our assuming beyond our power and title. There were many assemblies of old which had not enjoyed the intervention of an apostle to this end and had no apostolic vicar sent to do this work. Yet the great apostle himself exhorts the saints to own and honor those who labored and were over them in the Lord, even though they had no official status as elders.

So to the saints in Rome (where, it would seem, apostles went to be prisoners or to die) these are the words: “Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, [let us occupy ourselves] in ministry; or he that teacheth, in teaching; or he that exhorteth, in exhortation; he that giveth, in simplicity; he that presideth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.” (ch. 12) Now here it is expressly a question of gifts direct from the Lord, who gave and still gives what is needful—yea far more than is barely needed for His saints; still though there is no trace of office, we find rule as well as teaching &c. in their midst. Neither order nor doctrine therefore need fail for want of elders. Base is the spirit that despised an elder. It was a great boon, and so was most thankfully received and owned and honored when given. But where they were not and could not be, was it faith to say “we must have elders”? How much better to have used such things as they had, praising Him who, whatever the lack or the weakness, never fails in His faithful love, but is the same yesterday and to-day and forever?

Similar is the lesson of 1 Cor. 16:15, 16: “Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia and that they set themselves to the saints for ministry), that ye also be subject to such and to every one that joineth in the work and laboureth.” It is the same principle; for though the apostle had been in Corinth, it was but a youthful assembly, and of elders we have not a word, of gifts a great deal. But did means even there fail, however ill use they had made of what they had? Let others judge what the apostle here enjoins—of all moment for us today.

Gal. 6:6 proves that the duty of the saints toward one “that teacheth” is not dependent on elders. Of Eph. 4:11, 12 enough has been said for our present purpose; and Phil. 1:1 compared with 14-17 suffices to show that the fullest order consists with the freest preaching, and the apostle's joy triumphant even where motives were sadly mixed. Col. 2:19 is not silent on the joints and bands that knit together the body and so contribute to growth. It is in 1 Thess. 5:12, 13 that we find luminous and full instruction on this head; where two things are equally plain, that these saints, but lately converted, had not elders, yet that they had simple and sufficient means in God's grace for their orderly walk together. More might be added; but this is surely enough. There were circumstances in apostolically owned and founded assemblies where elders were not; and this affords comfort and instruction in times when they cannot be in the due manner. But the written word prescribes amply for all times. Only a single eye is needed to ensure the light of God.

Where elders exist, those that preside well were to be deemed worthy of double honor. For honor was due to an elder as such, double honor if he did his work well. There is no comparison with any preceding class. And “honor” means what it says; though it would be strange honor that could neglect their wants. But there is especial value, beyond that double honor, to those that labor in word and doctrine. This also is notable and instructive. Ruling was the aim of their institution; but, if they labored in word and teaching, it had peculiar price in the apostle's eyes. All did not so labor. They were not “teachers,” though aptness to teach was sought in one eligible for the office. The Presbyterian system may be far from a resemblance; but others surely are more distant still; while in all sects the minister is in contrast with the facts of scripture.

But to make “double maintenance “ out of the text is as mistaken as to deduce from it two classes of elders, lay elders that shared the government without maintenance, and clerical or ministerial elders that taught publicly as well as privately. The truth conveyed is opposed to both of these contending schemes, as divine truth never can really mix with any polity of human origin. But false interpretation begets and fosters pseudo-criticism. Thus even so ripe a scholar and able a reasoner as Bp. Bilson, under the influence of a foregone conclusion, would resolve the participles with the article in ver. 17, like the participle without it in ver. 18, as if they were alike conditional. “Presbyters if they rule well are worthy of double honor, specially if they labor in the word:” or, “Presbyters for ruling well are worthy of double honor, specially for laboring in the word.” To bear such a sense the construction ought to have been anarthrous with the article as it stands in each clause, it is a described or defined case, and not a conditional one, and the true force is given in the Authorized Version as well as the Revised. To take those “laboring,” in the sense of traveling from place to place to visit the churches, is not only without the least foundation but opposed to the clearly revealed fact that the elders were, as such, local charges, and had no title from their office save to rule or preside in the assembly in which they were appointed.

The true meaning then of the apostolic injunction is, that the elders that preside well should be counted worthy of double honor—honor in their office, honor because it was excellently filled, with especial distinction for those of the elders that labor in word and teaching: which clearly all might not do and some could not equally do. For it is a delicate and difficult task, demanding tact and moral courage more than public exposition or the like; and assiduous perseverance, in the face of frequent discouragement and trial as well as opposition, calls for such “labor,” rather than moving from place to place like an apostle, prophet, or evangelist, from all which eldership is wholly distinct. “Honor” is the right version and sense, not “maintenance” or “price” though it often means so, as we have seen elsewhere. But here such a force is only tolerable in eyes rendered dim by the mist of evil influence and habits in Christendom. “Honor” however, as the true and larger word, would imply this where support was needed, as is suggested by the quotations that follow.

In every case then, whether they were needy or above need, those that rule well are to be held worthy of double honor. For such an elder if wealthy or with competent means, would it be truly honoring him to give him a salary or even money? He who wrote now to Timothy insinuated the very reverse in the strongest way from his own example to the elders of the assembly in Ephesus assembled at Miletus. But it was important here to indicate that an elder who rules well is to be deemed worthy of such honor as would neither let him want nor turn him aside from his absorbing work to provide the bread that perishes. Such men ought no more to be forgotten than the evangelists (1 Cor. 9), though the latter may labor without, the former within. Indeed the same scripture (Deut. 25:4) is cited, though it be from the less to the greater in both cases, a remarkable witness to the depth of God's word below the surface. There is a difference in the order, as well as in the word for “muzzle,” of the two κ.in 1 Corinthians being the more technical, ϕ. in 1 Timothy the more general, but both meaning the same thing.

There is a second scripture cited which calls for more notice as presenting matter of peculiar interest. Possibly from its cast, the workman [is] worthy of his “hire,” or “wages,” may be proverbial; but the apostle quotes it expressly as “the scripture.” Whence did he draw it? From the Gospel of. Luke, chap. 10:7; for so it stands there to the letter, not in Matt. 10:10 where the Lord declares the workman worthy “of his food." Surely this is the more instructive (not to speak of its bearing on the date of our Epistle as necessarily subsequent to Luke's Gospel), as it is a decisive instance of an apostle's quoting from another inspired man as “scripture.” So Peter in his Second Epistle 15, 16) speaks of “our beloved brother Paul's” epistles as part of “the scriptures.” It is unwarrantable to contradict Theodoret and Theophylact, who say that one citation is from the Old Testament and the other from the New. Everywhere else no doubt the two apostles speak of the Old Testament as scripture; but each of them as here predicates scripture of the New at least once, which is as authoritative as if said a dozen times. It was uncalled for save here; but here it is of all importance, let Wieseler, Baur, or others, reason as they may. It is put, not as only explanatory of the first, but as an added and distinct quotation.

Chapter 18

On 1 Timothy 5:19-25

It is not only, however, a question of paying honor to the presbyters that take the lead well. They were exposed in the duties of their office to frequent misunderstanding and detraction. Those whom an elder had to rebuke for a fault, might, and, if unbroken, would resent it; and the ill feeling would, if unjudged, betray itself in evil speaking. Others again, if arrested in their unruly and factious ways, would, if not brought to repentance, cherish a hard and bitter spirit against such as warned of and put a stop to their mischief. These or the like admonitions might at length issue in positive charges against one or another in local charge who had given umbrage wisely, or perhaps imprudently. Timothy, who was not a mere elder, but in a peculiar position of superior authority, doing in his measure apostolic work, was liable and likely to hear damaging reports, and is therefore cautioned by the apostle. For we are, or should be, not ignorant of Satan's devices.

“Against an elder receive not an accusation except at [the mouth of] two or three witnesses” (ver. 19). The principle of the law for extreme cases righteously applies to what is analogous not only in things but as to persons also. None so open to the assaults of the disaffected; and therefore divine wisdom checks the tendency to entertain such charges unless gravely supported: else oversight would become a dreaded work to exercise, instead of a good work to which a grave brother might aspire. One cannot therefore agree with Chrysostom &c. that it is a question here of age as at the beginning of the chapter, but of an office which called for a guard not so requisite ordinarily. Scripture gives no countenance to the democratic self-importance which loves to reduce all to the same dead level. There are differences in administration, which are not only recognized of God but carefully provided for in their moral consequences, as we see here and elsewhere. A Christian like an Israelite might be charged by a single witness, though confirmation was needed to convict him with a serious result. An elder could not even have a charge preferred against him rightly, save on the testimony of two or more. Righteousness takes the circumstances into account, and not souls merely; and Timothy must respect the authority of others whose fidelity might imperil them, if he would not undermine what the Lord had set up, not only in his own place, but in all that are set to discharge variously the duties of preserving the truth, godliness, and order.

“ Those that sin rebuke [or rather, convict] before all, that the rest also may have fear. I testify [or charge thee] before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels that thou keep these things apart from prejudice, doing nothing according to partiality” (ver. 20, 21). The first of these has nothing specially to do with the elders, but breaks into the larger field of the saints in general. And as the apostle, while sustaining the elders in a work which must provoke the injurious tongues of the unruly, was far from sheltering an elder when impeached on adequate testimony, so here he insists that there should be no sparing those that are guilty of persistent wrongdoing. To limit the range of r. d. as if it meant only “the sinning “presbyters naturally leads to think of “the rest” of that class, to the loss of a solemn injunction in no way restricted, as “before all” ought to demonstrate. It would seem that the copula δ■ was inserted chiefly by western influence under the prejudice that the passage as a whole has that narrow, instead of the general, reference with which last its absence from the best and most authorities falls in. The Authorized Version like the other

Protestant English versions weakens the effect by omitting the verb “have,” which adds to the permanence of the fear produced. We can understand the better then how solemnly the apostle adjures his young fellow-laborer in a task so serious and demanding such moral courage, especially from a tender gentle spirit, not to speak of his youth, which had danger for himself as well as from others already pointed out (4:12).

But the sense of God before his soul, with whose presence he binds up “Christ Jesus,” would give firmness and decision, and keep love and obedience indissoluble and active, in contrast with the moral laxity which usurps the name of that holy affection, as far from it really as God is from fallen man whose evil will is allowed. There is but one article in the first part of the apostle's ground of appeal, not because it is one person as G. Sharpe hastily supposed, but to mark their entire association, which could not be unless they stood on the same level of divine nature and glory. The one article τοπ■ simply identifies the two persons in a common object, as the τ■ν following marks off the “elect angels,” however exalted, as having no title to be so identified. Christ Jesus could be and is put with God as on the same ground: not so the elect angels, though introduced connectedly, yet apart, as witnessing now, not merely in the future scene of glory. Compare 1 Cor. 11:10. Reference to any angels save those that kept their own first or original estate would be here altogether incongruous.

It may be well also to notice that the Authorized Version seems to lose the distinction between προκρ. and προσκλ., words, as far as the New Testament is concerned, only found here. For the former refers naturally to “prejudice” which condemns a case before hearing or duly hearing it; as the latter expresses an undue inclination or “favor” for one side, even if one should hear both. Timothy is admonished by the most sacred associations to watch against any bias either way. Now “preferring one before another” is partiality; whereas “prejudice” (the marginal alternative of the Authorized Version, not “preference” as in the Revised Version's margin) is the true counterpart.

We now come to an exhortation which has been pressed improperly, I doubt not, into the interpretation of ver. 20, from which it is quite distinct, so as to bind all these verses into an intimately connected whole. We have seen reason to infer that this is an error, and that ver. 20 bears generally on offenders, instead of being confined to sinning elders, though there is no sufficient ground to exclude both 19 and 20 from the charge in 21. But ver. 22 opens out a new thought, and there again the apostle would have his young colleague alert on the watchtower. “Lay hands quickly on no one, neither be partaker in others' sins; keep thyself pure” (ver. 22). It has been assumed that the act of laying on hands here pertains to the instituting of elders. But this is a hasty thought; for even if it were the fact, which is very probable, that hands were laid on elders when chosen, it is certain that imposition of hands had a far larger connection, and that it was a sign of blessing conferred or of fellowship in commending to God's grace, when there was no question of the presbyterate. “The seven” (Acts 6) had apostolic hands laid on them, which gave dignity to a work easily apt to degenerate, though the apostles themselves till then did not disdain to fulfill it. Hence it is not improbable that a similar form of inauguration may have been when elders were appointed. But scripture has carefully veiled it, if it were so; and, it is but a little venture to say, most wisely; for its omissions are never without design, any more than its insertions, or the manner of them. May it not have been on the same principle as Mary's interposition (John 2) was not encouraged, and as Peter's word to our Lord (Matt. 16:23), after a high commendation of his

confession of Himself, drew out the sternest rebuke ever by Him administered to a disciple? Was it not foreseen that a superstitious meaning would, in process of time, be assigned to the act, against which scripture raises its silent protest if people only knew how to profit by it, seeing that in not a single instance are hands said to be laid on presbyters? Hands were laid on Timothy, and even the elders joined in doing so, when the apostle conveyed the gift of God that was given him. Hands were laid on Barnabas and the apostle himself, when prophecy named them for a special mission, for which the Spirit separated them and sent them among the nations (Acts 13). But it would be ignorant prejudice that could confound either of these very distinct cases where hands were imposed, with eldership, or even with what people call ordination. Assuredly Barnabas and Saul were already recognized as most honored servants of the Lord. Compare Acts 9, 10 Gal. 1 for the one who, though greatest by far, was the younger in that work. This (and it is by no means all that might be adduced) is ample to prove that laying on of hands has in scripture a more extensive application than the very narrow one to which some have reduced the verse before us, even if it were without doubt applied to elders, which in scripture it undoubtedly never is.

The true deduction therefore is that the injunction has no special, if indeed any, link with elders, but was meant to warn Timothy against haste in all such acts. What has been drawn from scripture still more decidedly confutes Dr. Hammond's notion (revived of late by some at home and abroad) that the words refer to that act on the absolution of penitents and their re-admission to church-fellowship. Euseb. H.E. vii., Concil. Nic. can. 8, Snicer's Thes. 1576, Bingham's Ant. xviii. 2, 1, clearly indicate this as an early ecclesiastical custom; but that it has the smallest title to be scriptural remains to be proved. Hither, who is not often to be commended, is right in claiming for the reference the large extent of its usage in scripture, rashness in any part of it being a danger in proportion to its importance.

The full bearing of this first command gives perhaps the more significance to the words that follow, “neither be a partaker in others' sins; keep thyself pure.” Haste in according that well-known sign of fellowship, even if not the conveyance of spiritual power as sometimes, might accredit fair-seeming men, ere long to develop into enemies of the cross of Christ. What a sorrow would not this occasion to so sensitive a heart as Timothy's! Especially he then would do well to bear in mind the danger of sharing their sins by haste on his part.

Then follows the closing appeal: “Keep thyself pure.” Chastity to which Wiclif and the Rhemish V. confine this last word is but part of what the apostle impresses on Timothy. The purity required emphatically in himself would the better help to guard against looseness in sanctioning formally men who would make sad havoc of the flock of God or dishonor the Master by forsaking the work through love of the present age, if they did not fall into gross sins or bring in privily heresies of perdition.

That these exhortations are not so confined as has been supposed, but embrace godly and moral order, after speaking of elders in good and evil, seems plain from ver. 23: “Be no longer a water-drinker, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent illnesses." This appears to be a parenthetic statement of touching consideration for the scrupulous mind of Timothy, if he thought personal purity incompatible with what his weak bodily state demanded. How striking the juxtaposition! Nor was it a private letter, which would no doubt have corrected the mistaken and injurious asceticism of this young servant of the Lord, but have left others to suffer

similarly from that day to this; and especially in this day of ours which popularly regards the revival of ancient Gnostic error, as if it were a deed of special moral worth, yea, a weapon of divine temper to exalt man and win the world. But he is indeed a poor believer who could hesitate between all the opinions of medical men (were they agreed), and all the arguments of teetotal reformers on the one hand, against these few words of the apostle on the other. For they are but dust, His own an inspired word that which can never decay. The provident care which thus anticipated and delivered from the snares of men in ancient or modern times is thus to be remarked with thankfulness. Alford's modification seems beneath grave notice and due to his error of regarding all this context as bearing on the prescription of Timothy's duties as to elders; whereas we have seen that it has far broader aims.

Nor should we omit to notice the caution thrown in, whilst maintaining liberty as to every creature of God and duty to use what is beneficial in weakness— “a little wine:” why “a little” if it were no more calculated to excite than water? The nature of the wine is thus intimated, and the impropriety of indulging in excess guarded against.

From this measure of digression, dependent on the call to keep himself pure, the apostle resumes the more direct connection with not partaking in others' sins (ver. 22). “Of some men the sins are openly manifest, going before unto judgment; and some also they follow after, and likewise also the good works are openly manifest, and those that are otherwise cannot be hid” (ver. 24, 25). A holy mind seeks not to occupy itself with the sins of others, save when duty calls for it imperatively. But there is no excuse for the carelessness which would expose one to be continually deceived. It was therefore of importance to lay down principles of divine wisdom to guide where mistake is easy and its consequences might be deplorable. If the sins of some men are notorious and point to that solemn judgment where there is no mercy to mitigate the just doom of those who despised it in their contempt of God's truth and grace, there are some also whose sins follow after; and this is surely no less dreadful in the reality if appearances be saved, the deception of which is apt to ensnare not others only but the guilty themselves, making the end still more bitter though most righteous. On the other hand a like difference is found in that which grace produces, for the works that are comely are openly manifest, and those that do not come thus at once into notice cannot be concealed any more than He could who is their source (Mark 7:36). That this flows out of and is connected with the warning given to Timothy, against sharing another's sins, and especially in sanctioning unworthy workmen or discouraging such as might be vessels meet for the Master's use, is true: But to confine the instruction to the choice or rejection of candidates in the Lord's work seems to be the narrowness of man's mind and foreign to the studiously comprehensive terms of the apostle, in which he looks at things large and deep far beyond.

Yet was it no mean man who thus commented: “Some there are who offer themselves to ordination, whose scandalous lives are known beforehand; and run, before their tender of themselves to this holy function, into just censure; others' offenses are not known, till after they be ordained. Likewise also, on the contrary, the good works and holy carriage of some, that put themselves to the holy calling, are well known and approved beforehand; so as thou needest not make scruple of laying thy hands upon them: and as for them that are otherwise, if thou do diligently inquire after their demeanor and conversation, they cannot be hid from thy notice; so as thou may refrain to admit them.” So Bp. Hall (iv. 429, 430, ed. Pratt, 1808). Yet such a limitation, through attaching 24, 25 strictly to the preceding context, reduces the thought immensely below

the unforced bearing of the words, when seen to rise to the Lord's judgment by and by—while the latter, if allowed fully, would in no way hinder the profit which the true meaning affords for present use.

Chapter 19

On 1 Timothy 6:1-5

From matters of ecclesiastical and moral order the transition is easy and becoming to the due feelings and conduct of slaved, a burning question for the house of God on earth where materials lay so abundant for mischief at the hands of men rash, heady, and unbroken. Some have yielded to their subjective notions bred in the unhealthy swamps of modern license, and, with no appreciation of the apostle's gracious wisdom any more than of his stern disallowance of self-assertion, dare to question the inspired claim of the passage or even its genuine Pauline character. Suffice it to say that to the believer every word is as seasonable and wholesome in itself as the importance of the exhortation is plain for that time and any other. Nor is one without hope of sufficiently vindicating its value, as we weigh it clause by clause, in its bearing for our day on souls who owe domestic service, where the pressure of bondage no longer exists.

“Let as many as are bondmen under yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and the teaching be not reviled. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise [them], because they are brethren, but the more let them serve, because they that partake of the good service are faithful and beloved. These things teach and exhort. If any one teach differently, and accede not to sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is according to godliness, he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but sick about questionings and word-disputes, out of which cometh envy, strife, revilings, evil suspicions, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is gain” (ver. 1-5).

The law given by Moses had done much to mitigate slavery in Israel, and this not merely as to a Hebrew sold for debt or selling himself through poverty. A year of release came round speedily, after which his abiding servitude was quite voluntary, with a blessed antitype in view familiar to the instructed Christian. The old and still prevailing British boast is but an echo of the command that a slave who escaped among them should not be delivered to his master but was free to live unoppressed and free, where he pleased in their midst (Deut. 23) It was not however in this regard to his social position merely, but still more religiously that the law stands in contrast with other codes, yea with selfish and haughty Christendom. For Jewish slaves were entitled among other privileges to circumcision, enjoyed expressly the Sabbatical rest—indisputably a boon to none more than to them, and had their place at the solemn assemblies of the year, joining in the feasts like others, and in the fruits of the sabbath of the land every seventh year, as well as in the universal joy and liberty of the jubilee. Still it is fully allowed that the law made nothing perfect, as everywhere else so here also; and that in view of Jewish or human hardheartedness not a little was tolerated which was far from God's mind, till He came Who is the truth in grace. Christ changed all, and the bondman became His freedman, as the freeman rejoices and is honored in being His bondman. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, no male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. Circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian what matters one or other now? Christ is all things and in all. All is grounded on His death and resurrection Who, ascended into heaven, has formed an entirely new and heavenly relationship, of which the Holy Spirit actually come is the power.

Such is the Christian teaching, and no class seems to have reaped the blessing more bountifully in God's grace than the slaves who heard the gospel. Here we have most wholesome precepts to which Timothy was called to give heed, and this in view of false teachers, ever ready to abuse the truth for their lasts, as political leaders too had done from time to time in the world's history.

The first verse, as a maxim of the widest sphere, urges as many as were under yoke as bondmen to deem their own master worthy of all honor. Some might cry up other masters, others might dislike or disparage their own: neither spirit is of faith or becomes the Christian; and a slave, if a Christian, is no less responsible than another to reflect and live Christ. It is no question what their own masters might be, Jew or heathen, vain or proud, immoral or self-righteous, mean, ambitions, or what not. If God's providence had cast their lot under the obligations of bondmen, they were responsible to Him for counting them worthy of all honor, not because they deserved this or that praise, but simply as being their own masters. The possession of eternal life, redemption, and glory in prospect, was meant as it is calculated to lift the heart into moral elevation; inasmuch as it can only be truly in the sense of sovereign grace on God's part to a guilty sinner, saved at the infinite cost of His blood Who has thus secured the blessing, and waiting for Him to come, one knew not how soon, to consummate his heavenly hope.

It is not often the Rhemish V. can justly lay claim to exactness, but here it may through adhering to the Vulgate. All the older English seem to me to have failed, as well as the Authorized Version, in not regarding “servants” or slaves as part of the predicate. And so I understand the Pesch. Syr., though somewhat vague, whilst the Philoxenian reflects the more ordinary view. This gives undue prominence to “being under yoke,” whereas the true force is but complemental. It seems to be only a full description of all in bondage, not the peculiar case of some; and the general duty of such follows. How solemn for the inconsiderate and unwatchful Christian in such a position to remember that his failure toward his master causes God and His truth to be ill-spoken of! To a light mind their conscious knowledge might expose to a slighting of their own masters more or less destitute or even opposed. But doing the truth in all lowliness and honoring each his own master is the simple, true, and efficient way of bringing glory to God and the truth.

Next comes the special circumstances of such as had believing masters. This privilege might seem to promise only comfort and blessing; and doubtless the difference of the atmosphere would be great. But every position has its snares and difficulties; and both masters and servants, if believers, would be as apt to expect a great deal mutually, as sometimes to be sorely disappointed. Hence the apostle guards with care the exception. “And let those that have faithful masters not despise them, because they are brethren, but the more serve, because those that partake of the benefit are faithful and beloved.” It is needless to remark that the Rhemish with Wiclif is nearer the truth, not the other English translations which since Tyndale treat the last clause as part of the predicate. This beyond just controversy the article forbids, the force of which they overlooked. On the other hand Beza, Bengel, &c. are quite mistaken in the thought that the article with ε■εργεσ■ας points to God's beneficence in Christ, which would make here the poorest sense possible. The article is really due by implication, as often happens, to the previous phrase μ. δουλ. Faith does exalt the lowly and humble the proud; but it does not misuse communion in the Spirit to equality in the flesh. Rather would it teach the believers because they know this or that, instead of despising their masters, to render the more service, because those that reap their good service are believing and beloved. And there was then, as now, urgent need to impress these

lessons on souls, particularly on such as are in the subject relationship. With these the apostle uniformly begins, when as in Ephesians and Colossians he exhorts both. A carnal acquaintance with the gospel readily falls in with the selfishness of the humbler class which shuts out Christ, and breeds socialism, the basest caricature of Christendom.

But it seems a strange division which severs that which follows from the foregoing, by taking “These things teach and exhort,” either as the beginning of a new paragraph, as do Green, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Webster and Wilkinson, Westcott and Hort, Bengel, Matthaei, or as the end of the previous one as Ellicott and the Revised Version. It is better with Alford, Bloomfield, &c. to regard this as an unbroken context; and the more as the denunciatory warning which now commences stands in more evident contrariety to the exhortation just concluded. “If any one teach differently [play the strange teacher] and accede not to sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching that is according to godliness, he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but sick about questionings, and word-disputes, out of which cometh envy, strife, revilings, evil suspicions, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is gain” (ver. 3-5).

Thus plainly does the apostle prepare his younger colleague to watch against the strange teaching that would undermine the truth in these things and substitute the proud and reckless will of man under fair pretenses.

Some may think it strange that the apostle should speak so decidedly to Timothy. But let them weigh the moral judgment which this eminently sober servant of the Lord pronounces under the immediate power of the inspiring Spirit. None that fears God will tax him with undue severity; yet does he unqualifiedly condemn any man who taught a different teaching from what has been laid down. To undermine the relation of a servant to a master was heinous in his eyes, and not less so because fair pretexts and high sounding professions were put forward. For the duty of subjection flows from the relation, and it is strengthened, not relaxed, by the faith of those concerned. In every case supposed those under yoke are assumed to be believers: else they would not fall under the apostle's scope. In the latter case those in authority are represented as believers. In no case is a disrespectful, still less a rebellious, spirit tolerated; but every approach to it is repudiated as dishonoring God and the truth.

Nor is this all. For to teach otherwise is not to accede to sound words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the teaching that is according to godliness. The Spirit of God descried socialistic principles impending, if not then at work, which drew out so sweeping and unsparing a rebuke. Can one conceive any censure more suited to check and destroy such a tendency? Who that knows what it is to be a sinner, owing every mercy to grace in Christ, would dare to persevere in a line of direct antagonism to His words who is the Lord of all and the ordained Judge of quick and dead? Who so satisfied with his own theories and pleadings as to despise the apostolic declaration that his doctrine was incompatible with that which is according to godliness? There is such a thing as, after knowing the way of righteousness, turning back from the holy commandment delivered to us. No true-hearted saint would trifle with so awful an admonition from such a quarter: he who would persist in trusting his own heart, spite of it, mast reap the bitter fruit in the ruin not only of his testimony but of his soul; for God is not mocked, if man deceives himself. Corrupt teaching is of the enemy, and, if unjudged in the light that grace gives to expose it, cannot but

issue in the worst results, especially for such as teach error where Christ is named and consequently all are responsible to set forth the truth.

Here too there is no excuse on the score of abstruse thought or delicate shades of expression. It is a question of fundamental morality, or, as the apostle puts it, “the teaching that is according to godliness.” How blessed for us that Christ covers all truth, the highest and the humblest alike, our heavenly privileges and our most commonplace responsibilities! Nor is anything more perilous than the vaulting spirit that treats these ordinary proprieties of every day as of no moment in its one-sided zeal for union with Christ on high or the special glories of that great mystery. It is clear that our apostle gives no quarter to such shortsightedness; and the less where it is as arrogant and vituperative as it is rash and shallow. He is Himself the best example of a teaching which rests on foundations morally broad and deep, on which alone can be safely built that which melts into the light and glory of God's presence.

Hear how the apostle lashes the offender: “He is puffed up, knowing nothing, but sick about questionings and word-disputes.” Is it not a faithful likeness of mind at work without conscience, or heart, where Christ is only made the means of exalting the church, instead of the church subserving His glory?

We are sanctified by the, not by a, truth; but human one-sidedness (which ever boasts of its measure as all that is worth hearing, and so much the more, the narrower it is) is but the knowledge that puffs up. Think of Paul or even Timothy glorying in their friends as the men of intelligence in contrast with Peter or Apollos and those who appreciated them! No; they left such vain comparisons to the carnal Corinthians. Love builds up. This was the apostle's aim even in his withering exposure of the true character of this empty inflated teaching, which availed itself of the richest grace and highest truth to set aside the plain duties of every day in human relationships. And a great mercy it is, when simple souls who understand little else take their stand on the Christ they know and reject the sacrifice of common morals, whatever the showy pretensions which accompany or even extenuate such laxity. Their conscience, not yet depraved, assures them that it cannot be of God to treat grave sin lightly, while cultivating extreme zeal for ecclesiastical pretension or yielding to excessive pre-occupation with our peculiar and heavenly privileges. Partial views are but “knowledge,” apt to minister directly to the egotism that cherishes only those who hold with them exclusively, to the disparagement, not only of saints less informed, but of those who, better taught and subject to Christ, cleave to the truth in all its immensity. For thus are we best kept both in the sense of our littleness and in love to all the saints, instead of being puffed up in self-complacency and contempt of brethren generally. It is the budding of Gnosticism which is thus nipped by the apostle in more than one passage of the Epistle, though it afterward assumed a far more subtle and malignant shape. But, whatever its form, it is the inevitable enemy that dogs the steps of the truth, ever claiming the highest value for its own chosen line, but none the less betraying its alien source and nature, not only by its pride and party-working, but by its palpable neglect of the teaching that is according to piety. This the truth promotes, because it is the revelation of Christ to the soul, and in Him who fills all things we learn practically as well as dogmatically that, as there is nothing too great for us who are by grace made one with Him, so there is nothing too small for God who went down to the dust of death in the person of His Son. The most despicable position on earth through the grace of Christ becomes the fairest field for magnifying Him in our body, whether by life or by death.

And equally sorrowful is the fruit: “whereof cometh envy, strife, revilings (or, blasphemies), wicked suspicions, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is gain.” They are the unmistakeable works of the flesh excited by the hopes of turning piety to a selfish account. Far different is it when faith is at work through love! There the fruit of the Spirit cannot be hid in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; for Christ is the object, not self-veiled under deceptive appearances only the more loathsome to God, which therefore break out ere long into confusion and every evil work.

The last clause of ver. 5 in the common text and the Authorized Version is rejected by all critics as destitute of adequate authority, though the Syrr. &c. favor the insertion. It seems like an answer to the last clause of 2 Tim. 3:5, which is unquestionably genuine, though not in exactly the same terms. Here the exhortation is out of place; for it is only the hypothetic case of some one guilty of insinuating the false principles in question; whereas in the second Epistle it is an evil state that is positively predicted with directions how to act then. Further, the insertion in the first Epistle interrupts that connection of the apostle's words, as any one can see in the context before us.

Chapter 20

On 1 Timothy 6:6-8

The selfish evil of making piety a means of gain has been exposed. It is really to turn Christ's name to the account of present and worldly interests; an abuse of grace, an abandonment of truth, save in profession, and a taking forethought for the flesh in order to its lusts: an alien as can be conceived from all that the Holy Spirit is now working on earth to the glory of God the Father.

“But piety with contentment is,” says the apostle with emphasis, “great gain. For we have brought nothing into the world, because neither can we carry anything out. But having food and covering we shall be therewith satisfied” (ver. 6-8).

Piety as a cloak of covetousness, piety paraded in order to rise in the earth and acquire wealth, is a reversal of that which is everywhere shown to be a genuinely Christian expectation. When the Corinthians betrayed the desire thus to make the best of both worlds, the apostle reproved them in terms cuttingly ironical. “Already ye are filled full, already ye are rich, ye reign as kings without us; and I would indeed that ye did reign that we also might reign with you. For methinks God hath set forth us the apostles last as men sentenced to death; for we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are in honor, but we are despised. Even to this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat; we are become as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things unto this day” (1 Cor. 4:8-13). This speech of his was in grace, but it was unmistakably seasoned with salt. He could not but blame, but it was in loving admonition that they might be sound in the faith and saved from ruinous error in practice flowing from their false principle. The true course is that which is urged in 1 Cor. 7:29-31: “But this I say, brethren, the time that remaineth is shortened; in order that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as weeping not; and they that rejoice as rejoicing not; and they that buy as not possessing; and they that use this world as not using it to the full; for the fashion of this world passeth away.” We are but pilgrims and strangers, passing through a world to which we no longer belong; we are of the Father, His gift to Christ, whose witnesses we are now called to be, as we wait for His coming to be with Him and share the glorious inheritance along with Him. It is His will to assign us our lot meanwhile; and piety would own with thankfulness His disposal of us, whether as a test of our subjection of heart or as a sphere of serving Him from day to day. For there is nothing right for our souls where He has not His place. It is not enough that there be “contentment.” This alone would be but a heathen sentiment; as in fact not a few pagan authors have expressed it prettily, though (it is to be feared) it was rather what they could see to become man, than what they really made good in daily conversation. The stoics who most affected such language were hard more than happy men. Even had they succeeded in practice how far short was their self-complacent contentment?

What is here declared to be a great means of gain is “piety” with contentment. This is a state wholly opposed to the pagan self-reliance which leaves out God and dependence on Him. “Piety”

cherishes confidence in Him, and looks up to Him habitually as One who does not and cannot fail in His gracious consideration of every need, difficulty, and danger, all naked and laid bare to His eyes with whom we have to do. With piety “contentment “ is the fruit of knowing His love and assurance of His will as good, acceptable, and perfect. As the same apostle said to the Christian Hebrews, “Let your conversation (or conduct) be without love of money, satisfied with present circumstances"; for Himself hath said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee: so that taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid: what will man do with me?” It is the same principle at bottom; but here it is the harm for one's own spirit that the apostle warns against rather than the apprehension of mischief from others which he would remove from the believers of the circumcision. Piety with contentment is great gain.

This he illustrates and enforces by the homely yet all the more impressive facts of man's beginning and end here below; which all can see, but only men of faith act on. “For nothing have we brought into the World, because neither can we carry anything out” (ver. 7). This is urged with such characteristic brevity and compressed ruggedness that one need not wonder if words once brought in to explain have crept into the text of not a few manuscripts. These apparent interpolations differ. In one of the earliest (D or the Clermont MS.) which contains an addition which prevailed in the West, “[it is] true” appears; and so it substantially stands in the Vulgate, Gothic, &c. Among the Greek early writers as in several late uncials and the mass of cursives, “[it is] manifest” is the word ("known” in the Syrr. being perhaps fairly equivalent). The oldest authorities do not allow κα■ or ■λλ■ for ■τι, but give what is here translated, as the text; which turns man's entrance into the world with nothing, into the solemn reminder that thus it will be at the close, so that. the twofold truth may bear on the believer throughout his course. Compare Job 1:21: an anciently expressed sentiment, and as simple as sure; but piety with “contentment,” alone makes its weight felt or forms a walk in accordance with the truth.

“But having food and covering we shall be therewith satisfied” (ver. 8). The words translated food and covering are both in the plural which may indicate the variety in either case provided of God. The “covering” too is not limited to “clothing” and should not be so translated, as it takes in dwelling as well. The future seems more forcible than the exhortatory tense, and better suits the passive voice. Little reliance can be placed even on the oldest and best MSS. which too often interchange the long with the short vowels as in this case. The critics generally of late incline to the future.

Let the Christian reader study also the words of our Lord in Matt. 6:19-34 and delight his soul in the incomparable fullness and dignity of that blessed discourse.

Chapter 21

On 1 Timothy 6:9-10

With the godly contentment of the Christian, the apostle next contrasts the restless, sorrowful, and perilous path of covetousness in its mildest form. It is a worldly lust to be judged and disallowed like any other.

“But those that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many unwise and hurtful lusts, such as sink men into destruction and perdition. For a root of all evils is the love of money, which some eagerly seeking were led astray from the faith and pierced themselves through with many pains” (ver. 9, 10).

As usual, under a plain and unostentatious exterior, the language of the apostle bears the witness and conveys the power of divine wisdom. It is not here the possession of wealth which stands in the soul's way. This the Lord had laid bare in the rich young ruler who went away sorrowful, because he valued his great wealth too highly, to follow Christ at all cost. Moses suffered what the suffering and glorified Son of man never sanctions. The law made nothing perfect. The introduction of a better hope not only gives us to draw near to God, instead of maintaining the old distance, but in Christ detects and judges the flesh and the world as enmity against God. Outward advantage becomes a spiritual obstacle. Man is evil; and God alone is good; and the cross becomes the door of salvation from a God to whom all things are possible, if they that have riches with difficulty enter the kingdom of God. And, all things are possible to him that believeth. For faith makes Christ all, which the young man did not: else he had not gone away with a fallen countenance from Him who never fails to give peace to the most tried believer, and fills with joy the most forlorn.

Here it is the far more common class whose purpose it is to become rich. What does such a desire betray? Discontent with the calling in which one is called; distrust of God's will, goodness, and wisdom in His dealings with each; the same unbroken unjudged thirst for the things the Gentiles seek after. Does not our heavenly Father know what we have need, and what He deems fitting for us? The word of our Lord is, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there will be also thy heart.” Child of God, where is thy treasure? Is it Christ in heaven? If so, happy art thou! If it is wealth or distinction, the Lord warns, There will be also thy heart. What can be more false and beguiling than the fond fancy that prevails among many in direct contradiction of Christ, that, while the life is absorbed in the struggle for riches, the heart is not there but true to Him? It is not for want of solemn admonition that a Christian can thus stray. The character, the state, is proved in what we are set on and live for from day to day. “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be bright.” And if the whole body in one be found dark, is it not because the eye is evil? “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!” So the Lord detected the source and motive, and exposed the blindness that results.

The apostle here dwells briefly on the effects of such a purpose however veiled. They fall into temptation and a snare and many unwise and hurtful lusts, such as sink men into destruction and perdition. But oh! the unbelief of believers where an object, other than Christ and opposed to His will and glory, carries them away. It is not the riches which are the worst danger, though thereby the path is made more difficult; but the faith that counts them the Lord's, not our own, and therefore seeks only to be faithful as a steward, is according to His mind and blessed in doing it. It is the will or purpose that is so wrong and to be dreaded most.

To fall into temptation is quite different from being tempted. It is trying; but blessed is he that endures temptation. The Lord Himself knows what sore temptations mean, none so much. For as God cannot be tempted by evil things, and Himself tempts no one thus, neither was the Second Man, however the first was at once to his own rain, and that of the race, unto God's dishonor. But Christ suffered whilst being tempted, instead of weakly yielding to present gratification and lying down afterward in unavailing sorrow. Temptation in His case, however complete, was apart from sin; whereas Adam was drawn away and enticed by lust with all its bitter results. Christ had no sinful temptations, as we have within; He never fell, never entered into, temptation, as He warns us to pray against. To “enter” is fatal, as we see in Peter's case, though through the Lord's intercession his faith did not fail absolutely, and, when turned back or restored, he was used to confirm his brethren.

“A snare“ goes yet farther and supposes the deceived soul caught in the net of the enemy, whence only the grace and power of the Lord can extricate.

Further, the desire of riches is not alone but the parent of “many unwise and hurtful lusts.” It feeds vanity. It engenders pride. It ministers to selfishness. It suggests and promotes ambition, and so may be the means of corrupting others. How truly we hear of many unwise and hurtful lusts in its train!

As the way is sad and evil, the end (and here it is shown fully) is unspeakably wretched. “Such as (or, seeing these lusts) sink men in destruction and perdition.” Of course this is said of “men,” not of “saints;” but not the least terrible examples are of those who took their place and were once perhaps without question recognized among the confessors of Christ. The more we may know and possess, the less hopeful and the more unconscientious is our departure, when it comes, from what becomes His name. Their course and end mark such only as “men.” “Destruction” is the general description of their ruin; “perdition” is still more awfully precise. It is part of the snare and folly to presume on the bearing of the Lord's name as if it must preserve those under it from the baneful consequences of the unbelief which slights the word and gives loose rein to the will. But God is not mocked, and those who sow to the flesh must reap corruption. The end of these things is death, and none the less but the more irreclaimably where the word which should he living becomes a dead dogma, under which God's calls to holiness, in disallowance of self and the world, are not heard, and the unwary soul drops into a more and more hardened hypocrite. Who has not known such instances? Are they exhausted? Is your soul or mine to pay no heed?

“For a root of evil is the love of money, which some, being eager after, were seduced from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many pangs.” This is a solemn but not too sweeping sentence, which we all should ponder; though some more than others, as the apostle implies, are exposed to the poison. Wealth practically means the possession of much more than we need for

ourselves or the poor from day to day, what is over and above godly use, what therefore can only be for show or indulgence, for lavishness or for hoarding.

The language of men betrays their mammon-worship. They conceive money, and the love of it, a root of “goods.” God pronounces it a root of “evils;” and not merely possible but actual, τ■ν κ., the evils that exist, subtle or important, of the flesh and of the mind. So the Lord had admonished the disciples against the cares of the age, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, entering in.

Christianity is no doubt of faith and the “faith “; but, when real, it is a life more than a creed. It is Christ living in each believer, as the apostle says of himself as a saint, not officially, so as to be a sample of the household of faith. But so deadly a root of evils is the love of money that its seductive influence from the faith is singled out for the forefront of resulting danger. And this may help to explain the strength of the language in Eph. 5:5 where a covetous person is styled an idolater, as in Col. 3:5 covetousness is declared to be idolatry. Be it that πλ. there employed goes beyond φιλαργ. here used: still the latter is at least included in that unsatisfied greed which becomes pre-eminently an absorbing idolatrous passion that excludes true homage to the true God.

But the apostle in no way limits the mischief to causing souls to wander from the faith, though surely nothing can be more disastrous. The eager pursuit of money is wont to pierce its votaries through with many pains. It is hard in that chase to avoid deceit here, dissimulation there, hard words and ways to one, soft to another, taking selfish advantage of men and things and times, without account of heart or circumstances, and still less of Christ before God. It is not only failure but success that inflicts the many pangs; yea, the most successful in general have their, disappointments, and therefore all the keener.

Still it is hardly exact, I think, to say “the” root, though one knows what has been pleaded on its behalf; because “the” implies naturally an exclusive force, and the love of money, deep and wide as it may be, is not the only root, of all men's evils. But our language hardly admits of a simply anarthrous usage like the Greek, and therefore we make use of the indefinite article, though it may be feeble.

Chapter 22

On 1 Timothy 6:11-16

In contrast with those who, through that root of evils, not more wounded themselves than they dishonored the Lord, Timothy is now exhorted to cultivate all that is suited to and worthy of His name.

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness of spirit. Combat the good combat of faith; lay hold on the life eternal whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses. I charge [thee] in the sight of God that preserveth all things, and Christ Jesus that witnessed before Pontius Pilate the good confession, that thou keep the commandment, spotless, irreproachable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in its own times lie shall show; the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, Whom none of men saw nor can see: to Whom [be] honor and might eternal. Amen” (ver. 11-16).

“Man of God” is a phrase of common occurrence from the Pentateuch and throughout the historical books of Old Testament scripture. Continually applied to a prophet, it regards him as one identified with the interests and character of God in deed and in truth, though of course liable to failure, and thereon to suffer chastening. In the New Testament it is found nowhere save in the two Epistles to Timothy, here predicated of the one addressed in order to stimulate and warn, in the same epistle open to all who in an evil day make good in faithful and holy devotedness to God what is implied in it.

Timothy as a man of God is called to shun the worldly lusts, foolish and hurtful, against which the apostle had been warning. It is vain to affect zeal for what is good, if so dangerous a snare be indulged, source as it is of all evils. But persevering avoidance of evil can hardly be, unless there be also the zealous pursuit of righteousness and godliness, of faith and love, of endurance and meekness of spirit. Practical consistency with one's relationship is indispensable, as is reverent affection Godward, the light of the unseen let in on the present and the activity of the heart in good, the spirit made up to bear evil, and this with meekness, not with resentment and impatience. Such is the morally beautiful path traced here for his young fellow-laborer by one who knew it familiarly and deeply, though its perfection be found only in our Lord Jesus here below.

But more than this is called for, if He is to be magnified in our body, whether by life or by death. The figures are taken as often from the games so familiar in that day. “Combat the good combat of the faith.” Flesh or sight would only seek present things. Christ must be in view. “Lay hold on the eternal life whereunto thou wast called and didst confess the good confession before many witnesses.” As in “fleeing,” and “pursuing,” the work is regarded as expressly continuous: not so in “laying hold” of the eternal life. It is a single act, and duration is excluded from the thought, all being summed up in its completion, like the waking up righteously once for all in 1 Cor. 15:23 compared with the habit of not sinning. It is the prize at the end of which faith should have laid hold now, as the good confession is a thing done, not of course done with, nor on the other hand in

process of doing. It is the simple act in itself, which is expressed in the aorist, as ought to be well-known. The Authorized Version is doubly wrong in “hast” professed and “a” good confession. The Vulgate may be supposed to have influenced all from Wiclif downwards. The endeavor to bring in the whole ministry of Timothy as covered by a good confession, as Calvin contends, seems as unfounded as and only less objectionable than the strange “oblation” imputed to the phrase by the author of the “Unbloody Sacrifice” (1. 223, ed. of Engl. Gall. Library). Into what vagaries men wander who slight the truth of Christ for objects of their own!

The apostle rises next to a solemn admonition in this connection, as he does towards the close of his second letter. “Quickening,” or creating however, is not the thought, but “keeping alive.” Here all the older English versions like most others have followed the received reading; not that which suits the context, which has also the better authorities. How Dean Alford could adopt the right reading but give a rendering which suits the wrong, seems unaccountable; but so it is. The usage in the New Testament as in the LXX distinctly points to saving alive or preserving; and here “all things,” not persons, are in question, though some go so far as to teach the contrary. God, who is the source of life, is also the preserver of all things: on this he who espouses His cause in a hostile scene can and needs to reckon.

Besides, there is One no longer seen whom faith looks to with assurance, for not consolation only but unfailing support, “Christ Jesus that witnessed before Pontius Pilate the good confession.” He is on high to succor His servants, but He was here as none else “the faithful Witness,” the good Confessor. What cheer to the spirit of him who might flag through timorous counsels or the demoralization of compromise, that dire and corrupting pest for the mouth and heart when evils thicken among the faithful on earth! He has to follow His steps in this as in all things; and if he knows his weakness, as surely he will increasingly in the arduous combat he has but to spread it before His sight Whose grace suffices and Whose strength is made perfect in weakness. What a joy and honor consciously to witness the “good confession” where our Lord did so before us, He without what we have so abundantly and with such aggravation as none ever had nor can again! To have the truth is of capital moment; and this can only be by faith of God's word. “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” Thus only can we escape the lie of the enemy who deceives the whole world. But another thing there is, only second—that confession or witness which our lips and lives owe to Him Whose grace has given us the truth; and this not only though chiefly to His honor, but in love according to His will for those that lie as the world does in the wicked one, that they may be sanctified and saved. Before Pontius Pilate came out the overwhelming fact that (not only did the Gentiles know not the truth, but) the Jews would not have it when before their eyes and ears livingly in Him Who, while the Messiah, was infinitely more. The chosen nation was as unbelieving as the nations generally, and hence as more guilty, so also more unrelentingly cruel unto blood, though it were the blood of Him who was Jehovah's fellow. Jesus confessed Himself not only King of a kingdom not of this world, but born and come to bear witness of the truth, that every one who is of the truth might hear His voice. As the Jews alleged, He made Himself the Son of God; He was, He is, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father. No wonder even hard-hearted Pilate was afraid, till Caesar's, the world's, friendship was seen to be at stake; and so, like the Jews who tempted him, he perished in enmity to God. Such is the end of all indeed, who, as they believe not with the heart to righteousness, confess not with the mouth to salvation, though here no doubt “the good confession” is more precise.

The charge to Timothy was “to keep the injunction (or commandment) spotless, irreproachable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is important to notice the accuracy of the thought as well as of the language; and the more so, as erudite ignorance takes the unhallowed license every now and then of apologizing for scripture, and even for the apostle's epistles, as deficient in the exactitude which the schools, as they think, alone possess and impart.

But the unction from the Holy One gives quite another character and precision from that which is fed by the midnight oil of human training, and alone forms in the believer the mind of Christ, which, in its surface and in its depths, is alike beyond the wisdom of this age. Take as an instance the epiphany or “appearing” of our Lord in ver. 14, never confounded with His “presence” (παρουσ■α) or “coming": the one bound up with questions of our responsibility in service or testimony, as in the case before us, the other as simply and regularly (unless specifically modified otherwise) presenting our hope in all the fullness of divine grace. It will greatly help the Christian student to search the words and contrast their connections throughout the New Testament. On the great and instructive theme of the Lord's return, whether to receive His own to be with Himself above or to display them already with Him when He comes in judgment of the quick for the kingdom, the distinction becomes evident on examination and of the deepest moment in conducing to an intelligent grasp of revealed truth and of God's counsels and ways. In sovereign grace Christ will come to gather us together on high to be with Himself forever; but He will appear also to Rat down all evil and reign in righteousness; and when He is manifested, we shall be manifested with Him in glory. The object and character differ as much as the time: where grace in its due heavenly power is meant, it is His “coming” to fulfill our hopes; where government and responsibility are in question, it is His “appearing,” “manifestation,” or “day,” as any soul subject to the word may ascertain in searching the scriptures.

And such is the clear connection here, not only as introducing His “appearing” but as following it: “which in its own times He shall show, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings (lit. of those that reign) and Lord of lords” (lit. of those that exercise lordship). None can deny, that as Timothy's responsibility was involved directly in the words preceding, so in these the display of the Lord's glory is no less distinct, neither of which appears to be the thought where His coming for our translation on high is revealed. One might add its “own times” or seasons, as naturally and characteristically mentioned along with His appearing; whereas no such language ever accompanies the gathering of the saints to meet the Lord above. This appearing ushers in the kingdom, as in 2 Tim. 4:1. In its course, first and last, He will judge the quick and the dead. But this is clearly government rather than grace—at least not grace in its heavenly fullness but in contrast with it.

It is not denied that even those who are one with Christ, members of His body, His bride, are also to be viewed as servants to receive each his own reward according to his own labor; and hence the apostle speaks of the saints, responsible for each gift to be used in Christ's service now, awaiting “the revelation” of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall also confirm them to the end, unimpeachable in the “day” of our Lord Jesus Christ. But here again we see how responsibility brings in the “day,” &c. where grace in its heavenly privileges is ever linked with His “coming” and “presence.” As Christ has to do with both, so shall we; but they are quite different; and it is ruinous to the truth, if we, contrary to the word of God, confound things there kept invariably distinct, though occasionally but rarely both may be given together.

We may notice that even our Lord Himself is brought forward here in just the same way, as Jesus Christ the righteous owned and displayed by God in the glory of that great day. The Spirit speaks of His unseeable and inaccessible glory; our Lord Jesus Christ is the One Whose appearing will manifest God's glory before the universe in its own seasons.

This it is which gives occasion for the striking doxology which closes the section, where God as such is presented as He “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, Whom none of men hath seen nor can see; to Whom be honor and might eternal, Amen.” On the other hand, “the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh (not Israel only) shall see it together.” But it will be in the appearing of our Lord that God will show His various glories, He “who only hath immortality” in and by Him Who died and rose and lives again for evermore, the King of those that reign and the Lord of those that rule in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, Himself God and Lord, deigned by His abasement unto the death of the cross to lay a new basis in a ruined world, so that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. All testimony of faith is now seemingly as vain as was the good confession of Jesus our Lord; but His appearing will be the display of divine power, glory, and righteousness to the confusion of all that doubt as well as of proud rebels. Ere that day man will have shown his “rights” to be unmitigated wrongs, and his liberty, equality and fraternity, vile, false, and selfish as it ever was, to be only the prelude to the most galling slavery of man and Satan that the world ever saw. God will show our Lord's appearing in its own due times, not merely to the overthrow of apostate wickedness, but to the establishment, in the peace and blessing of man bowing to Jesus, of His own honor and might eternal. May our portion be with the present substantiating energy of faith which the apostle desired for his dear young fellow-servant. It is all revealed by His word to act not only on his soul but on ours.

Chapter 23

On 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Besides, the apostle lays it on Timothy to enjoin the wealthy saints in solemn and searching tones, of which it was uncalled for to give the counterpart to the poor, who never fail to find uninspired abundance of exhortation. The rich are apt to pass easy muster, not because they have not special difficulties and dangers, but because both poor and rich and even those who should be above either are disposed to be less outspoken with them than is well for all, and to the Lord's praise. But not so did Paul walk or direct his fellow servant.

“Those rich in the present age charge not to be highminded nor to set their hope on uncertainty of riches, but on a God that affordeth us all things richly for enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal in distributing, ready to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold of the real life” (ver. 17-19).

As our Lord designated wealth “the mammon of unrighteousness,” in the same spirit are the wealthy here characterized as “rich in the present age.” It was certainly not to exalt in their eyes or in those of others what the flesh is sure to overvalue, while it hides the great responsibility of those who have it. Yet is there no fanatical credit given to the garb or habit of poverty, no sanctimonious eschewing of ordinary food or shelter among the abodes of men, still less is there a hint of the superior worth of the monastic life. These anilities were reserved for the deeper gulfs of superstition. But those who are rich in the present age ("this present evil age,” as the same apostle stamps it in Gal. 1:4) have need especially to be on their guard, and to hear, not the voice of flattery so likely to be at hand, but the solemn admonition of the Holy Spirit, that they be not poor toward God in view of “the day of eternity” (2 Peter 3). Certainly riches toward God consists neither in lavishing on oneself or one's own, any more than in laying up for either.

Charge them then, says he, “not to be high-minded.” What so readily or so generally generates haughtiness as the possession of money? The Lord in the parable already referred to lays the ax to the root, when He calls on the disciples to make to themselves friends with, or out of, the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails they might be received into the eternal tabernacles. The grand principle, He insists, is faithfulness in that which is another's (God's) Who will commit to us in glory the true riches—our own and much too, if faithful here and now in a very little. Self-appropriation was the ruinous theory or practice (or both) for the rich man that lifted up his eyes in Hades, being in torment, and forgot that, in a sinful world which breaks the law and rejects the Messiah, wealth is the worst sign of God's favor. In effect He would have them sacrifice the present in view of the future, counting that not their own but His, and therefore with all freedom and cheerfulness as He loves in a giver, with their eye set on that which seems His only which He will give to be their own with Him forever. Does this seem folly to any who flatter themselves that they are wise and prudent? How will your wisdom and prudence seem in that day? Our true wisdom as Christians is molded by the cross of Christ. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Following Christ is the surest cure of high-mindedness, as it ensures also the scorn of the world. “Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself:” what will they feel at the walk of one

who can truly say, “To me to live is Christ?”

But there is a danger kindred to high-mindedness which is next, warned against: “nor set their hope on uncertainty of riches.” On this too many a philosopher of old moralized in vain: not that his words did not sound wise and grand, but that the effect was powerless, for he was either a selfish hypocrite who decried wealth in others to get it for himself as much as possible, or he denounced wealth with a cynical haughtiness of mind more extreme than in any man of wealth. Well then does the apostle first warn against high-mindedness, and next on building one's hopes on the stability of what so quickly takes wings and flies away, or from what the possessor is so often summoned in the midst of his greater plans. “Uncertainty of riches:” how true and expressive!

One is never quite right, however, without what is positive: and hence the apostle urges that those addressed should have their hope set, not on a foundation so sandy, “but on God that affordeth us all things richly for enjoyment.” There cannot be conceived a sentence more completely condemning the spirit of asceticism, which is fairer in appearance than the love of ease and luxury. But they are only forms of selfishness, however opposed, neither savoring of God, who has not left Himself without witness of His goodness toward men, even among the heathen allowed to go on their own ways. Surely it is not less among His own family of grace, though He may for higher ends give them the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being conformed unto His death. But He is none the less the God of all grace, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. And as to real superiority over all circumstances, where there was no wealth of the present age, who could testify better than the apostle a prisoner in Rome, yet able to write thence, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and know also how to abound: in everything and in all things I am initiated both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer want. I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.... And my God shall fulfill every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4) The ungrudging and bountiful Giver of all loves a heart that responds to His grace, as far from legality as from license.

But He looks also for activity in good on the part of the godly rich, as He is unwearied in good Himself (Acts 14:17). Hence follows the call to do good, to be rich in good works.” There is an important shade between the two, though it is not easy to express the difference in a paraphrase. By the first (■γαθοεργε■ν) is meant doing works of kindness or goodness to others, by being rich in good works (πλ. ■ν ■ργοις καλο■ς) abounding in fair upright works, comely in themselves: relatively and absolutely good works. And very important it is to note how both are pressed in close connection here and elsewhere, for men in general laud the one which affects man, and forget or disparage what is of yet greater moment, what is good in itself before God. Flowing from faith and love, how acceptable are both!

Even this does not express all the generous out-going of heart the apostle would have the rich exhorted to. He adds, as if he could not remember the poor enough, “to be liberal in distributing, ready to communicate,” which, I presume, goes beyond cases of need, where calls arise peculiarly suitable for men of ample means, as in the varied circumstances of the Lord's work and witness. How many opportunities of promoting His glory, which are not of a kind one would like to lay as a burden on the assembly as a whole! “Charge the rich in the present age.” There is a divine way for all, and those whose privilege it is especially, can hear His voice, as the apostle takes care that they shall.

But there is also encouragement specially significant and cheering to those in view: “laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may hold on the real life” (ver. 19). here again we may see the close correspondence with Luke 16 where “the true” is re-echoed by the last remarkable expression of the apostle, “that which is really life.” Anxiety for ourselves is one of the snares carefully shut out by our Lord from the disciples; were it even “for the morrow,” it is unworthy of confidence in the Father's provident love. He knows that we have need of food and raiment and will surely provide. We have to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, with the assurance that all these things shall be added unto us. So the apostle bids us in nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God.

Here he enjoins on the rich saints to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come by their generous giving to others. It may not be good common sense, but it is the surer way of grace in faith. To be consistent with Christ is to treasure up for ourselves, and all the better so that the left hand knows not what the right hand does. For that our Father sees in secret is a cardinal truth in Christian practice, as it is also to have reward with Him who is in heaven, and by-and-by. Let us then with patience wait for it, as here laying up for ourselves a good foundation for the future, that we may lay hold on the life that is life in earnest. What is now so misjudged even by saints not only slips away but disappoints, just because it is not habitually living Christ, which, if it have its brightness in glory, has here its reality of exercise and enjoyment too.

Chapter 24

On 1 Timothy 6:20-21

The conclusion is a solemn appeal, which was never more seasonable than at this moment, when the vanity of scientific speculation misleads souls increasingly to despise revelation.

“O Timothy, keep the deposit, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the falsely-named knowledge, in professing which some missed the mark concerning the faith. Grace [be] with you“ (ver. 20, 21).

“The deposit” here, as in 2 Tim. 1:14 means the truth entrusted by God through His chosen instruments, divine revelation conveyed in words taught of the Holy Spirit, the pattern of sound words which Timothy heard from Paul among many witnesses. It is neither the soul nor its salvation on the one hand, nor yet on the other the ministerial office, nor even the grace of the Spirit. It is the perfect communication of what God is in nature, ways, relationships, and counsels. This revelation alone gave, as inspiration now alone secures. It is not only the material of ministry, but its safeguard; as it is of those ministered to; for grace would vouchsafe to all an unerring standard. This the church, the assembly, is not nor in the nature of things can be: the church is not the truth, but its pillar and base, as the truth calls out each member of Christ and forms and fashions the whole. There only among men is the truth plainly inscribed and maintained. Where else is the word of God responsibly attested or presented here below?

Doubtless Timothy had a special place according to the favor shown, the truth unreservedly made known, the position given, and the charge and work assigned, as we see from the first to the last of this Epistle. But if we may not overstep our measure or intrude into the peculiar duties of that honored colleague of the apostle, we are no less bound in our place to guard that truth which is now entrusted to our keeping. It is the declared tower of safety in these last days of deception and self-will—every scripture as being inspired of God.

But along with adhesion and subjection to the truth goes the necessity of watching against the false. And so Timothy is exhorted to turn away from “the profane” babblings and oppositions of the falsely-named knowledge.” What more thoroughly undermines the power of the truth confessed, than the allowance of theories which flatter man, occupy the creature, and, as they ignore or debase God and His Son, so will be found at last really to deny both? “This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” All must be false where the true state of man is unfelt, and consequently the real character and intervention of God because of that state left out; for the intervention of God to triumph in His grace over sin and Satan has formed relationships on which our duties depend. “The falsely-named knowledge” attempts to fill the void which unbelief ever finds because it does not really know God and His Son, possessing it with its profane vaporings and antitheses. It cannot face the stern fact of utter ruin by sin; it shirks therefore the revelation of pure grace and of a righteousness which is God's and can justify the ungodly when man was proved to have none for Him. If it introduces Christ at all, which may often be and largely too, it is not as the Savior of the lost to God's glory, and as the Judge of all who believe not and so are unjust and have done evil, but only as the flower that adorns the race and

bears witness to the moral perfectness of which humanity is capable. God revealed in man, Christ rejected even to the death of the cross, yet in that cross an efficacious sacrifice for the guiltiest by faith of Him, and now man in Christ accepted in the holiest, and sending down the Holy Spirit to make all that is believed good in those that believe—this is the truth which defeats those babblings and oppositions. And as the center of it all is He who was manifested in flesh, a divine person yet man, the truth is perfectly suited to each soul, Jew or Gentile, barbarian or Scythian, bond or free. It is independent of ruin or development, of learning or the lack of it, forming the believer inwardly and outwardly according to its own character by the Holy Spirit, who sets Christ as the object and pattern before the eye of faith. No wonder then that the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And the gospel is not, as is so often thought, a mere display of mercy irrespective of God's moral glory; for therein is revealed God's righteousness by faith unto faith. The law was God's just claim on man; the gospel is the glad tidings of salvation, as the fruit of Christ's death and resurrection, and therein of God's undertaking for man and delivering him that believes. It is God's, not man's, righteousness, and hence revealed to faith, so as to be as open to the Greek as to the Jew, faith (not law) being the only source and way and principle of blessing for a lost sinner.

In this Epistle, however, it is not our privileges as God's children or as members of Christ's body that we see developed, but the broad and deep foundations of the divine nature and glory as the Savior God dealing with all mankind through the mediation of Christ. And, in keeping with this, it is not here the heavenly wealth and beauty of the church, but its moral order as the responsible witness and true defender of the faith before the world, the misuse of the law being denounced, and the profane fables and logomachies of man's imagination yet more, which, if they begin by promising showy and superior sanctity, soon betray their worthlessness and worse by grievous moral laxity. Hence the importance given throughout to every-day duty which the grace and truth which came by Jesus strongly enforce, while making the yoke easy and the burden light.

“The falsely-named knowledge” always subjects God and His revelation to the mind of man. Thus man acquires the place as far as possible of judge—ever agreeable to his self-importance, and withal necessary to veil from himself his own guilty and ruined estate in the sight of God. Nay more, in the fullness of his presumption, he avails himself of the human medium to deny inspiration in any true force, so as to sit in judgment of that word which, our Lord declares, shall judge him at the last day. Thus, in criticizing what God is in the communication of scripture, Who He is gets utterly lost; and sinful man in effect sets up, perhaps without suspecting what he does or its heinous sin, to judge God Himself!

The manner, in which God is now and then presented in this Epistle, appears to be directly suited to meet and expose such airy and daring speculations, which developed later into all the many vagaries of Gnosticism, sometimes subtle and bewildering, at others low and licentious, but always destructive delusions. The King of the ages, incorruptible, invisible, only God, and with that God one, one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all; God, the Creator and Giver of every creature, the living God the Preserver of all, specially of the faithful; God who preserves all things in life; who is about to display the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, while He dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man has seen nor can see. God so revealed consigns to their own nothingness the profane babblings and oppositions of the falsely-named knowledge; as the humble and godly walk produced points to its excellent and

wise and holy source, in contrast with the degrading ways which falsehood entails, and on none more surely than on those who once called on the name of the Lord.

Here accordingly the apostle briefly touches on the effect of this spurious knowledge, “In professing which some missed the mark [or, erred] concerning the faith.” It is sad to know men loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. But there is a deeper sorrow over those who once seemed to run well, thus fatally erring about the faith, not only the victims of folly and evil; but dishonoring blindly the Name which is above every name.

“Grace be with you:” so the most ancient copies say, though one might have expected “thee” as in most manuscripts and some of weight. But compare the closing words of the second Epistle. There it is the more striking, because they follow a strictly individual prayer that the Lord should be with Timothy's spirit. Yet I am not aware of a single MS. that favors the singular, and scarce any version save the Peshito Syriac. The comparison appears to confirm the judgment of Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort as to the close of the First Epistle. The benediction is of few words, but, as ever, weighty. Timothy did surely need grace, and the grace of the Lord would be sufficient for him; but it is the common need, the unfailing support, of all others, and they are not forgotten, even in a confidential communication to a tried fellow servant.

Chapter 25

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 1

1 Corinthians 12

The subject of which the apostle treats in this chapter, as an exposition of the principle (which subject is continued in the next chapter, where we have the spring of power, and in the one after, where we have the practice), was one most deeply needed at that time by the Corinthian saints, and not at all less now. For there is no greater forgetfulness of any part of the truth of God amongst Christians, than as to their great need of the Holy Ghost on the one hand, and as to God's great gift of Him on the other. Indeed, it is bound up with all the distinctive blessing of the church. Not that these chapters contain all, nor that they exhaust every side of the blessing; for we have here the church more particularly viewed as the scene of God's power, not so much as the object of Christ's affection. For the latter we must look into Ephesians. But here we have the truth of the church (not the individual) viewed as that to which God had given the Spirit of “power,” of “love” (which the apostle treats of in chap. 13), and of the “sound mind” that should be shown (which we have in chap. 14).

The Spirit of power was there; but, whatever the energy He works in, the Holy Ghost has in no way set aside responsibility. Man cannot understand this. A divine person, His office is to be here, that He might be in the saints, the dwelling of God, and that they should have therefore an infinite resource; but, at the same time, not so that the might of the almighty Spirit of God could not be thwarted and hindered, or the testimony which was intended to be borne not be spoiled—not only ruined in its object, but turned to wholly different objects.

This was the state of things which came then before the apostle's mind, as a matter for warning, especially in chap. 10. Much more is it that which is actually found around us at the present moment, out of which the word of God has called us to emerge. But what we have to remember, beloved brethren, is that every one of us is apt to turn back more than we suspect to what we have left behind. And hence there is a continual source of weakness, even greater than, though not so gross as, was found amongst the Corinthian saints. We see plainly in them how little the evil effects of that out of which they had come had disappeared from them. They were no doubt but young in the truth; but length of time does not eradicate evil, being in no way a cure for anything that savors of man. There is only one means, which is divine power by the truth; for, if this works in us, it works in self-judgment. Divine power invariably—if there is to be deliverance from evil—makes us sensible of it, as well as to judge ourselves in the light of God. There is not nor can ever be practical deliverance, until the Lord, by the power of His own truth brought home by the Spirit, makes us to sit in judgment on ourselves, searching and trying ourselves to the very core.

But as for the Corinthian saints, they were accustomed to a great deal of a different species of evil—having been under the influence and working of Satan, as he wrought powerfully in the heathen. Even before Christ came, there was a vast deal of demoniacal power in the world. We see it surrounding the blessed Lord at every step. No doubt there were different forms of Satan's power; but one of the worst was that which, usurping the name of God, had given to the

Corinthians the idea of religions power. Out of this terribly false condition the Corinthians had come into the church.

And have we no special danger? or if so, what? We have emerged from a state of things, not, it, is true, of that gross character, but from what is not less really foreign to the mind of God. We have come out of what is in point of fact a corruption of Christianity; and hence, therefore, we are very apt to bring in thoughts, feelings, and habits, which we do well to bring to the test of the word of God—even the oldest of us. But those who are comparatively young in the way need it more particularly; they have never yet proved duly their convictions; they have accepted a quantity of things, much more than they are aware of, on the acceptance of others, rather than by divine teaching for themselves. Along with much that is good, there is always the danger of our mingling a little of ourselves in every step of that process, and in particular we ought not to let in, or slip back into, what we have got out of.

But now for the principle. There are two main ideas among men around us, out of one or other of which we have all come. The one which most extensively prevails is that which I may call the Catholic idea, though perhaps most individuals in this room have known comparatively little of it as experience. Still it is before our eyes, and we are constantly in contact from time to time with persons who suffer from it; and it is well to know how to meet it. The Catholic idea is mainly characterized by this: all blessing, all privilege, is in the church; the grand object of God is the church; there is the Savior, life, pardon, every blessing; the only means of having these is to be in and of it; and this, too, as a present thing. For the Catholic idea does not venture far into the future; nor is heaven so much the object of its contemplation as is the earth. The notion is that, all privilege being concentrated in the church, the individual has scarcely any appreciable place. He is merged. He is merely a cypher, and all his importance is because he belongs to the church. As to himself, why he is not even allowed to call himself a saint; and, as to being a saint at all, it is a question for the church to settle. Not God, but the church determines whether he is to be a saint or not; and perhaps it is not done till fifty years after he is dead and gone. Now, no doubt all this is very gross ignorance; yet it is the form that the Catholic idea has taken. And remember, in speaking of this I am not referring merely to Romanism, but to ancient Christendom, under whatever guise it may present itself.

We have remains, as you know, which show how wildly this theory was taking root not very long after the apostles had disappeared themselves from the earth. No doubt there has been development since; but still the great idea was and is much what I have been endeavoring to set before you. This only is essential: all else is matter of detail and may differ. It is found in Romanism as well as in the Eastern Christian bodies; so it spread after the apostles left, far and wide and permanently.

But a new thing began at the Reformation. When the Catholic system had ripened into a monstrous head of corruption, when the results were morally unbearable among men, when the thought of the church had completely ruined or blotted out all right understanding of God, when on the one hand these who belonged to it, individually considered, were so little in the mind of men that it was no question of living faith, provided they belonged to the church; and, when on the other hand, all who were outside the church, no matter how real their faith or love, were considered heretics, and deserving of no better fate than to be punished soundly in this world for the good of

their souls; then came up another and counter thought in which the individual only is prominent. The one point here was that a man should not only read the Bible for himself, believe and be justified for himself, but that, as by faith he becomes a child of God for himself, so he should have been left free to serve God for himself, and choose his own company and his own mode of worship. Here all thought of the church was completely lost, and consequently, giving up consideration of God's assembly, individuals of this way of reasoning combined and formed churches for themselves. This grew, no doubt, to a far larger extent, and was carried out more fully, than was contemplated when first acted on.

But we find, in fact, that those who justly insisted on the importance of individual faith as the saving principle for the soul, and as that which for this glorified God, began to collect together at last, sometimes in a country to themselves, and then again, when in that country there began to be divergences of opinion among them, they made their own distinct churches. If they did not like the great public church of the country, they chose to split off into different religious societies, all essaying to become churches. One was, as they considered, as good in principle as another; but the best church was that which suited a man's own mind. This was the individual idea carried out to its natural results, and such is exactly what we find around us now.

We have the two systems confronting each other in fact. We see the old Catholic notion in those bodies who make everything to be a question of church privilege, who say that it is in the church alone can be found eternal life, or at any rate the hope of it—I might almost say, only the chance, for it comes to this. The whole system is a question of the church dispensing, the church acting, the church pronouncing, the church teaching what is truth, and really saving: everything is a question of the church. But in the other case the church is lost in the individual. It is each person who by faith has received the gospel and become a Christian, who consequently uses his own judgment in forming his own church, or joining the church he likes best. Such is the two-fold state of things in general.

Let me now ask you, what is the truth of God respecting it all? And this is where the importance of divine revelation comes in. The Corinthians were in danger of drifting into one or other of these two rivals, as we shall clearly find in these chapters. It is not, indeed, a very uncommon thing to find a mixture of the two, and this mixture we may trace among the Corinthians. The great thing to which your attention is called is this: the blessed manlier in which the Holy Ghost interferes in order to establish the believer in the truth; and so, without controversy, the soul finds itself able, while kept from what is wrong in each of these principles singly, to enjoy all that is right in both, as God's will alone is.

There is no possibility of a thing holding its ground on earth, unless there be something which gives it a moral claim. There must be a fragment of truth in order to win and keep Christians together. So it is when we look at the Catholic idea, and in what is called the Protestant view. There is a measure of truth in each; but when we come to God's word, there the truth appears about both, and in this order: it is not the church first and then the individual, but the individual first and then the church.

So it is introduced to us in our chapter, as it is always in Scripture. Take Matt. 16: what is the question the Lord first puts? “Whom do men say that I am?” One of them gives an answer for himself—an answer which would have done for each, though he who spoke went beyond the rest.

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This was a full confession of Christ, owning Him to be not the true Messiah only, but a divine person in the nearest relation to the Father; and the moment the Lord Jesus hears it, He brings out the purpose of His assembly— “On this rock I will build my church.” He had not then begun to build it, and He has not done building it yet.

Again in the Epistle to the Ephesians the same order is most marked. The individual Christian always precedes the body. Take for instance the first chapter: it is only in the last verse we see the church; and, if you look through the whole of the Epistle, it is regularly so. The individual is always set in his own place, and this necessarily is a question of faith; for faith is indispensable to the individual, and must be so. He cannot have faith for another. Each must have faith in God for himself. There may be the faith—the common deposit of the truth, which we all own; but still, when we look at faith itself, it is necessarily individual in the soul. Then follows the question of the church as the house of God and the body of Christ.

When one believes the gospel, one receives the Spirit, who not only is the seal of salvation, but also unites him to Christ as a member of His body There are divinely given relationships, whether individual or corporate; but the corporate follows the individual, the power in both being the Holy Ghost after redemption was effected, for the Spirit was not given till Jesus was glorified.

It is just the same thing in the chapter which is before us now.

The apostle opens the matter thus— “Concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” It will be observed that the word “gifts” is inserted by the translators. Nor is it correct; for the subject, though embracing gifts, goes farther, and takes in what is of far deeper moment as being the source of all, the presence of the Spirit working in the sovereign power of a divine person in the church, and by its members. Perhaps “spirituals” would give the idea, if our language could bear it without any addition. If we must, for clearness, supply a word, it should be “manifestations” rather than “gifts.”

Next, he tells them, “Ye know that when ye were Gentiles” —not “that ye were.” It was nothing new to say that they were Gentiles, but “when ye were Gentiles, ye were carried away unto those dumb idols even as ye were led.” That is, it was not a mere leaching, but rather in those heathen days a carrying away to what they would now look back on with pain, seeing the excessive folly of it as well as its daringness. It was Satan's direct opposition to the truth of God. They would learn that the true God is anything but a dumb idol—that He is one who has not only spoken to us by His Son, but Who opens the mouths that were once dumb to speak for Jesus Christ the Lord by His Spirit.

Thus the apostle brings in the test of spirits in the confession of Jesus as Lord (verse 3), “Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.” Here he does not, of course, mean only the precise term “anathema,” or “accursed;” but what he has, as I judge, in his mind, is this: whatever lowers Jesus is an impossibility to the Holy Ghost—a very simple principle, but one which is the only perfect test for all truth in the church of God. The apostle gives it in a double form, a criterion for as well as against. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” If man ventures without the Spirit of God, he becomes a prey to the evil one who seeks to lower Jesus. The Holy Ghost alone knows what is proper to His person. And He does not speak of Him merely as the Son of God. The point where

error comes in is in the Son of God becoming a man; for it is the complex person of the Lord Jesus that exposes persons to break down fatally. There are those, no doubt, who deny His divine glory; but there is a far more subtle way in which the Lord Jesus is lowered; and this is where He is owned to be a man, but where the manhood of the Lord is allowed in some way to swamp His glory, and neutralize the confession of His person. Thus, one is soon perplexed, and one lets that which puts Him in association with us here below work so as to falsify what He has in common with God Himself. There is but one simple thing that keeps the soul right as to this, which is, that we do not venture to pry and never dare to discuss it, fearing to rush in human folly upon such holy ground, and feeling that on such ground as this we are only worshippers. Wherever this is forgotten by the soul, it will invariably be found that God is not with it—that He allows the self-confident one, who of himself ventures to speak of the Lord Jesus, to prove his own folly. It is only by the Holy Ghost that he can know what is revealed about the Lord Jesus. But then we have the double guard: if a man lowers Christ, it is not by the Spirit; and if a man truly says that Jesus is Lord, it is by the Spirit. Here is the chief test for perpetual use in the church of God.

This is the truth about which we ought above all to be jealous. For there is a divine nature in the child of God that is sensitive to what affects Christ, and ought to be so. I cannot conceive anything more destructive to the soul than losing this sensitiveness. The person of Christ is a matter too serious, too fundamental, for any speculation to be allowed, and, in point of fact, the reason of it is this: the Holy Ghost, by whom is all true teaching, is not really with the soul that ventures to teach out of his own resources. He is here for the express purpose of glorifying Christ. Now this is a great thing to be simply settled on. The Holy Spirit of God is here for this very thing. It is not merely for comforting or edifying, though both come in; but the purpose constantly in view is this—He is come for exalting Christ, and guarding Him from all that lowers His glory. It is the aim and work of the Spirit of God as presented in the teaching before us.

(To be continued D.V.)

Chapter 26

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 2

Now that the apostle has brought in this great two-edged sword, as it were, to guard the glory of the Lord Jesus, we find him turning to another grave truth in verse 4, “There are diversities of gifts.” The Corinthians acted as if the only gifts worth talking about, and these above all and evidently grand, were such a manifest display of the divine power as in speaking many tongues without having learned them, or in working miracles. No doubt they did draw attention to the person who had the power so to speak or work; and it is very evident that here was divine power acting in a special way. But the Spirit of God recalls to one of the most characteristic truths attached to His own presence in the church— “There are diversities of gifts.” Whatever does not leave room for every gift that God has given is not the church of God acting as such. Whenever it is an accepted principle or a settled practice, when it is a sanctified order of things, to shut out the diversities of gifts that God is now giving to the church of God, it is a state that He disowns. It is contrary to the nature and aim of the church of God. Nor do I mean an opening for their exercise here or there in outposts, or in less important and comparatively private ways, but not on the greatest occasions, the coming together of all saints as God's assembly (■ν ■κκλησ■α) whether for the Lord's Supper or at other times. Not so did the Lord ordain as is shown by the apostle in all the context, where, correcting disorders, he maintains this intact.

There are diversities of gifts, “but the same Spirit;” because although these gifts differ immensely in their character, yet they all come from the same source. God has to do with one as truly as another. There is an immense difference between the lesser and the greater gifts, but “the same Spirit;” and if I would respect the Spirit of God, I should respect the least gift that comes from Him. Then there is another thing which the Corinthians had forgotten (verse 5), “And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.” One cannot have a gift without being a servant; that is, one is not his own master in the use of the gift, but a servant of the Lord Jesus. This the Corinthians had lost or never known; they were acting independently. Even the Holy Ghost Himself has deigned to take the place of a servant, and, having come down to that place, He lifts no one above it. This is the next great truth presented to us—not only diversities of gifts and the same Spirit, but differences of administrations (that is to say, of services), yet the same Lord. And, lastly, there were the results produced by these powers which wrought in subjection to the sovereign glory of God. For if there were differences or “diversities of operations” as they are called (verse 6), “it is the same God that worketh all in all.” What an immense present fact in a world of vain show!

If this was rather the general statement of divine power in the church of God, we come in the next place to its working in each individual. The apostle has been stating the common principle. There was the same Spirit, by whom all gifts were distributed, the same Lord, and the same God; but now he comes to the particular forms of the gift (verse 7): “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” It was not to please the individual himself, but for others' benefit. For these gifts to effect common good is the declared aim of all these workings of the Spirit of God in the church.

Then (verse 8) we have “For to one is given by the Spirit [not miracles, but] the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge.” Note that he carefully adds “by the same Spirit,” because knowledge has a considerably lower character than wisdom; but at the same time the “knowledge” that he owns here is as truly by the Holy Ghost as the “wisdom.” What is this word “wisdom” as compared with the word “knowledge?” To gather truth by serious study of God's word is far from being wrong. Indeed it is of the Holy Spirit; and the result is “knowledge;” and the utterance of it He gives is “the word of knowledge.” So Timothy was called to give himself wholly up to it. In fact, what is gathered thus is most justly to be considered the “word of knowledge;” and this no doubt possesses value, as everything has that God gives by the Holy Ghost to the church—the church of God. What a person gleans, spiritually laboring in the field of the word of God, has its place, was meant for all, and is refreshing to the saints of God. But it is not exactly the same as the “word of wisdom;” for “wisdom,” it seems; indicates that the soul is occupied not merely with scripture, but with Him who gave it that one might know Himself Thus the soul, furnished by the word of God, proves what it is to gather God's own mind; not merely to have it in details, as given here and there in scripture, but, by a deeper appreciation of His word, to enter into that acquaintance with Him which is found not so much in studying texts, as from communion with His own nature, ways, character, and above all with Christ Himself. He was found, I need not say always, “the wisdom of God.” Christ is never called the “knowledge of God,” nor could He be, but the “wisdom of God.” It is rather, I repeat, to be drinking not merely from the stream, but at the spring of all in God Himself! It is thence that the “word of wisdom” is drawn, following the course of the river higher up.

Now you will have noticed that the apostle does not commence with power so evident or striking He begins, on the contrary, with that which the Corinthians had very little love for, what they had painfully neglected and set aside in seeking after those mighty displays which occupied their active minds. The apostle takes them first to what edifies: “To one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge.” He then passes on to the gift of “faith,” namely, that power which enables the soul to break through difficulties. This is the faith that is referred to here. You must remember the gift of faith does not mean believing the truth; for this, of course, is indispensable in all saints.

Then we come to what was sensible to everybody or palpable even to an unbeliever. “To another the gift of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits.” The latter means not discerning whether or not people were Christians, but discovering whether the spirit by which they spoke. was of God or of Satan. In short, it was special power in the application of the preliminary criterion given in the third verse, which we have already noticed.

Then we have (ver. 10-12), “To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every one severally as He will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” Here we have the fundamental principle that I wish to assert just now with all plain ness of speech; and hence we perceive how the divinely taught may take in whatever is true of the two ideas that we have seen at work, give its just place to each, and combine them both, as the truth does, instead of setting them at war one with another, as men do.

Anything that really weakens faith could not be of God. Whatever would intercept the soul, whatever dared to come between it and the object of faith, could not be of God. Hence, therefore, the word of preaching that God employs for our conversion has exactly this for its object, viz., to put the individual before God—to present Christ to him, to meet his wants, and his misery, and his distance from God. There, consequently, it is entirely a question of faith. By faith it is that a man is justified; by faith he becomes a child of God. All the great individual blessings that a man has for himself, turn on faith in Christ given to him by the Holy Ghost through the word of God. It is through Christ (I need scarcely say) brought and revealed to his soul that this faith is produced.

But there is more than this to see. If one is a believer, what follows? When he submits to the testimony of God, when he has received the word of truth, when he has given to him the Holy Ghost, what is the effect? He is brought into the unity of the body of Christ. It is not simply that he has got the Holy Ghost, giving him the joy of the truth he has received, and withal power and liberty before God; but, besides, the Spirit gives union with all those here on earth who belong to Christ, who are set free for God and yet bound to Him.

Here then is exactly how we find the combination of the two principles entirely dislocated by man. He has divorced what should always be joined together. If you look only at man, there can be no doubt that the individual (or, as we may say, the Protestant) principle of faith is for the soul a far safer one than the Catholic one, which makes the church all. But there is more: we are not looking at things simply with regard to man, but also as to God; and we are bound to do so, and the Holy Ghost is here for the purpose of taking care of the glory of God, which is done by making Christ the object. He only is the object of all the purposes of God and the consequence is, that, until we enter into God's purposes, there never can be the sure or anything like a large enjoyment of the truth.

For when we have the Spirit of God, as He now is given to the believer, it is not only individually; but he is baptized into, or made to belong to, the one body. He is “one spirit with the Lord.” He is, consequently, one with all who are the Lord's. This, again, brings us face to face with the further truth that the Holy Ghost does not simply imprint unity upon the saints, and then leave them, but is here to make good all the objects of the glory of God. It is of very great moment that the children of God should look at the thing personally. I am afraid—and particularly so where people trust creeds instead of scripture—that the simplicity and the force of the plain truth that the Holy Ghost is a divine person is but little understood or even believed. Such is the case now, I believe, among those who are commonly called “Evangelicals,” whether they be Dissenters or Churchmen. Faith in the Holy Ghost as a divine person being feebly entertained, you will find that they generally talk about the Holy Ghost as an “influence.” It is not that men deny the existence of the Spirit of God, but they do not see the all-importance of His being a divine person; and, further than that, a divine person who is here working in God's saints and in God's assembly, sovereignly or as He will, to glorify the Lord Jesus.

Now here precisely we have the truth which the Corinthians too so little appreciated and therefore the apostle brings it out in this distinct manner. “All these” (not “some of them,” not those only which made themselves so conspicuous, but)— “all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: so also is [not the church only, but]

Christ." The apostle is no doubt looking at the church, but he blends it with the Head, as inseparably united together. He does not speak thus to the Ephesians. They do not require it to be so impressed upon them as did the Corinthians. Impossible to have been so loose as the Corinthians were, if they had remembered that the whole being, head and body, was all one "Christ." They looked upon themselves as invested with power, and this to them was the whole affair practically. But the apostle would convince them that these powers are but a small mid an inferior part of a vast system of divine working in the church on earth. It is a body one with Christ, and even called so, of which each and all who now believe are living members. "So also is Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit."

Then we have (ver. 14), "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not of the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" There plainly we have discontent with what the Lord had given. And was there ever-greater reason for this to be weighed than now? Whenever a soul is found faithfully using the gift given to it, there will always be blessing; but if on the contrary, the one with a humble gift, such as would be represented by "the foot," should covet what he has not got, his own proper work is lost by ignoring his real place in the body. The whole thought therefore is dishonoring to God. So again (ver. 16), "If the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Discontent may run through the members, high as well as low.

In verse 17th he puts it thus, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" The blessedness of the body is in each member doing its own function; because it is not merely my ear but I that hear through it, nor is it only my eye that sees, but rather I myself. It is the man. And this it is which gives, therefore, such a sense of unity, and is so real a means of blessing to every member, to the least just as much as the greatest. They all contribute; and indeed there would be a most sensible loss, were the least member to fail in doing its part. This is what the Corinthians had seriously lost sight of; but are we not in just the same danger as they were. Indeed we seem more particularly exposed; because, having come out of systems where there was only room for the priest or the minister, we naturally tend to the same. There is nothing that people sooner slip into than some kind of isolation and individuality; because for the most part they have come from where individuality was strong, and the place of the church was unknown or swamped. For not more truly does the "church" principle destroy the "individual" one, than the "individual" principle neutralizes the "church" one, if each stands alone.

The blessedness of the truth is that we have both—the individual blessing first clear, and then the corporate one, each being made and kept good by the Spirit of God. If the Holy Spirit brings my soul to know Christ, to rest on Him, and rejoice in Him before God, I cannot have it all without laboring that others may have the same blessing. This is the way in which God brings the two principles together and conciliates them round the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is not merely that I have Him as a Savior; I have Him also as the Head. Yea the body is one with Him as here: "So also is Christ." What an ennobling yet truly humbling standard for our practice, that all we are is a representation of Christ! I do not mean individually alone, but when we come together in the assembly; for this is the public way for the church to be known. How jealous ought we to be, therefore, that every meeting of the assembly should present Christ in truth! If we belong to God's church, what matter about any other church? His is the only church worth contending for; if we are

Christians, we are of it. All we need to see to is that we walk, and meet, and worship accordingly.

This, then, is the first violation of the thought of unity, viz., discontent with the place the Lord has given us, the desire for something greater, something more prominent than that which is ours. “But now,” says the apostle, “hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.” (ver. 28). How establishing this is to the soul! It is what, in our measure, we all want, to be more distinct about. Perhaps there are persons in this room who have come in merely believing that here we are enjoying things more simply and with more purity. This I believe; but it does not give you the true groundwork, nor explain why we have left what man has done in self-will. Is it the fact that we have to do with God in the matter, and that God has to do with us?—that we meet because, and as, it is the will of God? Surely God is still carrying on that building, His holy temple; surely the work of the Holy Spirit is still preceding on according to the figure that is spoken of here—the body of Christ.

Whatever the difficulties, or disorder, or confusion, God's house abides, and of Christ's body we are. We have come to that which expresses it, and it is as members of Christ we meet as we do. Each meeting of the faithful that we have our part in is a witness to the one body, though we frankly own the ruin-state in which the church is here below; even the humblest soul that is accepted in the name of the Lord Jesus, as made by the Holy Ghost a member of Christ's body, has just as real a place in it as any other. Not merely so are the prominent members, but no less are those described, according to the apostle's figure here, as the “uncomely” ones (ver. 23). It is of high practical moment that we should accept unreservedly the truth of God respecting this. So that, supposing there are real Christians that cause trouble or difficulty, it is the teaching of the Spirit of God that we should heartily accept them. What sort of a mother would it be that ever finds fault and becomes impatient with one of her children which complained of anything unduly? A true mother would anxiously care for that child more than any of the others, because it most needed her love. May I not then say that it is exactly thus the Lord really calls us to be? For what is a spiritual mind, but a mind in possession of affections and of a judgment according to God, so that we shall be found seeking just the same things as Christ—not restlessly wishing to get rid of a trial or difficulty or anything of the kind, but bearing all, not only in patience, but with love exercised by it.

Let us take up briefly the other form in which the working of the Spirit of God is apt to be set aside (ver. 21). “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Here we have the exact counterpart to what we have been looking at. It is not the inferior part wanting to be something greater, but the superior part that disdains the lesser place. These things, brethren, ought not so to be. But as they were then and we are now, so we do well to lay this instructive warning to heart. The very nature of the body rises up to rebuke the greater gift which would deprecate or hinder the less. Let us be thankful to the grace which has given us any place; let us discharge earnestly the functions God has given us in the body of Christ; but let us prize and make the most of every other member, and not least those who have a place wholly different from our own. Disdain be as far from us as discontent.

(To be continued D.V.)

Chapter 27

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 3

Here we have the two great hindrances that are too often at work. In both cases we see clearly flesh and not the Spirit of God; for the Spirit of God, as He works in all, so He takes up each and gives each his place, and this because it is God that has put them there. Consequently, whenever the Spirit of God works thus in souls, there should be the refusal of everything that would weaken or frustrate the will of God: especially if love also is drawn out towards each member of the body of Christ, because it is a member. However we need not enter into that further now.

You will note that in the 21st verse the apostle is more peremptory than in the 15th. We have in the former, “The eye cannot say unto the hand,” whereas in the latter it is “If the foot shall say.” The one is the danger of the strong or greater gift, the other of the weak or less; and the former is of the two the most offensive to the Lord.

In ver. 21 the apostle takes in the two greatest extremes of all. “Neither again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” He is looking here, of course, simply at the body, and bringing out the moral force of the comparison, which is, that the highest gift cannot treat the lowest as if he were needless to him. And, indeed, it is so where grace works; for I am persuaded that you will find that the greater the gift (where there is spirituality as well as power), there will be the more hearty desire for the working of the least gift that God has given for the good of the church. There will be no such thought as that, because one person has a superior gift, all others are to hold their peace while he is present. The spring of blessedness in the assembly is God Himself, and not any particular member of the body, though he may be by grace a very important channel of working for the good of the assembly. The great point is the sense that God it is who works in the church; and God may, even in the presence of the very greatest, it might be even of the apostle himself, be pleased to use, in a true way to edification, a very simple and lowly member of the body of Christ.

The main thing is that neither the lesser members are to desire a greater place than they have, nor the greater ones in any way to act as if they could do without the least. They are all precious in the assembly of God. “Nay, much more” (and this brings in what was referred to), “those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary.” It is not that they have their place only, but “they are necessary.” They may be trying enough by times, and too plainly show the feebleness of those who had not the power to rise above the circumstances and, things around; but still “they are necessary.” “And” (ver. 23) “those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need.” Take for instance the face. Care of this is not wanted, for it is of itself a comely part. But we take more care naturally of that part which has not the same comeliness, as for instance the foot. So here we find the divine aim: “But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body.” See to it then that there be no setting aside of what God has given for the good of the church, whether it be the lesser or the greater ones opposing each other. If so, the same result, in either case, is produced. It is man thwarting the government of

God, nay, His richest grace, in the church: would, he even make the Spirit appear a party to the dishonor of the Lord? May we be kept and guided in the path of Christ!

The apostle goes on (ver. 26), “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” And then, in the next verse, he brings in a statement well worthy of our mature consideration, “Ye are the body of Christ.” Not of course, that they were independent of any others throughout the world; but still they were the expression of Christ in that particular place. Strictly speaking, it is neither “a” body as if there was more than one, nor “the” body as if they alone completed it, but “Christ's body.” They had the privileges and the responsibility attaching to it. They were His body there. If you went to another place, you would find not another body but still the same. Looking at them individually, we see that “they are members in particular.”

Each member is a member of Christ, not of a but of the church, His body. In fact, there is no such thing in scripture as a member of a church. Scripture repudiates such language, which proceeds from the “individual” idea that we have been looking at. There everything is individualized, even the church itself, as well as every person that belongs to it. It is all on a false foundation, not for our relations as Christians, but for those of the church.

The truth is that the Holy Ghost, being a divine person—equally, therefore, acting in all the assemblies throughout the world—necessarily makes all one; and this is the reason why there was no such thing as “one body” until the Holy Ghost came down. In this way He it is, not faith, that unites to Christ. I quite admit that, unless there is faith, a man will never get to heaven; and therefore nothing is more important. This was true before the church existed at all; but now with it something more is found. A divine Person is come down, who never took flesh like the Lord Jesus, and never therefore was pleased, so to speak, to unfold His glory in any method so circumscribed as having a body prepared, to be incorporated with His divine nature, i.e. to be Himself a man while yet God. But now in fact the Holy Ghost, never having been pleased so to take a body or become incarnate, takes up all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and brings them into unity. This is the true account of the church, and no other; and the consequence is therefore that, no matter where it may be, it is always the “body of Christ.” It is so wherever one finds saints gathered to Christ's name. Wherever they are met in His name, there the Holy Ghost is left free to work for Christ's glory. Alas! how many true saints are scattered in sects, not so assembled. The state of things around us is that the two things are not found together. There are “members in particular,” but not holding to Him as the Head, or gathered on the ground of “the body of Christ.” I speak of the fact, not of intelligence. There are many real Christians, no doubt, but they are not found simply on that footing. Are there not individual saints scattered up and down the denominations? They are Christ's members; but could one say of them denominationally that they are met as “the body of Christ”?

Now, our wisdom is to own and act on this truth as on every other known to us. God has shown us the failure and the ruin of the church, and that whatever does not uphold the principle of the body of Christ will always be wrong. If I think only of the ruin of the church, there will be no confidence, nor a happy going forward according to the mind of God: the fact of the ruin will be used as an excuse for doing nothing. But, where we believe that God has His assembly, although it is at the present time in a state of confusion, we ought, if members of it, to grieve over it, and humble our

souls about it; but we must see that we be not acting inconsistently ourselves. If there are ever so few meeting together who own this truth, then the Spirit of God acts as truly here now as He did of old. Is this said to encourage assumption? God forbid! for I should not myself meet with any who would arrogantly claim to be the church of God, any more than with such as meet on any other ground than that. Let us cleave to the truth, and this practically, without setting up to be more or other than we really are, not daring to meet in any other way or name but His, yet owning unfeignedly the present ruin-state. The only sound and sacred principle to meet on is the one body, and this the body of Christ.

We are next told (ver. 28) “God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Observe, it is the same design as before—putting down to the lowest place that which the Corinthians had set first. “First apostles,” and last of all are these “diversities of tongues." None of the brethren, however, possessed all the gifts, as we find in the 29th and 30th verses: “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” Further, they are set in the church, not in “a” church; and it is the church on earth, not in heaven. It is real living unity in practice. Nationalism or Voluntarism is therefore excluded no less than Romanism. They all deny the one body in principle and in practice.

The chapter closes with an exhortation to “covet earnestly the best gifts;” that is, those that were for edification, though they had less of display than of power and blessing for the assembly.

Before taking up chapter 14 in detail, I may add a few words as connecting the previous part of it and the chapter before 13 with what we have already had. I showed in chapter 12, that the great principle is laid down, not merely of gifts, but of what is called “spirituals” —the word “spiritual” being much more than a question of particular “gifts.” What appertains to the Spirit is the point. Now the most important of all is this—not so much these gifts, in which is displayed His power in various forms, but, above all, the presence of God—the presence of God now made good in this especial form and energy that the Holy Spirit is here to act sovereignly in the assembly.

This, therefore, is a deeper question, and of greater moment than any display of particular gifts; and we must not forget that it is included in the doctrine of chapter xii. It shows, no doubt, that there are various forms in which He works. But who is it that works? God Himself. Nor is it only in a general way in which He may be said to do everything; but the solemn truth here brought before us, and which we must each value according to the measure of our appreciation of divine things, is this—God present in a new and intimate way, as He never was before, nor could be apart from, the accomplishment of redemption. It immensely clears the subject where the soul enters into this.

We know very well that at all times in the history of the world God intervened. Never did He fail to leave Himself a witness of His power and goodness. But it is another thing to have Himself so present as to give character to the place where He has been pleased to come and make it His dwelling. Granted that it is no question now of a visible sign. In Israel it was; and they being dull, and its being according to the character of His general dealings, Jehovah gave them a palpable proof of His presence. There was the cloud that betokened it. This gave the certainty, therefore, to an Israelite that God dwelt there in a way He had never done before. If they were redeemed out of Egypt, they had God Himself thus taking His abode in the midst of His people. But then this was

only a sign—for such was the nature of it—of a God who could not be approached too near, of a God who was purposely bringing out the sinfulness of the people that stood in this comparative nearness to Him. Still there was amongst them sin, and no offering as yet which could put it away forever.

Now, on the contrary, the basis of the presence or dwelling of God with us is the glorious fact that sin is judged in the cross, and that God accordingly can be present not merely judicially, nor merely with a sign of His glory, but in the reality of His grace; not of course closing as yet the place of responsibility, nor taking us out of the path of faith, but strengthening us in it. Accordingly the grand point throughout all these chapters is this: whatever consists not with the presence of the God of all grace who is Himself in the midst of His people—actually there, whatever is not suited to Him, is unsuited to them. It is not a question merely of the people being Christians—which is all taken for granted—but of truth, love, and righteousness in dependence on God in the use of the means that He gives us to glorify the Lord Jesus by the Spirit in His assembly.

God is here in our midst: not merely dwelling in each, which is perfectly true, but God making us, when gathered together, His dwelling. This principle is laid down, not merely in chapter xii., but in chapter 3, as it is supposed throughout the Epistle. We must remember that it is a presence here, not merely one by-and-by, but now on earth. At that time they had God acting according to the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over Satan; so that there were healings, and miraculous powers, the fruit of complete victory over what even the judgment of God had brought into the world. But, besides that, they had what is of permanent value for the testimony of God here below: as, for instance, grace edifying the members of the body of Christ by teachers and the like—the word of wisdom, and of knowledge, &c. On this without dwelling more, let US simply recall the two great facts: God's dwelling on the earth; and, again, that dwelling, while made good and true in each particular spot, as really one wherever it may be found. That is, there is a stamp of unity about all, which is bound up with the fact that the Holy Ghost is there, who by His presence is incapable of imprinting anything else than unity. Who does not see one Spirit, not only working by each gift, but unifying all the members?

Now I press this, because there is not a single religious system on the face of the earth which has not in some way let slip that unity—even those who boast most of it. Take, for instance, the Church of Rome. After all there is a vast deal, even in Romanism, of what you may call independency, as admitting not only of its separate parishes and distinct dioceses, &c. but of totally different and opposing monastic orders. The one thing that gives the appearance of unity is that there is one governor over all. They and others talk about unity of doctrine, discipline, and the like. But they do not see how utterly short this is of the “one body.” For there might be the same kind of doctrine and discipline in half-a-dozen bodies, and no unity whatever; as for instance, in the various Methodist societies, or in the Presbyterian churches, which are apart one from another, as much as from other denominations. And what is the worth of unity in a sect? This any might have. “The unity of the Spirit” is olivine; and all saints are bound to keep it.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 28

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 4

But what a different thing is unity in the mind of God—how wholly distinct the oneness of the church according to scripture! For there we do not see “One Spirit” and many bodies, even if they had a similar polity, but one Spirit and one body. And what a blessed thing to know, beloved friends, that this unity is ours, and that it is ours not in an exclusive but in an inclusive sense—that the unity of which we remind one another, as to which we need continually to rebuke our narrow hearts, is that which we maintain for all that are His! It is not a strange place that we wish to compel the saints into; nor is it something which we crave as an object near to our hearts in a selfish way, and therefore cry it up. No! our one motive is that it is the truth, this unity of the Spirit according to the will of God. It is a relationship, and this in grace, which our God has established by the presence of His Spirit for all that are His on earth, the great effort of the devil being to hinder its manifestation, to destroy the sense of it, and consequently, all just action upon it in the minds and ways of God's saints. For I press it, that not merely is it a question of the world coming in, but the more solemn thought that God's saints have lost even the true notion of unity. Consequently, when most look at the various societies that are existing around them, there may be feeling of complacency, not of shame and sorrow for the Lord's injured name. But even if they grieve, let them rise and do the will of the Lord themselves without waiting for others; especially as to obey is better than sacrifice, and example gives the more force to precept. Why should they go on with what is unscriptural? Who asks this at their hands"? Certainly not the Lord.

The doctrine of chapter 12 is that “God has set some in the church, first apostles,” &c. (verse 28). That is, the Spirit of God blots out all the effects of man to arrange matters so as to avoid difficulties, and allow what he calls rights to be maintained, and best secured, as he thinks, against collision. Men have got the notion that there is no truth, but only “views” as to divine things; so that it is impossible where souls come freely together, that there should not be difficulty and danger. Granted; we all admit that. If we have the idea that, coming out and finding ourselves upon the ground of God's truth about the church, we shall not find difficulties but avoid all collision, we have certainly deceived ourselves. And, beloved friends, it is far better that we should be convinced of this from the beginning, and that we should remember that God never guaranteed to His assembly that there should not be trials thus to prove us. On the contrary, it is there I look for them, and they are sure even to abound; but then is that all? Is the church merely a number of godly persons who come together and who seek grace to bear with one another? Nay, it is God's dwelling-place; and is not God there He is verily, and displaying Himself, not by the cloud, as in the days of old, but by the Holy Ghost—as it is said, “The habitation of God through the Spirit.” The Holy Ghost has the same place now to us, as the cloud of glory had for Israel; and what was then only a visible though glorious sign is now a divine person in power. For if there be any person in the Godhead to whom it belongs to act in power, it is the Holy Ghost. Whatever may be the counsels of the Father, and whatever may be the work that the Son has done to give effect to those counsels, the Holy Ghost is always the agent that works them in man; and sent down from heaven has now taken this place. There is the secret of the unity. Who is it that is in the church, and what makes it to be the church

of God? Not godly members merely, but in fact the Holy Ghost's presence. It is therefore a question of whether we really do believe in it, and whether we look for it. If we do, the consequence will be that our faith will be tried and put to the proof; but then we shall find that faith, however tried, is never disappointed. If we have brought in any latent unbelief, any thoughts natural to human kind, any expectations of our own, they, no doubt, will be disappointed; but this will be a blessing. It is good for us to be corrected of the Lord; and He has brought us where He can deal with us as One present with us, and acting for His own glory.

And as this is what chapter 12 sets before us, so, following it up, the apostle reminds the Corinthians that there was one thing even better than gifts. This was love. Hence, therefore, the place of chapter 13 Looking at God's nature, no doubt He is light; but what is the energy of that nature? It is love. It is this which actively comes to us from God and blesses us. As He has taken His place in the assembly, it is no question of His law for a people in the flesh who could not draw near, because God Himself is there. It is not put simply in the form of “grace.” Love is the energy of the divine nature, as grace its special way towards the evil with which it deals, and which it rises above. Thus love may be where there is no question of what it deals with, being the spring of what expresses the divine nature in its delight and activity in good. This is developed in the most blessed manner in chapter 13. It is what Christ showed to be in God; it is what the Spirit would now exercise in us.

It is impossible for the assembly of God to move healthfully or to enjoy happily the truth, unless the effect of truth is to free us from what hinders love—to judge all the roots of that which would impede the exercise of this divine principle. Hence, therefore, the apostle insists upon it that, whatever might be the value of prophecy, or knowledge, or any other gift, they all sooner or later depart. They are suited only to an imperfect condition, after all found necessarily here below. But love is not so; like Him who is its source, it abides and changes not. Nevertheless, the blessed fact is that love is also a present thing, and never more truly needed than now, as a holy spring of activity for the saint, as such, or in the church. This the apostle declares in the last verse of the chapter— “Now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

In coming to chapter 14, then, we have not the principle (this we had in ch. 12) nor the spring of power as in ch. 13, but the practice, the application, of the great truth. It is true—and I make the remark because I have seen it objected to not very long ago—that we do not hear very much about gifts in chapter xiv. The reason is because it is supposed that we have read chapter xii. God does not write the word to save people trouble, nor is it written, as men preach, in texts; by which the scriptures are divorced, and their strength in connection destroyed. Not so; God has written all His word to be prized, as made a matter for waiting on the Lord, that we may enter in and fully enjoy it, though it may not be understood all at once. How wisely it is so! Let us thank God that His word is so written that there never was a soul since the world began who could take it up and fathom it—even the apostles and prophets themselves. Let us thank God that His word does call us to take the place of learners. The more God gives us to know, the more He would have us feel how much there is yet to learn; and so we are kept, as He desires us to be, in the attitude of waiting. No doubt this does not suit the world. It suits much better to talk as if all were understood; while, on the contrary, it will be found how little is actually known of scripture when reduced to a science.

The point here is this, that chapter xiv. is an integral part of the great argument which is begun in ch. 12; and ch. 13 is not, as men suppose, a mere digression on love, but a direct, necessary, element at this point. For whatever may be the value of love individually, how much more is it necessary when we are brought into the place of such nearness, of such scope for affection, of such need of patience, of such call for faith, lest all be marred by flesh and self-will!

No doubt our coming together as God's church supposes our redemption. It is not a question of some peculiar gift or doctrine, but of God's presence who redeemed us—that He might enjoy with us, and we with Him, whatever He has given us. Such is the church's communion. Accordingly, it is the place where love has its full exercise; and I do not hesitate to say that there could not else be such a sphere for love as that which is given us now. We shall have it in heaven in another way, and in a fullness without alloy suitable for eternity. There, of course, all will be positive perfection and enjoyment; but here, in a time of difficulty, of sorrow, of trial, in a place where we have constantly to walk superior to circumstances, is a sphere where love can best grow, and its effects may admirably flourish.

Chapter 29

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 5

1 Corinthians 12, 14

In chapter 14 the gifts, of which the apostle had been speaking in chapter 12, are supposed. To argue as unbelief does, as if there were nothing in chapter 14 of the same nature as in chapter 12, is mere folly. But, coming to the point now, there is one thing desirable to be explained before mentioning the general argument of the apostle. In the beginning of the chapter he contrasts prophesying with tongues at great length, speaking of the former in these terms (ver. 3), “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men, to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” Now there is many a person that understands this to mean that whoever speaks to exhortation and comfort prophesies. This is to mistake him. You could not invert the sentence and still hold the truth. What the apostle means is that the man who only speaks in a tongue does not edify, nor does he exhort or comfort; the man who prophesies does. The truth is, that prophesying is the highest character of divine communication through man. It is not a question of opening futurity, but of bringing God and the soul together. An instance of it we may see in the case of the woman of Samaria. What Christ said to her evidently brought God Himself home to her conscience, and she at once awoke to the conviction that He who spoke was a prophet. Prophecy is therefore the most intimate and direct communication of God in dealing with the soul, giving a person the certainty that the mind of God is being expressed. Of course the man that prophesies does edify; but there are many other forms of ministration to the soul. There is comfort and exhortation in teaching; and again, in preaching the gospel great comfort might be given to the heart; but still these things are distinct from prophesying.

Now the apostle singles out (I make this remark for the purpose of a little help to the understanding of the general scope of the chapter) two gifts, one of which was slighted, the other overvalued, by the Corinthians. They slighted prophesying, because they were not in adequate degree exercised about the enjoyment of God. They cried up signs and tongues; and the apostle has given them various severe blows, from the beginning to the end of the Epistle, as to their low condition in this very particular. In short, they were walking as men. They enjoyed intellectual exercise, lively speculations, sparkling flow of eloquence. All these things had charms for the Corinthian saints. I do not mean that it was not about Scripture. Of course it may have been; but what they did not enjoy was God dealing with their souls. And the reason is plain. They were in an unbroken state. Some of them had been getting litigious, others making light of heathen temples and sacrifices; there was disorder in worship, foundation-doctrine questioned, some of them (as we know) not even moral, gross sin being very slightly judged.

Well, as we saw, the apostle confronts these two gifts, prophesying and tongues, chiefly, because they are the antipodes, as it were, of one another-speaking in a tongue being one of the lowest forms in which God's Spirit wrought, as prophesying is the highest. He censures them for their habit of speaking with tongues in the assembly of God, while there was no real value felt for prophesying. How came this? They had started upon a false idea. Their notion being that the

church was the place for the display of divine power, and speaking with tongues being one of the most striking and conspicuous proofs of God's power, it was, they thought, the most fitting display for the church of God. Not so, says the apostle, who therefore brings in, as a means to help them to a sound estimate, the bearing of love. There is nothing so characteristic of God amongst His own as love. For we are not here speaking of love going out towards the rebellious, as for instance the gospel used in winning souls. Remarkably enough, the gospel never occurs in this chapter, most precious as it is in its own place. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the evangelist is an essential feature; and there accordingly the Lord puts him forward in a most important way, as connected not merely with souls but with the church. This ought not to be forgotten, the evangelist being one of those who are given “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Here he disappears, because it is not the witness of love to the church, still less to the world. It is the presence of God in the church before the world, that is the point in our Epistle.

The Corinthian idea was that whatever displayed power in them before the world was the object for the church. Not a “tongue without an interpreter,” says the apostle: there is no love in it; and consequently, as he shows here (chap. 14, verse 3), thereby is no comfort no? anything that acts upon the soul to edification. This is the effect of divine love. There never can be real edification without divine love in some way or other acting in power on other souls, as it is that which works in him that speaks.

So the apostle brings these two gifts together at considerable length. He points out the unwisdom of dragging these unknown tongues into the church simply because they were a display of divine power. But what follows? We have the striking way in which the Spirit is brought before us here in His action; and again, how saints, unquestionable saints, having unquestionable power in the Spirit of God, may after all, through not having the Lord before their eyes, wholly miss the will of God.

What a lively picture it gives us, first of all, of the fact that the Spirit of God is come down to serve! His action might be all perverted, but still He was there. He did not withhold these powers, because they were misused. This is a solemn thought, not only fall of comfort in what is good, but extremely humbling as to what is evil.

And now, on what does this wonderful fact rest, that the Holy Ghost is here, and abides with us, and this forever? Not because the saints deserve it; but because of Christ and Christ's redemption. This is the reason why no dark ways of men, no break-up of the church, drove Him away. The Spirit of God abode on and on; and will abide until the church is completed. Therefore it is in vain for persons to say, “Where are those powers now?” This is not the true question, but the presence of the Spirit Himself. Only you will observe, when they had those powers, there might be and was the greatest confusion. And when those powers are no longer displayed, what then? Unbelief comes in to destroy all, and would ignore the greater truth of the presence of the Spirit in the church, because these powers are not in exercise.

I ask you, beloved friends, can you say that God has taught you this truth; or are you indifferent about it? Is the presence of the Spirit that which brings you together to honor, as Lord, Jesus who died for you? How sad to say that it does not seem in many cases as if it were; for I am afraid that some of God's children, who can not plead sickness or other lawful hindrances, allow themselves

just the Lord's supper, and little more, and so fail to magnify the Lord in His will and ways, and foreclose their own blessing immensely. If it were a question of persons who could not attend, or of those who had no other opportunity, it would be indeed worthy of love and respect for such souls to bear quietly privation and consequent loss. But I cannot but say that it is a pain where one sees brethren who only put in an appearance on Lord's day morning—just keeping within the verge of that which entitles them to retain their place in name, and no more. Precious as is the Supper of the Lord, when partaken of in the fellowship of saints, and according to the word of God, if it alas! forms not only the staple but the whole of one's Christian service and worship in public at least, it seems to be only another form of Ritualism. The Lord does not deserve this at our hands; nor would He receive it from such as feel Who it is that is waiting to bless us when we meet together. And is the Lord there only when we break bread? Is it then alone that we are gathered to His name? Is He not there when we come together to join in prayer? Have we no worship to offer? Or do we suppose that, because we do not take part actively, He has no claim and we have no privilege there?

It is indeed great forgetfulness of God, and of His working in all; for He acts not only in the great gifts, but, as we have it in Ephesians, by what “every joint supplieth.” It is not a question of chief men only, but of what every one owes the rest. Surely, my brethren, whatever may be the humble place that a saint of God has in the body of Christ, he has that place which is given him by God therein for His glory. If scripture is believed, you cannot deny that the church is a reality here; and if it be so, then there is not a joint in that body but what is meant, not merely to receive, but to supply, good. No doubt, one main source of our weakness lies in the little faith that each saint has in the importance of his supply to all the others. God is not working in the spiritual body or in the natural one, quite independently of the state and condition of the particular members. The body of Christ is a living whole, and should be intelligent too. In the house of God the Spirit dwells and acts. Is He not the “Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind?” and is this true of those only whose voice is heard in the meetings of the saints? Is it not true of every one in whom He dwells, of each saint that is a constituent part of Christ's body, as every saint is?

Let us have more faith, then, in what God has written for the common blessing of all, and more confidence; in the Lord's using those that may be little or weak. Their presence is a fact, and still more the action of the Spirit on the new man, when they are thus present, Our place is not to criticize, nor to be displeased at this or that, to indulge in partisanship any more than in what would equally grieve the Spirit; for either way we should be coming together for the worse and not for the better. When souls have the certainty of God being there, and that we are each forming a part of that which glorifies Him, what a difference it makes! How is it so? Because in love we then seek the edification of all; and, I may remark, that it is not only what is said, or what is prayed, but the tone of all, too, which has much to do with the blessing, the spirit in which we are together. Is it so, that when assembled we really are found in the truth of what we are thus met for—our souls going out in prayer, worship, or whatever it may be? Inasmuch as it is a divine person that is present with us, He knows all hearts, and we need to look well to it how far we are hindering or helping on the object for which He is here and we come together—the glory of Christ.

But as the Corinthians were childish in this matter of the tongues, the apostle rebukes them sharply, and demands (verse 7) what the effect would be if all were a jargon of sound; using figures to convict them of the folly of that which was practically a mere jumble of undistinguishable

sounds. That the speaker should be understood is pressed in repeated forms (vers. 11-17). Not that the apostle did not speak with more tongues than any of them; but in the assembly he had rather speak five words with his understanding, that he might teach others, than ten thousand words in a tongue (vers. 18, 19). He brings it down to this point (ver. 20), that they were only infants as yet. “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye babes, but in understanding be men.”

Whether it be individually or as an assembly, the end for which God has redeemed us is His own glory, and the way in which He forms us for that glory now is through One Who is here with us on Whom we are called to lean, Whose work and delight it is to exalt and commend Jesus. He has sent the Spirit on Whose action we are called to count, no matter what the difficulty may be.

Take a case of discipline: I mention this, because you are familiar with it. How would it show itself in the assembly as contrasted with the ways of men, or with a company even of God's children acting on human grounds? At best they would try to settle it, after the facts had been brought before them, by a majority, or show of votes. This is man's mode. He knows no better, because the available way is by the men who are there, the individuals whose business it is to judge. How acts faith in the presence of God, by His Spirit—how would this govern such a matter? The case is brought before the assembly. There may be a difference in the minds of those present. The facts are stated. There prevails the sense before a word is said that there is something lacking. Dead silence follows. A brother rises (for God would not have us depart from the order of His assembly; there may be sisters who know the facts and have a spiritual judgment as truly as men, but they do not violate the order of God), who states that he feels a difficulty, and he suggests that it would be well to inquire, waiting on God a little longer. The assembly bows. Discipline is a thing that may not be forced, unless indeed people are reckless of division or wish it. It is not a question of mere unanimity, but rather of God giving an intelligent conviction to the assembly. Accordingly there is a pause in the proceedings. The case is examined a little more fully. The point of doubt is looked into. The Lord does not refuse His light. Facts are brought forward again: during the pause the truth is brought forth convincingly. The doubt whether the case was adequately known, whether the sin under judgment was as grave as it appeared, is entirely removed. The facts are plain, as is scripture; no doubt remains any longer on the mind of any spiritual person; and discipline is either uncalled for, or it must take its course according to the Lord's sentence in His word.

The church of God is entitled, by virtue of Him Who is in it, to look for divine light; not to act in the dark, but to wait on God with the certainty of learning His mind about us. Now, I do not deny that there may be in certain cases a mistake, but then there is always an intelligible ground for seeing how the mistake has been made. The assembly might act hastily, and this very thing would convict it; for supposing you show that in an extreme case of discipline they have been too ready to act without due testimony, no wonder they have not had the guidance of the Lord. For it is a plain scriptural principle that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” It is an exceedingly humiliating thing when an assembly has to acknowledge that it has acted wrongly; for the very fact of our being so gathered together is meant, as far as means can go, to correct extravagance and supply what may be lacking in mere individuals. When really subject to the Lord, all is sure.

We are entitled, I say, to look for the guidance of God; but one quite admits there may be such a thing as mistaken acts. The assembly is no more infallible than an individual Christian. For what makes the assembly to be that of God is not merely that they are Christians, but that His presence is vouchsafed there—God present and left free to act by His own word. And this is the ground on which we should look for guidance. But then the same thing is true of an individual. He has God's presence in him, but does this make him infallible? The truth is, there is no such thing as infallibility except in God Himself; but we must also hold, that, just as an individual waits upon God, he is proportionately guided; and, of course, so far as the assembly depend on God, they enjoy the same gracious guidance. But there is no ground for anything like pretentiousness, or the notion that there cannot be a mistake through haste, on the part of the one or the other, though it would be less likely in the assembly. We have to pray that, if even gracious answers expose over-confidence, there one might be made watchful; as, on the contrary, we should bear in mind that just because God's grace has put us into the place of His church, it is in that place that. Satan is peculiarly anxious to lower, pervert, and dishonor the name of the Lord Jesus by our means.

(Continued from page 281) (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 30

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 6

This should teach us to lean on the Lord, and, as God's assembly, seek to be faithful to His word. But it is most important to remember that God's assembly as a whole is now in a state of ruin. That man is not to be trusted who holds the precious truth of the presence of God in the church, without the sense of the condition of things at this present moment. We need this deeply; for where it is lost sight of, there is apt to be such rashness, and dangerous high-mindedness in the use of truth, as would leave us outside the action of the Spirit of God.

So with a person who is brought to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not merely that He is brought to God through faith. This is quite true; but there is that also which puts the soul in the dust in the confession of its total ruin, as truly as there is the sense of the blessedness into which it is brought. And so is it now, when God has not merely placed us in such intimate relations with Himself as an assembly, but has also shown us the state of the church generally. Of all persons on the face of the earth, those favored thus ought to remember it most, and practically too.

But again we observe another point of interest. We see in the course of this chapter the fact coming put that in the assembly, as Paul knew it, the same kind of action appears as we are familiar with. We have praying, thanks, and blessing enumerated. The grand center of these last is the table of the Lord, as we learn from the preceding chapters (10 and 11) Here, on the other hand, it is the action and presence of the Holy Spirit. But I would recall to you that we here read of just the same elements as are met with now, not of course all that then were, but as far as they go. God indeed is faithful.

Further, we see very plainly in this chapter that powerfully as “a tongue” might serve as a sign to unbelievers, what the apostle prefers a great deal is that which acts in and by the understanding to edify all. He takes particular pains to mark that his feeling on the subject was not through jealousy, or because he had not so many gifts as some boasted. The apostle had no ground personally to decry in any way the gifts about which he was speaking; for (ver. 18) he say, “I thank my God, I speak in a tongue more than ye all.” But what the Lord wants is edification, that is, the building up of the saints. And the growth of the saints is inseparable from the activity of divine love on their behalf in and by the truth. This is therefore pressed. Whatever was not somehow to edification was unsuited to the assembly.

Here I may say as a principle, that this should guard us against any love of singularity amongst the saints of God—such as, among the young, the vanity of preaching on hard scriptures. Now, no doubt, by dwelling on some such portions of the word of God there may be a kind of factitious interest created in passing, or by giving some application of a plain text that no one else has heard of. This always seems to me uncommonly small; and, further, I cannot but think it really evinces a want both of self-judgment and of earnest desire for the edification of the saints. The thing to be sought is what will manifest God. Could one conceive of Paul doing such a thing? find in our blessed Lord exactly the contrary. He was the absolute perfection of all grace and truth. How He takes up the simplest facts, the most common objects of daily life! how He turns to account the

woman sweeping her kitchen floor, if I may say so, for a lost piece of silver; or the shepherd seeking for his lost sheep! The most trivial incidents in His hands are vehicles of the highest truths for the soul. For there it is where power proves itself—bringing God into such matters, and making them the witness of His gracious interest in our souls. How blessed it becomes when one sees in the trite objects of every day the dignity and grace of the Lord! It brings home to us God acting by Him. As for the novelty that claims to be original, it may be ingenious like fireworks; but what if we never can trust it, whether it be true or not? How unlike God's ways in Christ!

But I merely speak of this now, as giving a practical turn to the very principle that was then at work among the Corinthians. They were occupied with what would electrify and surprise, and not with that which would help the growth of the soul in the knowledge of God Himself.

The apostle comes to another consideration (ver. 21). He draws attention to the scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of foreign tongues. Whenever God's people came in contact with other tongues, they had got all wrong. If Israel had remained in their integrity, such strange sounds would have been kept far away. They were let loose on them when they departed from their true place. The Corinthians would do well to ponder, that foreign tongues in Israel's case had not a good connection: this might remind them of their own vain folly, being in no way an honor to the Jews.

Besides, for whom were the tongues meant? “Wherefore” (ver. 22) “tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” The Corinthians were using them for a display among believers—was it not strangely unintelligent? “But prophesying” —that which they really slighted—is “not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” This is its direct use. But now he points out another thing, that, although prophesying is not in its direct use addressed to unbelievers, it may have a mighty effect on them, and in a way too that tongues could not have. This he puts in a pungent hypothesis (ver. 23). “If, therefore, the whole church be come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” Such would be the effect, supposing they were all speaking with tongues (and if good for one, they thought it was for all). But (ver. 24) “if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest” The result is that he is constrained to do homage to God, reporting that “God is in you of a truth.”

This is a point that I would impress on you all, of the greatest importance for ourselves. We are called to look to the Lord that we may not hinder the manifestation of God in the conscience even of an unbeliever. When we do come together as His assembly, let it never be that we may take part, but that He may work both as, and by whom, He will. Neither, again, let us be impatient. Our part is to count on Him; neither hindering others, nor refusing to go forward if He leads. Suppose that there is a silence that may be painful to some—never surely a sign of the power of God there, but, on the contrary, that there is something which hinders—still let us not doubt but believe. He knows how to try and humble, as well as to comfort. The main thing is to seek always His unfailing presence and action. In the long run He never disappoints, as man always does. Yet we do not go to sit silently, but to worship audibly and be edified. Silence is quite exceptional. For our God is not a mute stock, but One Who has spoken to us, and Who gives us now to speak for Him and to Him. The church of God therefore is in no way the witness of a dumb idol, but of the living and true God

Who is in the midst of it. We ought to desire when we come together that there be liberty, not restraint; but even this is not so painful as the forwardness of those who must speak because there is an open door, not because God gives them the word to build up His own.

We ought to pray then that, when we come together, God would manifest His presence there in our midst, and that nothing should be done that is not suitable to Him. It may be a very simple soul that He uses: I am sure that God can do it by one who has nothing of this world's learning, and that He loves to do so. But still we must cry up neither unlearned nor learned, or suppose that there is any particular virtue in the mere circumstances of the saints of God, though it is no small witness that there is liberty in the assembly, when the simplest are welcomed in their desires to edify. But this, remember, is for God, and not for ourselves. Edification is not by giving out a hymn, or reading a chapter, because there is silence, and we can bear to wait no longer; nor is it because a particular chapter has blessed ourselves that it should be read. Why should not I be content to enjoy the chapter myself? Why bring it out then? Have I the assurance that God would have it to be read there? This is a very searching test; but surely, where it is God Who gives the word, those who are spiritual would have the sense of it. Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God, Who has given us His Spirit for this and all other ends in the church now.

The great aim, then, is the manifestation of God's presence in the assembly. It was, no doubt, only a conceived case where the apostle supposes them all prophesying, but the principle is true universally. And we find, in fact, an important regulation as to this soon follows.

Another point we have in the 26th verse— “How is it, then, brethren? whenever ye come together, each of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.” The apostle does not formally condemn this. He leaves it as an open question, to be judged on spiritual principles. I do not say that he approves of it: he states the simple fact; but he now brings in what was to judge that fact on every occasion. What is the great criterion here? “Let all things be done unto edifying.” Could they say so? Could the person who had a psalm say that his motive was to edify? could the man who had a doctrine or the like? Let them search and see. There is One who knows the truth; and this is the One pleased to act in the church of God. It is thus a challenge, as it were, to God where the soul dares in His presence to act out of its own will and inclination. Can anything be more solemn than for a person unexercised to take part in the assembly? What continual self-judgment is due to see whether one's motive arises from simple obedience to the will of God?

To press this would not hinder God's action, it would only question our own; and this is why God lays down the principle. It would give seriousness. A man should think of Him before he speaks or reads. He should not give out a hymn simply because it was a sweet one in itself, or a favorite of his own. All these things might be true; and they might be well enough in one's own home. But here God is acting with a view to the edification of the assembly; and the point is, Am I confident in my soul that it is God who is guiding me Now, the apostle Peter lays this down most positively where he says, “If any man speak, let him speak as oracles of God “: according to the oracles of God is not enough. One might speak according to the scriptures, and yet be out of season; for in this he might be wrong, because it was not what God would give then, for He alone knows what is best and for His own glory. The meaning in fact is, If any man speak, as His oracle, or mouth-piece, it was to be then and there. This is a serious thing for one's soul. Am I sure that God

would have a given word spoken now? Is it suited for God's assembly at this time? I ought to wait, if I am not sure about it. It is what the Spirit of God implies in the exhortation, “Let all things be done to edifying.” But Peter's scripture puts it expressly.

If there is solemnity on the one hand, there is also love and liberty on the other. If I am too much afraid, I must take care that I be not wrapping up in a napkin what is lent for the good of others. So we cannot escape from danger on either hand. The man who is always silent, because he is afraid, what witness is he of the grace that feeds the flock in due season? and, on the other hand, the man who is always so ready to come forward, whose witness is he? Alas! only of his own spirit, of his own self-confidence, nothing better. Hence what we have to look for is that God act here, and nothing should satisfy us short of this. The spiritual will appreciate it, and every child of God reaps the blessing, though the carnal would, no doubt, prefer what pampers man. How blessed the assembly walking in faith, love, and obedience!

But, further, the apostle lays down (ver. 27) that If any man speak in [an unknown] tongue, let it be by two, and at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret.” If there were no interpreter, it had no business there. Edification is the rule absolute in God's assembly.

In due course we come to the other gift—prophesying (ver. 29). Surely you could not have too much prophesying! This is what he rules, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.” Why so? Because God is thinking of the edification of His assembly. Supposing half a dozen persons were to speak one after another, what would be the effect? Why, it would really be too much of a good thing. It must be bewildering to many, particularly to the simple saints; and God always thinks of the little ones: the stronger ones do not need so much His care, or, at least, not precisely in the same way. They might possibly get good by it. But God, I repeat, thinks of the little ones; and what would perplex the simple, or be over-much, God here forbids. “Let all things be done unto edifying.” So that, whilst the Spirit of God stops the strange tongues unless they could be turned to edification, He does not allow even prophesying beyond the measure that would be for the profit of all.

Another thing laid down next (ver. 32) is that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Because what some of these Corinthians maintained (judging from the blow that is struck at it here) was that they could not interfere with prophesying; that, if any had the Spirit to speak, they must speak. Paul says to them, You are talking as men might who are possessed by evil spirits: this might be the case with a man under a demon; but is it so with the Spirit of God? The Holy Spirit never puts a man, as it were, into a vice. He in His operation makes it no kind of necessity. In a moral way, He may lay it on the heart; but in the assembly we never find man thus absolutely obliged to speak. Balaam might have been in an extraordinary manner forced to give an utterance, just as his ass then spoke under an imperative power; but surely one ought not to think of either as being analogous to the action of the Holy Ghost in God's assembly.

No, the Corinthians who said or pretended (as an excuse for their love of hearing themselves speak so often) that it was necessary, were all wrong. This is a most important principle, and that too on the side of good, as well as a warning on the side of evil. For as the 30th verse tells us, “If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” “Revelation” had this stamp of superiority over anything else. The scripture was not yet all revealed. “For (ver. 31) ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the

prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all assemblies of the saints." No power delivers from responsibility to the Lord in the use of the power; and He who is Lord has regulated the due use of each gift by His word, as here by the apostle's. Spiritual power must subserve His lordship and bow to His authority. Irresponsible or irresistible power in the church is not of the Holy Spirit.

In ver. 34 we hear of one class, and only one in the church of God, who are not allowed to take any part in public, viz., the women. Not that God does not give as precious gifts to women as to men: but whatever gifts be given them to exercise, it is not in the assembly that the Lord allows this to be done. I am aware that some have used this as a reason for women preaching. The idea of females preaching to the world was an irregularity not even yet contemplated. It is not supposed that woman had so completely forgotten the propriety of nature. No Corinthian even wished her to go with unblushing face before the world, nor yet pleaded the case of "perishing sinners" as an excuse for forfeiting that retirement which always becomes her sex.

As for the women spoken of here, they might have argued thus—and I suppose they did— "If we cannot preach, surely we might speak in such a holy place as the assembly. There the men will not misunderstand, or impute it to any want of decorum." If there was any place at all where women might speak, it surely must be in the assembly. But it is forbidden there—not meaning by this that they were free to preach before the world, but that they might not speak anywhere publicly, not even in the assembly. I grant you that in their own homes or with women, there is a place; or a married woman might speak with her husband; but in the assemblies of the saints, it was plainly and peremptorily forbidden. What therefore was to be done? "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in [the] assembly" (ver. 35). He does not suppose that the young unmarried ones even wished to speak in the assembly, but only the older ones. Of course, the younger ones would ask their parents or the like.

"What," continues he, "came the word of God out from you, or came it unto you only?" The word of God comes out from no church, and it comes to no saints exclusive of others. What a principle, and how deep reaching and important for all! The reverse of this is what the church has always desired in one form or another. I do not know a single society that is called of man a church that has not sought to originate what ought to have been left to the word of God. When a church lays down its rules, when it formulates its beliefs, when it puts forth anything to be acted upon for discipline, or government, or doctrine, when it quits simple subjection to the word of God, it falls into the same error that the Corinthian assembly is here guarded against. It is evident that their error was really (not in bare form, of course, but in principle) the progenitor of the present disorderly condition that exists in Christendom from the Pope down to the smallest sect of Protestantism. For what we find in the Epistle is, not that the Corinthian church was the only place where these gifts of the Holy Ghost were, but an assembly where He was interfered with, where much was perverted, where human principles were allowed to hinder the blessed action of the Spirit of God. To their charge accordingly was laid interference with the Lord's order and authority.

For there are two grand principles in the chapter, both working in connection with the central truth of God's presence in the assembly. Around that uniting fact are these two guards— "Let all things be done to edifying" (verse 26), and "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verse 40): one,

the activity of the power of divine grace, and the other, the correction and guard of its displays; that, whatever might be done in the desire for edification, there should be submission to the authority of the Lord Jesus. The church is for His glory, edification is the aim, and this in comely order according to the word of the Lord.

It is instructive to remark here, as has been often done before, that no elders appear to have been as yet in Corinth. Such there were in many of the assemblies; and they were of course desirable in all when the due time was come. But in Corinth they are not spoken of, where, if any existed, it would be reasonable to hear of them. This is of great moment, because it proves that they are in no way essential to what God addresses as His assembly. In the most ecclesiastical of the where church discipline, both in putting out and in restoring, are most developed, where we have the fullest light as to the Lord's Supper and the assembly of God &c, elders are ignored, and, as I believe, evidently not there. But it is mere ignorance to conclude that, where elders were, as at Ephesus, &c., the gifts were not exercised, or that the assembly of God was not competent to act as in 1 Cor. 11; 12; 14. The happy reflection is that, when there are no apostles to choose, the Lord continues the presence of His Spirit. Have we faith to act on the ground of His assembly? But the one-man ministry, when used (as it is in Christendom) to deny His action by whom He will, and this in His assembly, is as unscriptural as the Papacy. They are verily guilty who imply a change in the assembly by trying to pervert 1 Timothy and Titus, or Rev. 2; 3, so as to neutralize 1 Corinthians, as well as to justify the device of the one-man minister. But it is all vain. Scripture, being divine and of course consistent, cannot be broken; and the Lord is speedily coming to judge the many “idols” (1 John 5) of those who bear but in effect deny His name.

Thus then we have the presence of the Spirit of God making good the precious truth that God is in the assembly. There is the activity of His love in seeking the edification of His saints as the motive, but there must also be no infringement of the commandment of Him who is Lord (ver. 37). All these canons were no doubt written by the apostle, but they are none the less His commandment. The word of God comes to the Corinthian church—it does not originate thence. Further, it comes not to these saints abode, but to all. The place of the church is never to teach but to bow to the word of God. The church has no authority in such matters—it can originate neither doctrine nor government. The church's place is to be subject, and this of course to the Lord. It is not exactly right to say that the church is under the presidency of the Spirit of God: a well-meant but unscriptural expression. The Lord is in the midst; and hence the apostle brings in “the Lord” where it is a question of authority. The Spirit has taken the place rather of service; and hence (as pointed out the last time I spoke), where operations are referred to, it is He Who works all in power; but where it is a question of authority, the Lord Jesus rules. He it is accordingly whom the Spirit gives us to know as in authority over us when we come together, as at all other times. For we have to guard against the snare of those who avail themselves of Jesus being Lord, to deny that the Spirit both divides sovereignly and works all in all.

Let us be careful, while we seek only what is for edification, that all things be done decently and in true order, our aim being the promotion of the glory of the Lord Jesus. Let us judge ourselves continually by the standard of the word, and, in particular, let the assembly be governed by these special scriptures which apply to it where most apt to stray, as in fact it has so erred generally. W. K.

Chapter 31

On Acts 8:1-4

Outwardly also the death of Stephen was the epoch when the murderous spirit, provoked by his solemn and fearless testimony, burst out against all who bore the name of the Lord.

“And there arose on that day a great persecution against the assembly that was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria except the apostles. And devout men buried Stephen and made great wailing over him. But Saul was ravaging the assembly, entering throughout the houses, and dragging men and women was delivering [them] to prison. They therefore that were scattered abroad went about evangelizing the word." (Ver. 1-4)

Blinded by religions pride and jealousy the Jews were but sealing their guilt irrecoverably. Those who despised the Messiah in humiliation on earth were now rebelling against Him glorified in heaven, rejecting withal the Holy Spirit whom He had sent down to render a divine testimony to His glory. Man in his best estate is not only vanity but enmity against the God of love. They had sent, as one said, the spirit of the martyr and witness to Jesus on high with the message, We will not have this Man to reign over us. So had the Lord once figured the hatred of “the citizens” in the parable of the Pounds (or Minas); and thus were His words punctually verified. That generation has not passed away; nor will it, as He has apprised us, till all things He predicted shall have taken place; and the most tremendous of these things await the end of the age which He terminates by His appearing in glory.

But the rage then in Jerusalem was so intense and widespread against the assembly there that they were all scattered abroad except the apostles. It was in accordance with the word of the Lord that the testimony of the gospel of grace did begin “at Jerusalem,” and so it did. It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to the Jews; and so it was. This salvation of God must be sent unto the Gentiles, and they will also hear; but it must go fully to the Jews first, and this was now being done; and the Jews rejected it with a persecuting obstinacy as yet beyond all example on earth. It was reserved for Popery to outdo that day in unrelenting, opposition to the word of God and in sanguinary hatred of His saints. “They were all scattered abroad “throughout the neighboring regions “except the apostles:” a persecution as remarkable for its success in dispersing the objects of its fury, as for the exception specified; for those who staid would naturally be the most obnoxious of all. It is the more striking because the charge in Matt. 10:23 ("when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next”) was primarily to the twelve; so strange it seems, Canon Humphrey should take our chapter as a fulfillment of that command of our Lord, though the closing words point rather to a future testimony in the land before the end of the age. Nor is Calvin more happy who will have it that the apostles remained behind as good pastors for the safety of the flock; for it is evident that the sheep were all gone. Still less tolerable is Bp. Pearson's idea (Lect. in Acta App. iv. x. p. 62, Opera Posth. 4to. Lond. 1688) that the tradition of the second century, mentioned by Clemens Alex. and Eusehius (H. E.), accounts for it; namely, that our Lord forbade the apostles leaving Jerusalem for twelve years! This very chapter later on disproves it. He bade them go and disciple all the nations, yea, go into the world and preach the gospel to all

the creation. Remission of sins was to be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning with Jerusalem. They were to tarry in the city, but it was expressly till they were clothed with power from on high, without a thought of twelve years.

But for the present, in face of that great persecution, the apostles abide. Divine wisdom ordered all aright. They remain there together unmoved by the storm which dispersed all others, for important purposes which afterward appear; and the spread of the glad tidings falls under the good hand of the Lord to His scattered saints. No man beforehand could have foreseen such a result of such an ebullition, God rejected not alone in His unity as of old but also in His Son and now in His Spirit. His truth was counted a lie, His saints as sheep for the slaughter. But if the apostles abode, the dispersed brethren went in all directions announcing the glad tidings of the word. It is the just action of the Holy Spirit in the gospel which we see as God's answer to His people's full and final rejection of His grace; and this was secured in the best and most unmistakable way by the apostles remaining, while all the rest were scattered, with no other external impulse, and have the last degree of human evidence from unbelieving rebellious Israel in the city of solemnities itself.

Meanwhile “pious men buried Stephen, and made great wailing over him” (ver. 2). There is nothing in the epithet to necessitate our regarding these as disciples. They were rather God-fearing Jews whose conscience revolted against the lawless end of a trial that began with the form of Jewish law and was carried on with the corruption of suborned testimony which then characterized the chosen nation. Calvin has missed the point of the account by the assumption that it is for us a lesson of the faithful, even in the heat of persecution, not discouraged but zealous in the discharge of these duties which pertain to godliness. Still farther did he err in making Luke also commend their profession of godliness and faith in their lamentation, as if they identified themselves with Stephen's life and death, and testified withal what great loss the church of God had suffered by his decease. The force of this history lies in the raising up decent burial and exceeding lamentation on the part of Jews who were not of the assembly, when those on whom it should have devolved were not there to pay the last offices of love. There is no need with Meyer to render the particle which introduces the account as an adversative. The writer was inspired to give it as an additional feature of the scene, not without interest and profit to the believer who sees and values the gracious care of God even in such circumstances. A Gamaliel stands up for righteous wisdom at the right moment, and pious men bury the martyr with great wailing when it could be least expected.

The true opposition is in what is next told us of his fanatical and bitter zeal who was afterward to be the most devoted servant of our Lord, who had also to experience what it is in the church to be less loved, the more abundantly he loved, spending and spent out most gladly for the souls of men. “But Saul was ravaging the assembly, entering the houses throughout, and, dragging both men and women, delivered [them] to prison” (ver. 3). Religious rage is of all the most unrelenting; and fresh victims do not satiate but whet its cruel appetite, sex and age being alike disregarded.

It may be well here to remark that ε■αγγλ■ζεσθαι to denounce the glad tidings is ministry of the gospel no less than κηρ■σσειν to proclaim, or preach, in ver. 5. Mr. Brewster in his Lectures on this book after Dr. Hammond gives no valid reason for laying stress on the difference, in order to support what he calls “regular commission.” First the former word is used of our Lord Himself (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 20:1), as it is of the apostles (Luke 9:6; Acts 5:42; 13:32;

14:7, 15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18; Rom. 1:15; 10:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:16, 18; 16:2; 2 Cor. 10:16; 11:7: Gal. 1:8, 11, 16, 23; 4:13; Eph. 3:8), which is more than enough to refute the mean or vague use to which he would confine it. Secondly, the latter word is so little restricted to an official class, that it is applied to the healed leper and demoniac in their proclaiming what the Lord had done for each of them (Mark 1:45; 5:20), and so to those who published the cure of the deaf and dumb (Mark 7:36). Again it stands side by side with the former word in Luke 4:18, 19, 44; 8:1; 9:2; Rom. 10:15; 1 Cor. 1. 9. 15; 2 Cor. 11. Further, the latter, not the former word is used of those at Rome who during the apostle's imprisonment preached Christ, some even of envy and strife, thinking to raise up affliction for him in his bonds. Were there an atom of truth in the alleged distinction, there would be just the occasion to employ this supposed expression for mere speaking or irregular work. But it is not so; the Apostle describes the preaching of the heartless as well as the true workmen by the term (κηρ.) which Mr. B. will have to be distinctive of the truly commissioned official. The notion is therefore wholly unscriptural. Difference of course no one denies, for the one means to announce glad tidings, the other to proclaim or publish; but this is wholly independent of the desired confinement of preaching to those ordained for the purpose, an idea purely imaginary and opposed to all the evidence of scripture. Those who had the gift were not free but bound to exercise it in responsibility to Christ the Lord. Elders were chosen by apostles or apostolic envoys, and deacons by the multitude but for other objects; nor did they ever preach in virtue of their proper office: they might be evangelists like Philip. Otherwise they were no more authorized than the rest of them, like the dispersed before us. Rules and order even in earthly things are of moment, but quite distinct from preaching or teaching for which ordination is unknown to God's word.

But Dr. Guyse represents another class which limit “all” scattered abroad to “preachers!” This he does by misinterpreting ver. 2 of “Stephen's religious friends,” and those ravaged by Saul in ver. 3, so as to deny the general preaching by the turning it into “the remainder of the 120 that was called the Apostles' own company” (Acts 4:23), and perhaps including several other later converts that had received the gift of the Holy Ghost and went about as evangelists to preach the gospel! How sad these evasions of the truth on the part of godly men. Power makes itself felt; and gifted men should be the last to silence any Christian who can evangelize. For it is a question, not of divine qualification, but of human sanction; which is really a restraint on the Holy Spirit, a slight of Christ's grace, and a hindrance, so far as man can be a hindrance, of sinners' salvation. How blessed the grace of God, who, without design on the apostles' part or even a hint from any, turned the world's dispersion of the assembly into scattering far and wide the seeds of gospel truth.

(Note: Much truer to the word is Doddridge's note— “There is no room to inquire, where these poor refugees had their orders. They were endowed with miraculous gift; if they had not been so, the extraordinary call they had to spread the knowledge of Christ wherever they came, among those who were ignorant of Him, would abundantly justify them in what they did.” Fam. Expos. iii. 105, 100, Tenth Ed.)

Chapter 32

On Acts 8:5-13

Among the great host of those that were scattered publishing the word of the Lord one is singled out by the Spirit of God, who achieved a signal victory for grace where law had utterly failed as always. Samaria was won by the gospel to the name of Jesus; and the good soldier who fought was Philip He was one of the seven chosen by the saints and appointed by the apostles to do diaconal work in Jerusalem. But the ascended Lord had given him as an evangelist, we may learn expressly from Acts 21:8; and here we find him in Samaria engaged in this work for which he had the gift, not in that office to which he had been ordained, now that the dispersion of the saints from Jerusalem no longer admitted of its functions. But as gift is in the unity of Christ's body (Eph. 4), so its exercise is above passing circumstances and has ample scope, where a local charge were out of place, as our chapter abundantly testifies. It is the free action of the Holy Spirit exemplified in the details of an individual, as we have already seen it generally in the dispersed.

“And Philip went down to a city of Samaria and preached to them the Christ. And the crowd with one accord gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For [as to] many that had unclean spirits, they went out crying with a loud voice, and many palsied and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city” (ver. 5-8).

The worthlessness of tradition is made manifest, though unintentionally, by Eusebius (H.E. iii. 31; ed. Heinichen, i. 261-3), who cites a letter of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, to Victor, bishop of Rome, before the end of the second century, speaking of Philip as “one of the twelve apostles,” “and his daughter.” But what could be expected of a man who could in the same letter interlard the scriptural description of John with “who became priest bearing as he did the miter” or high-priest's plate? See also Ens. H. E. v. 24. So rapid was the loss of Christ's truth, so inexcusable in presence of plain scriptural facts before all readers. They may ridicule Papias, but what of one bishop who reports the fable, and of another (among the most learned in his day) who uses it more than once in his History of the Church? Such are very early Christian fathers, ignorant of scripture to the last degree, yet idolized by superstitions men who profess to receive the Scriptures as inspired of God.

It is interesting to note that the city in question was the same where the Son of God had made Himself known to not a few Samaritans who confessed Him to be the Savior of the world.

Now the Christ is preached there by one of whom it could be said in all truth—that after serving well as a deacon, he was gaining to himself a good standing, or step in advance, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. It was meet that both should be rather in Sychar (afterward Neapolis and Nablous), ancient Shechem and Sichem at the foot of Gerizim, the mountain that vainly sought to rival Jerusalem, rather than in the city of Samaria, lately rebuilt or enlarged by Herod the Great, and named Sebaste in honor of Augustus. There the Lord deigned to abide two days, deepening the impression produced by the sinful woman saved from death, and giving them to hear Him themselves and to know the truth in Himself.

The enemy seemed now in possession like a flood; but the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him in the preaching of Philip, confirmed by the signs which he wrought before their eyes. No miracle was needed there when the Lord visited the place and wrought as the great and acknowledged Prophet, though in truth the central object and glorious sum of all prophecy. It was the Father seeking true worshippers through the Son, who declared Him in a fullness of grace and truth which surmounted the trammels of Judaism; and the word went home in power though not without the Holy Ghost which the Son gives as a divine spring of unfailing enjoyment. But now Satan had sought to efface the truth and set up a rival in sorcery, ever apt to seduce, interest, and alarm those who know not the true God. And the time was also come for God to bear witness in men, the servants of Christ on earth, to His victory over Satan and glorification on high, as we have seen in previous chapters of this book. Here the energy of the Spirit was at work in Samaria in a free herald of the gospel, after the testimony had been refused with an enmity up to death in Jerusalem. On the one hand, the crowds gave heed with one accord to the things spoken by Philip; on the other, from many that were possessed unclean spirits came out with loud outcries, and many palsied and lame were healed. Can we wonder that “there was much joy in that city"? But with Luke 8:13 before me I could not affirm so absolutely as J. Calvin that the joy must be the fruit of faith. (Opera vi. 71.) At least the “faith” may not be of God, as we see in the flagrant case which the Holy Spirit brings here before us. Indeed not a few remarks in his Comment seem rash.

Yea, such was the power at work that even the main instrument of Satan fell under the general influence of the multitudes he had so long seduced to his lies. “But a certain man, Simon by name, was before in the city preaching magic and amazing the nation of Samaria, saying that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed from small to great, saying, He is the power of God that is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because a long time he had amazed them with his magic arts. But when they believed Philip evangelizing about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women. And Simon also himself believed; and being baptized he continued with Philip, and, beholding signs and great works of power as they were done, was amazed” (ver. 9-13).

This is the only reliable account of one who prominently figures in the early ecclesiastical writers as a heresiarch most hostile to the truth, but with so much fable surrounding him as to prove how little we can trust their statements. Some object to his being classed with the leaders of heresy, on the ground that he was not a Christian. He certainly was “baptized,” as he is said to have “believed,” and thus had a better title (as far as profession goes) than his Samaritan master Dositheus, who is said to have been a disciple of John the Baptist but eclipsed in his leadership subsequently by Simon. Even Justin Martyr who had the double advantage of being a native of Flavia Neapolis which arose out of the ruins of Sychar, and of being born not a century after, seems to have fallen into the blunder of confounding the Sabine deity, Semo Sancus, who had a statue erected to his honor, with Simon M. Dr. E. Burton in a note to his Bampton Lectures (Oxford, 1829) endeavors to show the impossibility of such a mistake on the part of Justin, and has put together from various learned men what can be said in favor of Simon's deification at Rome. If it were so, it is of small consequence. The alleged contests between him and the apostle Peter, whether at Caesarea or at Rome, are too absurd to notice, being evidently legends grafted on the inspired history by the unhallowed hands of men whose mind and conscience were alike defiled. Destitute of the truth they betook themselves to marvels of the imagination, which after all

rather detract from the solemn effect of sacred history, and add nothing to the dignity of the apostle's exposure or to the blind self-condemnatory turpitude of the unhappy man himself.

Whatever the mischievous result of Simon's sorcery and falsehoods leading to his own blasphemous pretensions, and we are here told of his misleading all around small and great, (for what avail rank or education to guard from error?) all vanished like smoke before the light of the gospel. “The kingdom of God” and “the name of Jesus” annihilated the vain jugglery and impious frauds of the Samaritan. But it is instructive to notice that there is a difference in the language of ver. 12 as compared with 13, and a difference in favor of the men and women in the former as against the latter. They are said simply to have believed the testimony and to have been baptized; the same is said of Simon with the important addition that he attended closely to Philip, and, while beholding the signs and great works of power as they were done, was amazed. This was what transported him, not the love of God, not the truth of Christ, nor the grace of the gospel even to such a guilty deceitful wretch as himself, but the wondrous power which wrought before his eyes. Its overwhelming reality struck none so deeply as Simon. Others had their eyes drawn to the kingdom, and its holy glories; others in spirit fell down and clasped the feet of their unseen Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, lost in wonder, love, and praise. Simon was in ecstasies, beholding the signs and great deeds of power, the character of which was discerned by none more clearly than himself He yielded to evidence and believed what approved itself to his mind irrefragably. Not a word implies self-judgment before God; not a word of any gracious action on his heart. Conscience was not plowed up; nor did the affections flow under the sense of God's immeasurable grace in Christ to save him from his sins. On the other hand it is not said of the men and women in the verses before that they were “amazed,” as Simon was in his close attendance on Philip, not to hear the truth more folly and grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, but “beholding the signs and great deeds of power as they came to pass.”

The Spirit of God thus lays bare to us in this description, it seems to me, the merely natural source of Simon's faith as distinguished from others. And such is all faith which is founded on “evidences,” which the mind judges and accepts accordingly. It may not be in the least insincere, and those who so believe may be the readiest to do battle if it seem necessary for their creed. But there is no life, as there is no repentance; no link with Christ formed by the Holy Spirit through the reception of the word, because it is God's word, discovering God to the guilty conscience and delivering withal through Christ dead and risen.

Still Simon may have fully credited himself with honest conviction of the truth; and, in the warmth and haste of so mighty a work in so short a time, not even Philip saw reason to question his confession. In fact, where it is the mind without conscience, progress is much more rapid; and all outwardly looks promising for a little where a soul thus easily passes into the ranks of Christ. We have not long to wait for the circumstances which betrayed unmistakably the unrenewed condition of Simon's soul, delivered the saints from what had else been a constant incubus, and gave himself the most solemn warning that his heart was not right with God.

Chapter 33

On Acts 8:14-17

The tidings of God's gracious work in Samaria could not but make a powerful impression on all saints; and of these none would estimate its importance so deeply as the personal companions and most honored servants of the Lord in Jerusalem. His will and glory, as well as love to the objects of His grace that they might be blessed more abundantly, drew their hearts to the spot where God had wrought so manifestly. Indeed the Lord risen (Acts 1:8) had specially named Samaria as a scene of future testimony for the disciples. What a contrast with Jews having no intercourse with Samaritans!

“Now when the apostles that were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, the which, on coming down, prayed for them that they might receive [the] Holy Spirit; for as yet he had fallen upon none of them: only they had got baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received [the] Holy Spirit” (ver. 14-17).

Some important principles of truth are illustrated here.

The independency of congregationalism is shown to be as far as possible from the will of God. There was no holding aloof on the part of the chiefs in Jerusalem, though we hear of no request for their intervention on the part of the Samaritans. The apostles felt as members of the one body of Christ for the fresh objects of divine grace; and yet the chosen future exponent of that great mystery was still in his sins and unbelief.

Nor was there the smallest jealousy in Philip, because other servants of Christ came whose place in the assembly was so much higher than his own. The “way of surpassing excellence” as yet prevailed; and as the members generally had the same care one for another, in none did this appear so conspicuously as in those whom God set in the church first: for Christ's sake and according to His word they were in the midst of them serving as bond-men. Nothing was farther from the heart of the chiefs who ruled, than on the one hand to be called Rabbi, Father, and Master, or on the other to affect the lordly patronizing of the Gentiles. It was on all sides the power of the life of Christ.

Again, it will be noticed that the apostles send two of their number, not James (son of Alphaeus) and Thaddaeus, nor Simon Can. and Matthias, but their unquestionably choicest pair, Peter and John. Can any believer be so dull as to conceive that this had no far-reaching purpose in the mind of Him who dwells in the assembly and knows the end from the beginning and would give the sure light of His word to such as look to Him for guidance? Not even Satan, I am bold to think, yet indulged in the dream of an exclusive chair for Peter's direction of the church as a whole; still less of a present throne in command of the powers that be, with a triple crown of pretensions over heaven, earth, and hell. On the contrary, without a thought of these vanities of ecclesiastical ambition and most profane assumption, the apostles in love and wisdom send, to those that had received the word of God in Samaria, Peter and John. Who better qualified, were it needed, to

judge and report truly? or who could be the bearer of better blessings from on high? or who in fine be more jealous for the glory of the “one Shepherd,” in dealing with these “other sheep” which were not of the Jewish “fold?”

And what could more become servants of Christ when they did come down? They “prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.” God had hitherto withheld this, the great and characteristic privilege of the Christian. But the apostles in Jerusalem were in the current of His will and ways. And Peter and John on the spot perceived the lack and spread it out before God, not out of doubtful mind, but reckoning on His faithfulness to make good the promise of the Spirit. Even at Pentecost Peter was led to look beyond the Jews and their children to all that were afar off, as many as the Lord their God might call to Him. “For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they had got baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus.”

So plainly then is the situation laid before us, that doubt is inexcusable. On the one hand these Samaritans believed the word, as they were also thereon baptized; on the other hand not one of them had as yet been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Jewish saints had at once received on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Yet from the days of the so-called fathers down to the Reformers, and hence till our own day, not merely the superstitious but men beyond most for godliness, ability and learning, as to this seem at sea, as if they had no chart. It is indeed one of those deep blanks in traditional theology (Catholic or Protestant, Arminian or Calvinist, being here almost equally at fault) which involves incalculable loss practically as well as in spiritual intelligence, and is nowhere more felt than in the worship of God. The soul's entrance into the truth has commensurate blessing in its train, as those know who have made the transition from ignorance of this truth into the enjoyment of it.

Thus Chrysostom (Cramer's Cat. Pat. iii. 136) and Cecumenius speak of the Samaritan converts receiving the Spirit for remission! but not for signs: a manifest departure from Scripture, which never designates the first vital work of the Spirit in the soul as “the gift of the Spirit,” nor consequently as a question of “reception” (compare Acts 2:38; 19:2).

But, leaving the Fathers, one must content the reader with J. Calvin's remarks as well as J. Light-foot's as a sufficient sample. The former are purposely cited from Beveridge's edition of the early English Version given in the series of the Calvin Translation Society (Acts i. 338, 9). “But here ariseth a question, for he saith that they were only baptized into the name of Christ, and that therefore they had not as yet received the Holy Ghost; but baptism must either be in vain and without grace, or else it must have all the force which it hath from the Holy Chest. In baptism we are washed from our sins; Paul teaches that our washing is the work of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5). The water used in baptism is a sign of the blood of Christ; but Peter saith that it is the Spirit by whom we are washed with the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:2). Our old man is crucified in baptism that we may be raised up in newness of life (Rom. 6:6); and whence cometh all this save only from the sanctification of the Spirit? And finally what shall remain in baptism of it be separate from the Spirit (Gal. 3:27)? Therefore we must not deny but that the Samaritans, who had put on Christ indeed in baptism, had also His Spirit given them (!); and surely Luke speaks not in this place of the common grace of the Spirit whereby God doth regenerate us, that we may be His children, but of these singular gifts wherewith God would have certain endued at the beginning of the gospel to beautify Christ's Kingdom. Thus must the words of John be understood, that the disciples had not

the Spirit given them as yet, for as much as Christ was yet conversant in the world; not that they were altogether destitute of the Spirit, seeing that they had from the same both faith and godly desire to follow Christ; but because they were not furnished with these excellent gifts wherein appeared afterward greater glory of Christ's kingdom. To conclude, forasmuch as the Samaritans were already endued with the Spirit of adoption, the excellent graces of the Spirit are heaped upon them, in which God showed to His church, for a time as it were, the visible presence of His Spirit, that He might establish forever the authority of His gospel, and also testify that His Spirit shall be always the governor and director of the faithful."

This is enough to show where pious and enlightened men are in general as to the truth of the Spirit and indeed of redemption also. They are not aware that the gift (δωρε■) of the Spirit, whilst over and above that communication of life which is common to all saints in Old and New Testament days, is at the same time quite distinct from the gifts (χαρ■σματα,) and more especially from powers and tongues, the sign-gifts which the Spirit distributed in honor of the risen Lord Jesus when inaugurating that new thing, the church the body of Christ, here below. Nor is Christian baptism a sign of life, but rather of sins washed away and of death to sin with Christ. That is, it is a sign of salvation, the demand before God of a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the present clearance of a Christian, and not merely what the heir had in his nonage under law. Then it was a perfectly sure promise, now full accomplishment for the soul (1 Peter 1:9) which baptism expresses as a figure. But this is quite distinct from the Spirit, given to the believer as the seal of redemption and earnest of the inheritance; and this distinction in particular the great French Reformer ignored, as people do to this day. Hence in his great anxiety to guard against sacramentalism (though even here his language is unsafe and has been used for evil by men of that school), he lowers the reception of the Spirit to transient displays of energy and thus involves himself in hopeless antagonism to scripture. The words of John (xiv.-xvi.) go far beyond miracles, healings, or kinds of tongues. They are to be understood of the far different presence of the Paraclete Himself, who was to dwell with the disciples and be in them; and this is not "for a time as it were" but to abide forever.

The Samaritan believers were saints then, and children of God; but as yet they were not endued with the Spirit like the Old Testament saints who, though born of the Spirit, never received that great gift, which was not and could not he till redemption, when God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into hearts already renewed, crying, Abba, Father. No doubt sensible gifts then and for awhile accompanied the Spirit's presence thus vouchsafed; but we err greatly, if we either confound the gift with the gifts, or deny the new and abiding privilege with what all saints had before redemption.

A brief extract from what our learned Dr. Lightfoot says (viii. 125-128, Pitman's edition) will suffice. "The Holy Ghost thus given meaneth not his ordinary work of sanctification, and confirming grace; but His extraordinary gift of tongues, prophesying, and the like. And this is evident, by the meaning of that phrase, the Holy Ghost in the scriptures when it denoteth not exactly the person of the Holy-Ghost or the third person in the Trinity." Here again we have the same confusion of God's new and distinctive endowment of the church, the ever abiding gift of the Holy Ghost, with the gifts, some of which took a visible form and others not. It is admitted that what is called "sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:2) is different and previous; as it is that vital work of separating a soul to God which takes place in conversion or quickening, and therefore has always been and always must be, as long as God in His grace calls sinners to Himself from among men. This typically is what

answered to the washing of the unclean in the Levitical figure: then followed the application of the blood of sacrifice; and lastly the anointing oil, which only is what the New Testament designates the reception of the Spirit, wholly distinct from the new birth (which answers to the water), the blood intermediately being the token of being brought under redemption. The gifts, however important in their place, were quite subordinate, and might be some of them but temporary, though all of course were in fall force when the Spirit was given at Pentecost.

Are Christians then grown wiser in our day? Let Dean Alford bear witness (The Greek Test., ii. 88, 89, fifth edit.), who like the rest, takes advantage of the accompanying gifts, which might be seen, to ignore the incomparably more momentous unseen gift of the Holy Ghost. Further, he cites the very remarks of Calvin as “too important to be omitted,” which we have seen to be a heap of confusion, that might with justice be exposed more unsparingly still, were this the task in hand. They all agree in the great error of reducing the gift of the Holy Spirit to the outward “miraculous gifts,” instead of seeing along with these the unprecedented and transcendent privilege of Himself given to he the portion of the saints forever. It is the more inconsistent (and error is apt to be inconsistent) in Dean Alford, inasmuch as he owns in his note on John 16:7, “that the gift of the Spirit at and since Pentecost was and is something TOTALLY DISTINCT from anything before that time: a new and loftier dispensation.” His own emphasis is given as it is.

One of these objections is that the imposition of hands preceded that gift here as well as in ch. xix., where the apostle Paul laid his hands for a like purpose and with a like result on the twelve disciples at Ephesus. But why should this offend them? They may not like the ritualistic effort to base confirmation on a scripture which gives no real countenance to that ceremony; they may feel grieved at or ashamed of a mare form without power; they may justly censure R. Nelson (or any. citing him) for untruly referring to Calvin as if he thought confirmation was instituted by the apostles. For in fact in the Institutes (iv. ch. xix. 76) he disproves the very thought attributed to him. But to deny that it was the Holy Spirit Himself, that was communicated at Samaria and Ephesus by imposition of apostolic hands, is to fly in the face of God's words; to construe it into the gifts, and not the gift, of the Spirit, is to prepare the way for the most withering unbelief and the loss of the spring of all true power. For what is the church without the personal presence of the Holy Ghost? and what is the Christian without His indwelling? That which baptizes into unity does not exist otherwise; there is no power adequate to constitute the believer a member of Christ; for both depend on the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Let it be observed that the two main occasions of that gift were to the Jewish believers (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10), on neither of which is there a word expressed or implied about laying on of hands. Indeed one has only to weigh both accounts (Pentecost being of course the fullest and chief) to gather that there could be nothing of the sort on either day. The peculiar cases of Samaria and Ephesus, which some would unintelligently erect into a rule to supersede those more general, were but ancillary as events, though the blessing conferred was of course, as far as it went, the same; and on each of these, where the laying on of hands occurred, the principle was, it would seem, to guard against rivalry, to bind the work of God together, and to put the most solemn sign of divine honor, first on the Jewish apostles, and next on the apostle to the uncircumcision. This was of moment to mark; but we do not find it repeated, save for special reasons and with other features, on Timothy personally (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). But God had taken care at an early day to anticipate and cut off possible misuse by employing a disciple, not the apostle; in the very

conspicuous instance of the great apostle himself (Acts 9:17), as if to break beyond dispute all thought of a successional chain.

It may be well also to say that the effort to make the anarthrous form mean no more than a special gift or particular operation of the Holy Spirit is not borne out by scriptural usage. For we find πν. ■γ. employed with and without the article, so as to demonstrate that this expression in no way excludes His blessed personality, but only falls under the usual principles of the language. Where it is intended to present Him as a distinct object before the mind, the article appears; where it only characterizes, the phrase is as ever anarthrous. Here; to go no farther, we have πν. ■γ. in ver. 15, 17; but in, 18 τ■ πν. Were it merely previous mention, we should have had the article in 17 as well as 18. The true solution however is not here contextual, but the intention is not to present objectively. Where this is not so, the accusative of a transitive verb is regularly without the article, as being only the complement of the notion expressed by the verb; where it is sought to present the governed word as an object before the mind, the article is added. The usage therefore is thoroughly exact. So in Acts 19:2 we have twice πν ■γ. without the article, but in 6 the article in its emphatic duplication; where it seems vain to contend that the Holy Spirit is not meant in all those cases. Is there then not a difference? Unquestionably; but the difference lies, not in the contrast of a special gift with His general influence, as men say, or even with His person, but in the questioned character of what was received in the one case, with the definite object before the mind in the other most suitably accompanying such a phrase as “came” upon the men described.

This is the true key to Acts 1:2, 5 not the mere circumstance of the preposition (strangely supposed by some to be exceptional) which serves to define; as the phrase in ver. 8, brings the Spirit into an objective point of view. But it is the self-same Spirit in each case; and could a mistake be greater than to allow that Christ only gave injunctions by a particular gift, and that the disciples enjoyed Him in all His fullness? Compare also Acts 10:38, with 44. So, on the eventful day when the promise of the Father was fulfilled, we find in Acts 2:4 the Spirit both without and with the article, and there according to the principle enunciated: when used to characterize what filled all, it is designedly anarthrous; when the phrase presents a distinctively objective cast of thought, the article is as correctly inserted. The presence or the absence of the article leaves the Holy Spirit untouched and only affects the aspect meant—person or power. Compare ver. 17, 18, 33, 38; 4:8, 31 (a very remarkable expression in the text of the oldest codices); 5:3; 6:5; 7:55; 8:29, 39; 9:17, 31; 10:38, 44, 45, 47; 11:15, 16, 24, 28; 13:2, 4, 9, 52; 15:28; 16:6, 7. The Epistles would only add and confirm, were this needed.

On Acts 8:18-25

Thus were the Samaritans sealed of the Holy Spirit and made members of Christ in full possession of the church's privileges, no less than the saints at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

The sight of the blessing brought out the true condition of Simon. He was amazed, before the two apostles entered the scene, as he beheld the signs and great deeds of power wrought by Philip. Now that others from among the Samaritans received like power, Satan prompted his unrenewed mind to evil.

“Now Simon, when he saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, offered them money, saying, Give me also this power that, on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive [the] Holy Ghost. But Peter said to him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou thoughtest to obtain the gift of God through money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and beseech the Lord if so be the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee, for I see that thou art in gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. And Simon said in answer, Beseech ye for me with the Lord that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me” (ver. 18-24).

Undoubtedly there was somewhat to be “seen;” but this does not hinder the truth that the Spirit was being given inwardly, and not merely “gifts,” still less only what men call the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. They however point to the fact that this was through the imposition of the hands of the apostles. But why should not God give the Spirit thus if He please? It is for Him to judge His own best methods; and God, who gave the Spirit at Pentecost without the laying on of hands, was pleased now to honor the apostles as the channel. It is a question of His wisdom as well as sovereignty. For mere bishops to imitate the form without the power is without any basis of truth, and real presumption. Simon saw, in the fact, a means of self-exaltation, perhaps also of gain. Certainly he offered them money, saying, “Give me also this power that, on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.” What an insult to God! What is bought with money may naturally be sold for money. But this divine gift, was it to be a matter of traffic among men?

It is a mistake to suppose that Simon wanted the gift for himself. He wished to buy the power of conferring the Holy Spirit upon others. It is very possible, however, that he may not have received the outward gift even for himself; assuredly he was not sealed of the Holy Ghost, which, as we have seen, implies the new birth previously. And Simon manifests not a thought or a feeling in communion with God. He was just a natural man, and a man even debased by all his former ways and character, especially those which profanely abused the name of God. The truth he had heard could never have judged his conscience or reached his heart. It was rather stupefaction in presence of transcendent power, and the keen desire to appropriate this power to his own selfish purposes. He judged, as man habitually does, from himself: not, as the believer does, from God. As money is the great means among men, he supposed it must be so with the apostles. Christ was nothing in his eyes; the power that eclipsed his own was desirable to obtain at any price. This was all that he conceived of the Holy Spirit; and it proved, in the most conclusive manner, where

his own soul was.

Simon's offer filled Peter with indignation, who said to him, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou thoughtest to obtain the gift of God through money.” Christ alone is the procuring cause, and they alone who rest on His blood by faith, receive it. The word of Simon betrayed his ruin. He was, as yet, a lost man. There was no real faith and consequently no salvation in his case. Baptism is an admirable sign where there is life and faith; without these, it is a most solemn aggravation of man's natural guilt and ruin. It is to perish with a Savior in sight, with sin and God's judgment slighted as well as the Savior. Simon had no share nor lot in this matter, for his heart was not right before God. This does not mean, in my judgment, a lack of share or lot in the sign-gifts but in the Savior: the gospel was nothing to him. Had the word of truth reached him, his heart would have been purified by faith, for the grace of God is adequate to save the vilest. But no heart visited by grace could have thought of offering money in order to obtain the power of giving the Holy Spirit. Simon was self-convicted of total strangership to God and His grace. The heart of man, though a baptized man, was as perverse as ever, and had broken out into a more daring sin than was possible before. Outward nearness to grace is of all things the most fatal to him who is not subject to the truth of God.

Yet, as he had taken the place of professing the name of the Lord, Peter calls on him to “repent.” Repentance is the clear duty and imperative call of God for a sinful man. It was always an obligation since the fall; but the gospel, as it sheds a brighter light upon the need, so furnishes the mightiest motives to act upon the heart. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The highest of duties, then, is to own and honor the Son of God, confessing one's own sins, which brought Him, in divine love, to the cross. On the other hand, he that believes in the Son has everlasting life; whilst he that disobeys the Son, not subject to Him now fully revealed, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

Hence the apostle adds, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and beseech the Lord if so be the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee, for I see that thou art in gall of bitterness and in bond of iniquity.” That there is grace in God and efficacy in the blood of Christ to meet any wickedness of man is certain. Peter would have never thus exhorted him had pardon been an impossibility. But the answer of Simon clearly shows that, though alarmed for the moment, there was no sense in his soul of his shameless sin against God and especially against the Holy Spirit; no real reckoning upon grace in God, according to the revelation of Himself in the death of His Son. Peter did not say, “Beseech” God but “the Lord,” for in Him and by Him only can God deliver a guilty soul; and now that He has sent His Son, the only sure and adequate way of honoring the Father is in honoring the Son. “He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.” Confessing the Father only, not the Son, neither saves the sinner nor glorifies God. So here Peter calls on him to beseech the Lord, who is the “way, the truth, and the life.” But there was no faith any more than repentance in Simon, who said in answer, “beseech ye (it is emphatic) for me with the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.”

There was confidence, if we can so say, in the channels of power. He who had no faith in Christ, confesses his faith in Peter; as millions since have done in saints, angels, or the virgin Mary. This, however, is not really faith but credulity and superstition; for it has no ground, either in the nature

of the persons, or in the word of God. Faith in the Lord Jesus has alone a divine resting-place; for God sent Him, His only-begotten Son, into the world that we might live through Him—through none other but Him. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins.” To all this truly divine and infinite salvation Simon was insensible. But he saw in Peter an instrument of power, without faith in the word he and Philip had preached; and so he entreats the apostles to pray to the Lord for him so that none of the things spoken might befall him. It was future consequences he dreaded, not his present state of ruin and guilt that he felt. Thenceforward, according to scripture he disappears from our sight; and none could wonder if the worst evil came on the impenitent man. But the reticence of Luke did not suit the ecclesiastical historians who to their own shame, detail for their readers, accounts which bear the stamp of fable in honor of Peter. And where is the Lord in all this? Wounded, we may say, as so often, in the house of His friends.

But we have a brief word added as to the two apostles. “They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem and evangelized many villages of the Samaritans” (ver. 25). It was not a mere transient act, as the common text has it, but a continuous work. Their hearts were toward the Lord, who had created in them a right and fervent spirit, and needed no entreaty to spread among small and great the glad tidings of His redemption. The villages of the Samaritans, and many of them, were not beneath the detailed and repeated labors of the apostles.

Chapter 35

On Acts 8:26-40

We have now the history of Philip's evangelistic service resumed; and full of interest and instruction it is.

“But an angel of [the] Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise, go southward unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza; this is desert. And he arose and wont. And behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch in power under Candace, queen of [the] Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, had come to worship at Jerusalem; and he was returning and, as he sat in his chariot, was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, Approach and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip running up heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I unless some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this—

As a sheep He was led to the slaughter;

And as a lamb dumb before His shearers,

So He opened not His mouth.

In His humiliation His judgment was taken away.

His generation who shall declare?

For His life was taken away from the earth.

And the eunuch answering Philip said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or of some other? And Philip opened his mouth, and, beginning from this scripture, preached to him Jesus. And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, Behold, water: what hindereth me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. But when they came up out of the water, [the] Spirit of [the] Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through he evangelized all the cities till he came unto Caesarea” (ver. 26-40).

A fresh step is taken by Philip. Jehovah's angel directs him; for there were two roads, and an evangelist would not have chosen the one that was a desert.. But the object of God's grace was traveling by this one; and an angel is employed as ever in God's providence, here objectively that we might not forget the truth or take account only of thoughts and feelings. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth for service on account of those that inherit salvation?” The ready servant of God's will, Philip leaves the rejoicing multitude to whom he had been blessed in Samaria, and goes promptly, though he only knows the seemingly strange direction of his journey, not as yet its aim. It was a proselyte returning from Jerusalem, unsatisfied but wistful and groping his way in the prophetic word. The blessing is not now in the city of solemnities; the blessed had

been driven away. Samaria is rejoicing in the Savior of the world. The Ethiopian is soon to stretch out his hands to God, not in prayer only but in praise and conscious blessedness; though Ethiopia must wait till He comes who is already ascended on high and has led captivity captive. But here it is not an angel but “the Spirit” that said to Philip, Approach and join thyself to this chariot. Angels have to do with circumstances, the Spirit leads as to souls. So we saw in chap. v.; and so we may see yet more clearly in comparing chap. 12 with 13. The reality is as true now as ever, though it was then manifested and is written in God's word that we be not faithless but believing.

With alacrity the evangelist answers to the Spirit's call, and runs to Candace's treasurer as he sat in the chariot reading Isaiah, and puts the searching question, Understandest thou what thou readest? Alas! it was then as now in Christendom. The vision of Him who came to make God known, otherwise unknowable, is handed about from learned to unlearned, as if the divine solution of all riddles were itself the one insoluble riddle. The learned man, when asked to read, says, I cannot; for it is sealed; and on the same appeal the unlearned excuses himself, I am not learned. Faith alone can understand: so it is, and so it ought to be. So it was now that grace took up the returning stranger; for the passage was Isa. 53:7, 8; and when the answer betrayed his sheer ignorance of the gospel, Philip let him hear the glad tidings of Jesus.

It was not without God that the then passage of Isaiah set out the holy suffering Messiah. Other parts of this very strain, both before and after, bear witness to His exaltation; but here it is sufferings simply—the main difficulty to a Jew, who thought exclusively of His glorious kingdom. Hence the propriety of the name of “Jesus in Philip's application of the prophecy (ver. 35): the more striking because the inspiring Spirit had said (ver. 5) that Philip proclaimed “the Christ” or Messiah to the Samaritans. Ignorance, learned or unlearned, slights these distinctions, censures those who point them out as refining on Scripture, and thus really loses the force of the truth. For God has not written one word in vain; and spiritual intelligence gleans its sweetest fruit in that too neglected field. The Samaritans needed to hear that the Christ was come; the Ethiopian to know that the despised and suffering Jesus was beyond doubt the Messiah, whom the prophet introduced with a trumpet note as lofty in Isa. 52:13, as that which closed the passage in ch. 53:12. Everywhere are bound together His sufferings and His glories after these; but nowhere more than here do we find His meek submission to the wanton cruelty of His guilty people. Now “Jesus” was the right word for this; for on the one hand it expresses what He became in manhood, so as to be the object of contempt to rebellious creatures, and on the other it tells out His intrinsic glory who for us stooped so low. He was Jehovah the Savior.

The difference in the language from the Old Testament in our hands is due to the Septuagint, or Greek Version, then in common use, and especially among the Egyptians, &c. The sense remains substantially the same. But we are not to infer that Philip confined himself to this scripture: that he “began” from it more justly implies and warrants that he did not end there but expounded others also, But this was of extreme importance to one in the state of soul which the whole preceding account gives us to see in the treasurer; and it was blessed to the letting in of a flood of divine light into his heart!

Yet the scripture which detected the darkness of the Ethiopian's mind, before Philip sounded the glad tidings of Jesus in his ears that he by faith might ever after be a child of light in the Lord, has fared ill, not merely at the hands of the fathers of old, but hardly Jess with Calvin and the like in

Reformation times and since. For the great French commentator (to dwell on no others) will have these verses to teach that our Lord was so broken that He appears like a man dejected beyond hope, as is evident, but also that He comes out of the depth of death as a conqueror, and out of hell itself as the author of eternal life. But to draw this last sense from the words cited in ver. 33 (or from the original in Isa. 53:8) is quite unfounded. The prophet is as far as possible from here saying that Christ should be lifted up from His great straits by the hand of the Father. This is in no way taught by His judgment being taken away. The new beginning of unlooked-for glory is found elsewhere, but not here. Nor does the exclamation of the prophet in, the following clause ("His generation who shall declare?") import that His victory shall go beyond all number of years, instead of lasting only a little while. Sundry old interpreters were not justified in proving hereby the eternal generation of the Word, any more than others who understood it of His miraculous Incarnation. But no perversion seems worse than the deduction from such words as these, that Christ's life shall endure forever; for the entire passage refers exclusively to His humiliation. The first clause of 33 appears to express the mockery of all righteousness in His judgment; the second, the unspeakable wickedness of that generation; the third, the violent end of His life on earth to which He bowed, which is its proof. Were it a question of Phil. 2 or of the whole section (52:13-53), and not of these two verses only, Calvin would have been right as now he is demonstrably wrong. And this is confirmed by the Hebrew, which here no more admits of a thought of exaltation than does the Greek. The suffering Messiah is seen only in Jesus, at all cost to Himself the Savior of the sinful man who believes in Him, let His own people gainsay as they may the blessed report of the faithful.

Baptism follows the hearing of faith. And so, when they come upon a certain water, the stranger asks what hinders his being baptized, and has the privilege conferred on the spot; as Peter asked, in Cornelius' house, if any one could forbid it, when the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit, even as the believing Jews before them. For the outer mark, worse than worthless without the heart's subjection to the Lord and His grace, has its importance in ways neither few nor small; as the loss of the truth represented is as manifest in those that despise as in those that idolize it. They fail to see that life is never attributed to baptism: but salvation is set forth in it, the washing away of sins and death to sin, the blessed portion to which the gospel bears witness, in Christ dead and risen, for the believer. Life the Old Testament saints had, when there was no such thing as Christian baptism. Abel and Abram had it, no less than the Christian; but the Christian by virtue of Christ's accomplished work has soul-salvation, as he waits for his body to be saved and changed at Christ's coming. Of this salvation meanwhile, which no Old Testament saint could have, baptism is the sign, to which therefore the believer now submits, as a confession not only that Jesus is Lord, but of deliverance through His death and resurrection. Those who make all subjective, like the Friends, or who make all objective like the Catholics, suffer the consequences of their errors. Neither one nor other owns dogmatically the true present privilege of the Christian as in Christ delivered from all condemnation, freed from the law of sin and death, perfected forever by the one offering of Christ. This truth to the Quaker and the Papist is dangerous doctrine, both holding, though on different grounds, that whoever is justified is sanctified, and that, as far as he is sanctified, he is so far justified, and no farther. Both therefore slight the word of God, and preaching, and faith; as both are wholly ignorant of the gift of the Spirit sealing the believer to the day of redemption, the one crying up ordinances and priesthood to the glorification of the church, the other resting for all on what he calls the inward light, which he contends is given to every man.

Jew or heathen, Mahommedan or Christian, whose destiny for over turns on the use he makes of it. Neither allows eternal life in Christ to faith; neither sees, founded on Christ's work, that quittance of our old state as children of Adam, and entrance into the new state of the Second Man, of which baptism is not the channel but the emblem. Hence they ignore, if they do not falsify even in quotation, such scriptures as Col. 1:12, 13. They are striving to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; they are hoping to be translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Had they read baptism aright, they would be rejoicing in the sense of a present and everlasting deliverance to the praise of Him in whom they believe.

If true, they are certainly feeble, believers. With the Ethiopian all was simple and assured. For they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him (ver. 38). There was no thought of going before the assembly in Samaria. Baptism is individual, no matter how many souls might be baptized. The church has nothing to do with it. The Lord directed His servants (not the church as such) to baptize; and for this they are responsible to Him, as they are for the preaching of the word. The church does not baptize, any more than preach or teach. The evangelist does, though he may ask another to do it for him, as Peter when he directed Cornelius and the rest to be baptized in the name of the Lord on a later day.

“And when they came up out of the water, [the] Spirit of [the] Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing” (ver. 39). The miracle only established the new convert's faith, as doubtless it was wrought of God to do; for there is not a hint that Philip wished it, still less sought it in prayer. It was God for the honor of His Son in virtue of that Spirit's power which was working on earth; but surely not without a wise and gracious intent for the witness of it (and he was not alone) returning to his native land with the gospel of salvation. Abyssinia was thus to have the glad tidings of God concerning His Son; as Philip transported to Azotus (or Ashdod) abides the same simple-hearted indefatigable preacher of divine grace (ver. 40). For passing through he was evangelizing all the cities till he came to Caesarea. It is there the inspired history shows him to have lived, and his four daughters, long afterward.

Chapter 36

On Acts 9:1-9

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus follows in beautiful development of the ways of God. For on the one hand his murderous unflagging zeal against the Lord Jesus and His saints made him, (arrested by sovereign grace and heavenly glory, in the person of Christ shining into his heart from on high), to be so much the more conspicuous witness of the gospel; on the other his call immediately thereon, to go as His apostle to the Gentiles, was a new and distinct departure of ministry to the praise of divine mercy. For the blood of Stephen, far from quenching the raging enthusiasm of the young zealot “consenting to his death,” had only stimulated him to dare unsparing violence against all men and women who called on the Lord's name; and now his unsatisfied zeal against “the way” induced him to chase the fleeing scattered saints outside the land.

“But Saul, still breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked of him letters unto Damascus to the synagogues; so that, if he found any belonging to the way, both men and women, he might bring [them] bound unto Jerusalem. And as he was journeying, it came to pass that he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly there shone round him a light out of heaven, and falling upon the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he [said], I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; but arise and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him were standing speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; but leading by the hand they brought him into Damascus; and he was three days without seeing, and did neither eat nor drink” (ver. 1-9).

Thus wonderfully was the chief persecutor called, not as saint only but as apostle also. The conversion of the dying robber was a signal display of suited though sovereign grace; that of the living pursuer of the saints to prison or death was higher far. And if Peter followed the rejected Christ from Galilee to His ascension and heavenly glory, Saul began with His call out of heaven till, himself ever afterward a partaker of His sufferings, he finished his course in becoming conformed to His death. He was apostle, not through the living Messiah on earth, but through Him glorified after God the Father raised Him from the dead. He began his witness where Peter ended it on his part.

Saul's was an unprecedented starting-point, which gave another and heavenly character to his service. There was a complete breach with Israel after the flesh, no longer a question of the earth or earthly hopes. Man risen from among the dead and gone on high has no connection with one nation more than another. The cross broke off all possible claims of those who had the law; but therein also was laid the righteous ground for the forgiveness of all trespasses, for taking out of the way the hostile bond written in ordinances. Heavenly associations with Christ glorified were now revealed as a present fact for faith to apprehend, enjoy, and make manifest practically on earth; and of this, both individually and corporately, Saul was chosen to be witness as none other ever

had been before; and therein none followed, for the case admitted of no succession.

This was the man who, brimful of deadly hatred, desired the highest religious sanction for war to the death against all men or women that called on the Lord Jesus. Armed with the high priest's letter he approached Damascus, when suddenly light out of heaven flashed round him; and fallen to the earth he heard a voice charging him with persecuting Him whom he could not but own to be the Lord; and the astonished Saul learns to his utter confusion before God that it was Jesus, Jesus persecuted in His own, who were one with Him. Overwhelming discoveries for any soul! For the light, “the glory of that light,” the power, the voice even to him were unmistakable altogether; and the more so, for one like Saul confidently and conscientiously embittered against His name, thinking he was doing good service if he captured or even killed His disciples: so stout certainly his will, so ardent his zeal, so unsuspecting his malice, through blinding religious prejudice.

Never was a conversion so stamped with heavenly glory (2 Cor. 4) and this from the person of Christ speaking thence (Heb. 12). It was emphatically the saving “grace of God” that appeared to him, in total and manifest overthrow of the highest earthly tradition, though it was also the “glad tidings (or gospel) of Christ's glory,” as not another even of the apostles could say like himself. Hence he speaks of “my” gospel, and so when joining others of his companions, “our” gospel. It was not as if there was any object or any saving means before the soul but the one Savior and Lord; but so it was from heavenly character, as well as the fullness and sovereignty of grace, therein manifested beyond all.

Besides, in Christ's words, from that first revelation, lay the germ of the doctrine of the assembly as one with Christ, His body, which the apostle was called to expound and enforce by his Epistles, as by his ministerial work and life, in a way and measure that surpassed “the twelve,” however honored in their place. And this peculiar manner, as well as heavenly development of the truth, of which the Lord makes him the pre-eminent witness, brought on him unparalleled trial and suffering, from not only without but even within, as his own writings and others abundantly prove.

Saul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Judaism and the world were to his soul judged and abandoned forever by the certainty of saving grace and heavenly glory in Christ on high; who now manifestly exercised divine power and authority, and at one glance pointed out the new and only true path of patient suffering for the witnesses, in word and deed, of grace and truth, according to His own matchless way on earth, till He come and take us to Himself where He is. On the one hand, not only the Gentiles (Romans, Greeks, and all others) were fighting against God, but yet more keenly the chosen nation, the Jews; on the other hand, the simplest disciple now is one with Christ on the throne of God, and to persecute them is to persecute Him. This and far more such a mind as Saul's read in the revelation outside Damascus—a revelation to go forth in due time over all the earth, and have its power only in faith and love forming a Christ-like life to Christ's glory, but not without notable effects even where it was ever so hollowly professed. It may be drowned in blood or obscured with clouds of creature error and presumption, Jewish or Gentile or worse than either when both combine to deny the Father and the Son, but none the less in its objects will rise in heaven with ever durable and unfading glory around Christ, ere He shall be revealed from heaven with angels of His might in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that believed, as well as to be alike

the Blesser, and the Blessing, to all the families of the earth according to promise.

It will be noticed that the first effect on his believing and repentant soul was the spirit of obedience. Life was there through faith; and this as ever instantly shows its true character by obedience, which the Lord saw. It is assumed in the latter half of the Text Rec. which forms the whole of ver. 6: “But rise up and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” He lets us know in his own account to the Jews (chap. xxii.) that he had said, What shall I do, Lord? This the inspired historian does not cite here, though he gives it later where it was of importance. But in any case the Lord counts on obedience, even before Saul could be supposed to appreciate dogmatically, and to rest in peace on, the sprinkling of His blood. The new nature lives in obedience, such as Christ's in the consciousness and affections of sonship; and that blood cleanseth from every sin of which the old man was guilty. Even before the new-born soul knows clearance from all guilt, the heart is made up to obey, not through fear of penalty like a Jew with death before his eyes, but attracted by sovereign goodness and submission to God's word. Obedience is the only right place and attitude of the renewed mind, in contrast with the independence of God natural to man shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. Power comes in the gift of the Holy Ghost, when the believer rests on redemption and knows all his evilness before God. But even an apostle must be told, not discover himself, what he must do.

“The men that journeyed with Saul were standing speechless, hearing the sound but beholding no one” (ver. 7). The word often means “voice,” as it is rightly translated in ver. 4, where Saul clearly heard what the Lord said to him. Here his companions did not hear one word articulately, as we are distinctly told in chap. xxii. 9. Yet they did hear that something was being uttered. Hence “sound” appears to be a more accurate representation of the fact intended by the expression. And this is confirmed by a nice difference in the form of the Greek phrase; for the genitive (expressive of partition) is used where the effect was incomplete, the accusative where the words were sent home in power. This distinctness may not seem always preserved, as in John 10; but it cannot be denied in the case before us.

On rising up Saul proved to be without power to see, blinded, we may well say, with excessive light. So they led him by the hand into Damascus (ver. 8); and for three days without seeing he did neither eat nor drink (ver. 9). A deep work thus went on in a soul capable of feeling grace and truth as profoundly as he could judge himself according to the light of God, which had exposed the vain wickedness of religion in its best shape, and brought down the most zealous missionary armed with inquisitorial power, where Job of old was brought—to abhor self and dust and ashes.

Chapter 37

On Acts 9:10-19

Thus was brought to pass a conversion of the highest character and the deepest interest, pregnant with widespread results never to pass away. The miracle found its justification, not only in the moral principles of the case or in the dispensational display at that point in God's ways, but especially in the all-importance of such a heavenly revelation of His Son. Nevertheless Saul, when converted, though designated to a ministry which transcends that of every other man, enters the sphere of Christian confession by the same lowly portal as any other.

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias—and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold I [am here], Lord. And the Lord [said] unto him, Rise up, and go to the lane that is called Straight, and seek in Judas' house one of Tarsus named Saul; for behold he prayeth and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, so that he might receive his sight. And Ananias answered, Lord, I heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to the saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the high priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go, for he is a vessel of election to me, to bear my name before both. Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went and entered into the house; and laying his hands upon him he said, Brother Saul, the Lord, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, so that thou mightest receive sight and be filled with [the] Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received sight; and rising up he was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened” (ver. 10-19).

There is much to learn from the connection of Ananias with the new convert, total strangers to each other as they had been, save that the former well knew by public rumor of the latter's fierce enmity to all who called on the name of the Lord. He was himself a devout man according to the law, of unimpeachably good report among the Israelites of Damascus (Acts 22:12). Such was the man who had a vision of the Lord about Saul, as Saul had about, Ananias: both corroborative, in the most simple and important way, of the miracle put forth on the occasion of Semi's conversion. If we see sometimes an economy of divine power, here the dullest cannot but own a striking affluence; as indeed the end in view was most worthy. For in the testimony of the fresh witness were laid the great foundations of grace and truth, of the gospel and of the church, of individual Christianity and of corporate blessedness, of the deepest truth for man's soul, of the fullest vindication of divine righteousness, of past wisdom in God's ways displayed, of future counsels of glory for heaven and earth and eternity to the praise of God and His Son—the foundations of all this and more were laid, as they had never been before and never need to be again. Who, acquainted with God's ways in His word, can wonder at the special pains taken to furnish outward vouchers of unusual fullness and of unquestionable force, so as to preclude all reasonable imputation of delusion on the one hand or of collusion on the other? The Lord has here seen to this remarkably: let us not overlook it.

Ananias had communications from the Lord (ver. 10-12), which even in vision drew out the expression of his extreme surprise. Nor can there be conceived a more exquisite unfolding of the free intercourse which grace has now opened between the heart of the Master in heaven and that of the servant on earth. Ananias on one side ventures respectfully even to the verge of remonstrance (ver. 13, 14), after being told to seek Saul at Judas' house and recover his sight; as the Lord on the other over-rules all reluctance by the assurance not only of His own abounding grace, but of Saul's genuine repentance to fit him for the wonderful work to which he was henceforth called (ver. 15, 16). How entirely then may we not pour out our exercises of heart into His bosom, how implicitly count on His loving interest, who has all things at His disposal, and interests Himself in our history from first to last! For His eye of love is on the praying at such a house in such a street, no less than on the vast sweep of Christian life and service from Arabia to Damascus, from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, yea to Rome if not Spain, where His own name would be borne before both nations and kings and sons of Israel, and the many doings of Saul over the world of that day would be less than his many sufferings for Christ's name. Truly he was a vessel of election to the Lord, in labors of love most abundant, in sufferings for Christ yet more unparalleled.

Ananias promptly obeys, goes to the house where Saul lodged, and, laying his hands on him, told out the errand on which he was sent, not only to restore Saul's sight but that he should be filled with the Spirit. The force of the message lay in this that the Lord, Jesus, who appeared to Saul in the way, now sent Ananias supernaturally to convey His blessing. How evident that God was at work, and that the Lord Jesus was the revealer of His mind and the medium of His mercy, as He is the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His subsistence; not more surely man than God, and now the man glorified at His right hand who searches the reins and hearts, and controlled Ananias no less than Saul. If the vanity of man in his best estate was manifest to Saul's conscience (and no man had such reason as he to know this experimentally), the grace of God in the Lord Jesus was equally evident. “And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received sight, and rising up he was baptized, and he took food and was strengthened.” Saul submitted to baptism like any other. He was baptized by a simple disciple; and he himself subsequently taught others to lay no stress on his own baptizing anyone. “I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gains” (he wrote to the vain Corinthians), “lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas; besides I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” The proclamation of the truth is far beyond the administration of its sign. So we shall see that Peter preached at Caesarea, but consigned to others the baptizing of Cornelius with his kinsmen and his near friends. Indeed the same thing appears here; for nothing would have been easier than to have employed an official, at least a “deacon,” if this had been desirable in God's sight, who surely has no pleasure in breaking down His own order. A “disciple” baptizes the great apostle of the Gentiles.

But the most striking fact in all the transaction is the gift of the Spirit through Ananias: so decidedly did the wisdom of God in Saul's case break through the ordinary method of conferring the Spirit through the hands of an apostle, if, for special reasons, hands were employed at all. Here the utmost care was taken to mark God laying all human pretensions in the dust. The employment of a disciple like Ananias lays the ax to the root of official pride; and this where the Lord was calling out

the most honored servant He ever deigned to use.

There is another remark to note of still more general importance, which the history of Saul's conversion brings into evidence. We must not confound, as popular preachers do, the reception of life and salvation. Life is always given immediately; not so salvation. Saul was quickened the moment he believed in the Lord Jesus. But this is quite distinct from what scripture calls “salvation;” and hence we see, in the state of Saul, during the intermediate three days, a plain testimony to this important difference. What searchings of heart! What deep questions were discussed in his soul during those days and nights, when he neither eat nor drank! Yet divine life was there all the while as truly as afterward, faith too in the word of God, and in His glory who had smitten hint down and revealed Himself to him and in him. But was this peace with God? Was it rest? Was he delivered consciously from all condemnation? Salvation is found in believing the gospel which presents the work of Christ in all its fullness, as God's answer to every difficulty of the conscience and heart. It is not, therefore, a mere confiding in the Lord for ultimate safety, but present deliverance enjoyed by the soul. Into this Saul was now brought. It is a great mistake therefore to talk of “salvation in a moment,” “deliverance on the spot,” or any other of the stock phrases of superficial revivalism, which ignore the word of God and spring from the confusion of life with salvation. After truly looking to the person of Christ with its soul-subduing power, a deep process habitually goes on in renewed souls, who are not satisfied with “life for a look,” but face the overwhelming discovery of not only all they have done, but all they are in its evil and enmity against God and His Son. Self is thus judged in the light and humiliation is produced, without which there can be no solid and settled peace. In the style of preaching referred to, this is slurred over to the danger and injury of souls, quite as much as to the slighting of the full truth so due to Christ's glory.

And therein also is seen the practical importance of distinguishing the new birth of the Spirit from the gift of the Spirit, as we have repeatedly pointed out in expounding this book. The one goes with believing on the Lord, when first arrested by God's word in the midst of open sins or proud self-righteousness; the other is, when the soul (plowed up by the word and learning its hopeless evil before God, humbled as well as troubled, yet not without hope, for Christ is believed in) finds in His all-efficacious work who for him died and rose, that his evil is all gone, root and branch and fruit, and that he is in Christ, a child of God and joint-heir with Christ, yea, dead and risen with Him, and so freed from all that can be against him, that he might live unto God. Of this, burial with Christ is the instituted symbol to which every Christian submits; salvation is the expression of its standing privilege. Hence in his First Epistle (3:21) Peter brings in the comparison with Noah's Ark, and passing through the waters of death as the way of salvation; so Christ did personally and efficaciously for our sins, as we in spirit when baptized. The apostle carefully distinguishes between the mere outward effect of the water, and points to the true power in Christ's death and resurrection, of which baptism is the figure. Expressly however it is a figure, not of life, but of salvation, present salvation of souls; as we await the coming of the Lord for the salvation of our bodies when we shall be like Him even outwardly, seeing Him as He is.

Calvin will have it that Ananias laid hands on Paul, partly to consecrate him to God [from the context one gathers, ministerially], partly to obtain for him the gifts of the Spirit. It would not be worth noticing in general, for both are absolutely wrong; but the errors of great and good men are proportionately dangerous. The blessed man says of himself, “Paul, apostle not from men nor

through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him up from among the dead." Nor can we too vigilantly reject the error that confounds the gift (δωρε■) of the Spirit, or, we may add, the being filled with the Holy Spirit, with "the gifts" (χαρ■σματα). Nor does it appear afterward by the narrative that Ananias was also commanded to teach him, any more than this was implied in his subsequently baptizing him. How readily even the excellent of the earth let slip, or add to, and so spoil the holy deposit of the truth! It would rather appear that Ananias laid hands on Saul to cure his blindness, before he was baptized; after which he was filled with the Holy Spirit, without a hint of any such act subsequent to baptism.

Chapter 38

On Acts 9:19-22

Thus simply is brought before us the call and conversion of the great apostle, containing within the account itself the germ of that which was to be unfolded in his Epistles and called out by the demands of the work which mostly gave occasion to the Epistles.

It may be noticed that to bear Christ's name before Gentiles has the first place, the sons of Israel being put last, with “kings” placed between them. He was to be “apostle of Gentiles” (Rom. 11). For this, the call of the Lord from heaven was most appropriate. On earth He had sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When He sends from heaven, Israel ceases to have any such place. All mankind, before this, had joined and been lost in one common guilt. The Jews had even led the Gentiles to crucify Him. Israel's superiority after the flesh was therefore clean gone. Sovereign grace alone governs henceforth; and therefore, if any are to be prominently named, it is rather those who are most needy. Of such Saul was characteristically apostle.

“And he was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And immediately in the synagogues he preached Jesus, that He is the Son of God. And all that heard him were amazed and said, Is not this he, that in Jerusalem made havoc of those that called on this name, and had come hither for this thing, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in power and confounded the Jews that dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ” (ver. 19-22).

Here we have a new departure of at least equal importance. From the very first Saul proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. This gave a new and higher character to the preaching.

The other apostles knew it but are not said to have preached it. Peter had long ago confessed the great truth with singular strength; and the Lord had pronounced him thereon blessed; for flesh and blood had not revealed it to him but His Father, that is in heaven. Yet do we never find Peter preaching or proclaiming the Lord thus at Pentecost and afterward. He sets forth the crucified Jesus, as having been made both Lord and Christ. He dwells on His death, resurrection, and ascension. He represents Him as from heaven pouring forth the Holy Ghost, having received of the Father that promised gift. The greatest prominence is given to Jesus as the now glorified Servant of the God of Israel, exalted by God's right hand as Leader and Savior to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Peter preached Him thus fully, but only as the Messiah, whom His people had rejected, whom God had raised from the dead and would send from heaven in. due time, to bring down all promised blessing. Beyond this he does not preach Christ, so far as the book of Acts teaches.

Stephen went beyond this at any rate in his last discourse. “Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Any one familiar with the Psalms and the Prophets ought to have discovered, at least by the light of the New Testament, the import of this new title. It opens out assuredly a far larger glory for the Lord than the realm of Israel. The Son of man is set over, not all mankind only, but all creation, He only being excepted (which shows its

immense range) who set all things under Him. In Psa. 8 it is intimated that His humiliation unto death was the ground and way whereby the Lord passed into this glorious supremacy; and that we Christians see Him already crowned with glory and honor in consequence, though not yet do we see all things subjected to Him. Dan. 7 shows Him coming with the clouds of heaven in this same glory to the Ancient of days, and receiving dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve Him—an everlasting dominion withal, which shall not pass away neither shall His kingdom be destroyed, as that of all others had been. In this glory, however, before He comes to judge the quick and the dead, Stephen beholds Him through the opened heavens at the right hand of God. No doubt this was a sight miraculously vouchsafed to the proto-martyr; but what he then witnessed on high is revealed for us to know and profit by, even now in the Spirit.

Saul of Tarsus brings us an immense step beyond, for he proclaims Jesus in His proper and, divine glory as the Son of God; whilst it was reserved for John, the apostle, to give His most admirable record of the Lord in this self-same way and to show how the intrinsic glory of His person superseded every object hitherto precious in the eyes of Israel; a divine glory, which could not be hid though veiled in flesh, and which manifested itself on departing by sending down from heaven the other Paraclete, though (not less than Himself) a divine person, the Spirit of truth, not only to glorify Him, but that we might have fellowship with those who most of all enjoyed His presence here below; “and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

It is well to notice that Saul thus preached Jesus “immediately” and “in the synagogues.” Hence we may see how powerfully, and the more so because indirectly, the account of Luke confirms his own explicit statement to the Galatians, that he did not receive the gospel he preached from man, nor was he taught it but by revelation of Jesus Christ. How strikingly too all this, so different from what learned and pious men say or think about it, falls in with the character of his preaching so distinct from all before him: the same Jesus, but His glory viewed, neither as connected with Israel, nor conferred because of His sufferings, but higher up and divinely personal. That he was formed in his peculiar line by Ananias is more worthy of a Corinthian than of a Reformer, though natural in those who lay exaggerated and unscriptural stress on human elements for the training of Christ's servants. God is sovereign in this as elsewhere. The Lord had His own aims in calling Saul and Luke, as in the differing cases of Peter and James. He can call from learning and science, whether to pour contempt on human pride in such fields or to use them as He pleases; He can call from the land or sea those who have never known the schools to prove Himself superior to that which the vain world inordinately values. But Saul preached “immediately,” and “in the synagogues.” What a testimony to conscience that he should preach Jesus, and preach Him as the Son of God!

The reader will observe that for “Christ” in the Authorized Version after the Text. Rec. of ver. 20 is here substituted “Jesus,” as it stands in the best authorities, followed by the Revised Version and others founded on carefully drawn up editions. It is not improbable that the later copies which introduced the error may have been swayed by ignorant considerations of a quasi-Christian sort, unless it were a mere slip of memory which crept in and got perpetuated among those who understood not the difficulties and wants of such Jews as were addressed. To preach to them “the Christ” or Messiah, as the Son of God, would have served no adequate purpose and met with little if any opposition. They would have all allowed it in terms, even if none really entered into its full import. But the momentous truth Saul affirmed was as to Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth; and that He is

the Son of God. What could be graver to a Jew? To accept it as of God was to condemn the people, and especially the religious, and find himself in the dust before the Crucified (now risen and on high) for whom this divine title was claimed in the highest and most exclusive sense. It became the turning-point not for time only but for eternity.

The signal change in the preacher also told powerfully. “All that heard were astonished and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of those that called on this name and had come hither for this thing, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?” Such a conversion, coupled with his actual zeal for the truth, could not but be most impressive, as grace which had wrought intended it to be. “But Saul kept growing more in power and confounding the Jews that dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.” Here “Jesus” would he quite out of place, and the Messiah is the truth meant; for advance in truth received and learned from God does not cast a slight on a lower level which is equally of God. And breadth of mind in taking into consideration an immense sweep of varied truth and harmonizing all in the Lord Jesus to God's glory is one of the marked traits of His most remarkable servant. The Messiah, ship of Jesus must ever be a capital matter in dealing with Jews. Higher glories there are, as we have seen, of surpassing interest and importance; and none ever rose higher, in principle at least, than Saul did from his first testimony as we were told. But the lowest point of view had for its urgent and indefatigable advocate the same devoted man who was the earliest to proclaim the highest. None of Christ's servants has ever shown equal largeness of heart. We may perhaps say of him, in a deeper as well as more heavenly sphere, what God says of king Solomon to whom He gave wisdom and understanding exceeding much, that God distinguished him by “largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.” (1 Kings 4:29). The question of a Christian woman's wearing her hair long, or her bead duly covered, was to him connected with and answered by the vast scope of creation, the theater of God's purpose in Christ, which put the man and woman in their true relative place, and brought, in the very angels as spectators meant to act on the spirit of such as walk by faith, not by sight. But who, save Saul of Tarsus, to settle a detail in conduct apparently so small, would ever have thought of such a scope in application of God's order and ways to maintain His moral glory? His waxing powerful does not mean that he overcame his adversaries in disputation, but that the Spirit so strengthened him by the deepening of his soul in the divine word, which no doubt did bear down more and more the puny arms of such as opposed themselves. Whatever might have been his vast natural ability, whatever his providential training under Gamaliel, it was in practical dealing with souls in the synagogues or individually that the new nature in the Spirit's power found its true field of unremitting exercise.

Chapter 39

On Acts 9:23-27

So sudden, surprising, and profound, a conversion as that of Saul (by nature, character, attainments, and position the most zealous of Jewish adversaries), could not but make the deepest impression on all observers, especially of the circumcision. How confirmatory to the disciples at Damascus! How impressive in the synagogues to hear him proclaim Jesus as the Son of God! How suited to confound those who denied Jesus to be the Christ! God's grace displayed in it was such as to amaze all that heard. The very opposition of the restless enemy was for the moment paralyzed.

“And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews consulted together to kill him; but their plot became known to Saul. And they were watching the gates also day and night that they might kill him; but the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

And when he arrived at Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples; and all were afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took and brought him unto the apostles, and declared to them how he saw the Lord in the way and that He spoke to him, and how in Damascus he preached boldly in the name of Jesus” (ver. 23-27).

The Spirit of God appears to comprehend in the first verses the space of three years which the apostle spent in Arabia, a fact of great significance as following on his conversion and used powerfully in the Epistle to the Galatians (1:17) to prove how little man, even the twelve, had to do with it. His call was in no way from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father that raised Him from among the dead; even as the gospel he preached was not according to man, nor yet did he receive it from man, nor was he taught it but by revelation of Jesus Christ. It was expressly meant of God to be independent of Jerusalem and the twelve, but derived (call, apostolate, and gospel he preached) immediately from the prime source of grace, truth, and authority, the risen Head, and God Himself. Thus was secured what was all-important, not only for the Gentile saints then, and indeed thenceforward for the due intelligence of the body of Christ, but for our special profit now, so menaced at the end of the age with the revival of the early Judaizing which opposed the full gospel at the beginning, the heavenly as well as independent character of Paul's office and testimony.

Otherwise it seemed even more extraordinary for Saul than for Moses to go to Arabia. But as there was of old divine wisdom in the long shelter there given to the future leader of Israel, so the break with the flesh was complete in the briefer sojourn of the apostle of the Gentiles, where none on earth could imagine he was winning for himself a good degree either in the humanities or in divinity. Such was God's ordering manifestly and wholly distinct from man's ways. He took no counsel with flesh and blood. He went not up to Jerusalem to those that were apostles before him, as all would else have thought most proper if not absolutely requisite. It was designedly on God's part death to the Jewish system in its best shape, and to all successional order, that Saul should go to Arabia, and again return to Damascus; and then after three years should go up to Jerusalem, not to receive office at apostolic hands, but to make acquaintance with Peter, there remaining but

fifteen days, and seeing none other of the apostles save James the brother of the Lord. For his ministry was to be the true and fullest pattern of that which according to the will of God was to follow when the temporary Jerusalem order should pass away, and the Holy Spirit would bring out all the blessed and governing principles of a heavenly Christ for the church His one body on earth, as well as for His servants individually: a ministry of holy liberty, the expression of God's grace in the first communication of His truth, centering in the divine and glorified person of Christ, to the utter denial of man's will and the world's pride.

But the world, as the Lord had previously warned His disciples, hates those identified with Christ as it had hated Himself, and according to His word would persecute them as Him. And so Saul now proves at the hand of his old co-religionists, ever the most bitter. The Jews were plotting to make away with him. “Yet, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God-service. And these things they do because they have not known the Father nor Me.” How evidently and deeply true! Nor did any more strikingly and continually verify their truth than Saul of Tarsus. The sword of the Spirit was too incisive in his hands, no matter how great his love and lowliness, not to rouse the unquenchable resentment and deadly enmity of Satan. And when the Jews went so far as even to watch the gates of Damascus both night and day that they might dispatch him, the disciples, much as they appreciated his ardent love of Christ and zeal for man's blessing, took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket. Miracle there was none, but an escape ordinary enough, if not ignominious for those who would surround the great apostle with a perpetual halo. How little they know of the cross, of God, and His ways!

This escape from murderous hands at Damascus he relates in the wonderful sketch of his devoted labors and sufferings which he recounts to the ease-loving Corinthians when set against the blessed apostle by the deceitful workers there fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. How admirably suited only to shame those who took care to work and suffer the least possible, but to kindle into burning love the feeblest spark in the true servants of Christ from that day to this! At the close of that list of trials which he gives as in foolishness in his confidence of glorying, if others gloried after the flesh, before he says a word of the man in Christ he knows—himself of course, but purposely so put—caught up even to the third heaven, he winds all up with this very incident, in a singularly isolated way, so as to bring into juxtaposition his being let down through a window in a basket by the wall with his being caught up into Paradise for exceedingly great revelations. Strange conjunction, but how instructive withal, the same one lowered from a window in a city wall, and caught up to heaven to hear unspeakable words! Who but Paul had even thought of thus glorying in the things that concerned his weakness; and, if he did mention his most singular honor as a living man, of taking care to tell us how, to counteract all self-exaltation, there was given him thenceforth a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him?

It may be well to note that in 2 Cor. 11 there is the additional information that the hostility he encountered was not confined to the synagogue but shared by the ethnarch of the then king, no doubt to do the Jews a favor, as others in somewhat the like position did afterward. “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king was guarding the city of Damascus, wishing to take me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.” This I cite, not to confirm the truth of Luke's account as if the divinely inspired word could be inaccurate or needed support for a believer, but to give a fresh instance of the moral purpose which reigns in all scripture, the true key to that peculiar method of God, which is as perfect for His own glory and the

growth of His children, as it furnishes occasion to the unbelief of man who judges all in the self-confidence of his own intellectual powers, at the utmost very limited, great as they may be. Information, important as it is in its place, is one of the least objects in the word of God which lets the faithful into the communion of His mind and love.

But a new and very different lesson now opens in the city of solemnities, where not long since great grace was upon all, and the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied exceedingly and a great crowd of even the priests were obedient to the faith. For Saul, having arrived at Jerusalem, essayed to join himself to the disciples, and all were afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. How painful on the one hand for that vessel full of divine affections, that channel even then overflowing with a testimony of Christ beyond these doubting brethren whose grace was really so small as to question the largest measure that had ever crossed their eyes! But how helpful on the other hand for us and all saints, who have to learn that no one is to be received on his own responsibility, but on adequate testimony from others! A man unknown, or only known by circumstances calculated to alarm, must ordinarily have a wonderful opinion of himself or be surprisingly blind to the duties of others, if he expect to be welcomed within the holy bounds of Christ on the good account he gives of himself. And God's children must be exceedingly rash or indifferent to His glory who hold the door open without a commendatory letter, or (if this through circumstances failed) its equivalent in some satisfactory degree. He who can not present something of the kind ought rather to praise the care for the Lord's glory in His own, even if it call for a little patience or delay on his part; and never was there a time when such vigilance was more due in the interests of Christ and the church than in its present state. Let the saints only bear in mind that here too as everywhere it is a question not of letter but of spirit. Proof of reality Christward is and ought to be all that is wanted; while indifference to Him, and yielding all to the mere profession of His name, when nothing is so cheap, is the most offensive and guilty looseness. Legality is not well, where all should be grace; but it is at least far less indecent than laxity. And “letter” too could be most readily forged, as we should not forget, by an unscrupulous person.

Even if saints be ignorant or prejudiced, the Lord never fails and soon raises up an instrument to remove the difficulty. For Barnabas “took him and brought him to the apostles,” (no more we have seen than Peter and James,) “and declared to them how he saw the Lord in the way, and that He spoke to him, and how at Damascus he preached boldly in the name of Jesus” (ver. 27).

That this course on the part of Barnabas was owing to previous acquaintance with Saul! that they two had studied together at Tarsus! where both knew nothing of the Lord Jesus, and that either, even if true, could be a ground to satisfy the disciples, is just a sample of human guesswork—not to say of false principle—which disgraces those who cultivate such a style in the interpretation of scripture. But Christendom's hanger after all that tends to exalt the first Adam, as it demands such pabulum, is sure to find the supply where truth is neither trusted nor valued as displayed in Christ to God's glory. Is not the real key furnished by the sacred historian in a subsequent glimpse at Barnabas in ch. 11:23, 24? When he saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted accordingly; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. Nor was it in Antioch only or first that grace wrought mightily in him; for in far earlier days than either he had been singled out for what God had produced in him, in contrast with Ananias and Sapphira who had agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 4 v). How much one gracious heart can effect,

and how little it matters what the circumstances may be through which it seeks to please the Lord and help those that are tried! Yet how often, when such a character is formed and proved, a crisis arises too strong for all but the present guidance of the Lord above all that is of man; and grace in all its fullness must control, graciousness quite breaking down! And so Barnabas proved at a later day. How little any then could have anticipated that Saul would be the one to reprove Peter as well as Barnabas for the allowance of flesh or law to the jeopardy of the truth of the gospel! Yet so we know it was; and scripture has set it out in glowing and imperishable words to preserve us in our weakness from like error. How thankful should we be, for the condescending mercy of our God who would thus turn to our account the mistakes even of the most honored, instead of hiding or palliating all in the genuine spirit of party to the dishonor of the Lord and the irreparable injury of our own souls.

It may be well to note that this visit to Jerusalem (ver. 26, et segq.) is not to be regarded as immediately consequent, being named here in order to complete the history of Saul thus far by the account of his first introduction to the saints there.

Chapter 40

On Acts 9:28-31

Adequate testimony then to the call of divine grace is the true ground of reception: and the peculiar antecedents of Saul brought it out in high relief. There are very different circumstances now where the world in these lands calls itself Christian. But the principle abides, though profession in an easy-going estate, where corruptions (moral, ecclesiastical, and doctrinal) abound, is as far as possible from calling on the name of the Lord in the face of opposed nature and persecution private or public. It is of the deepest moment that all for each soul should turn on that Name, the only passport which ought to be demanded as thus directly magnifying Him, the best of all safeguards against the world, the flesh, and the devil; for His name is the death-knell of all evil, whatever its varying form. To that Name the highest of earth must bow and be indebted for recognition where every tongue confesses Him Lord to the glory of God the Father; but the same Name introduces the most down-trodden slave into the fullness of grace now with living hope of heavenly and everlasting glory. And though His name solemnly summons every one that names it, to stand aloof from unrighteousness, against none here and at once does it threaten such scathing judgment as when men (no matter what their fame, credit, or pretensions) bring not the doctrine of Christ.

But the assembly, profoundly engaged to care for the common interests of that Name, looks for trustworthy testimony as to each soul that names it. This gives the fullest scope to faith and love in the saints already within, who, seeking the glory of the Lord in those that confess Him, are according to their measure reliable witnesses, whether for receiving a Saul of Tarsus, or for rejecting a Simon Magus. For if all have communion as saints in what is done, and are free, yea bound, to satisfy themselves, the evidence on which they judge practically rests with such as, enjoying the confidence of all, have love enough to ascertain the truth. The church acts on witnesses it believes. So it is shown in the striking instance before us, that we might be guided aright in our own duty, even where the outward features are as unlike as possible. But, the church being a divine institution, and not a mere voluntary society even of saints, there is a holy and wise principle which governs, or at least it ought, and will if done rightly, bringing out the Lord's glory, as in Saul's case. Active love, animated by a single eye to Christ, will see clearly and judge aright.

“And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord; and he was speaking and discussing with the Hellenists; but they had in hand to kill him. And when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him off unto Tarsus” (ver. 2830).

Liberty was thus enjoyed whether for fellowship or for testimony. It is indeed essential to Christianity and in contrast with the law which genders bondage. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” or as He Himself testified, “I am the door; by Me if any one enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out, and shall find pasture.” Salvation, liberty, and food are assured by His grace: and so Saul was proving at this time even in Jerusalem. What could be sweeter than to taste it for his soul, where tradition had so lately blinded his eyes, and zeal for the

law led him to persecute the way of divine grace unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women?

But there was more than this, bold utterance in the name of the Lord, which well becomes the object of grace. If “this day is a day of good tidings,” and assuredly it is beyond all that ever dawned, how hold our peace? Not so did the four leprous men, when famine pressed the city of Samaria, and they found the deserted camp of the Syrians fall of every good thing for those that were otherwise perishing with hunger. And who in Jerusalem more than Saul, its late emissary of bonds or death for all that called on the name of the Lord, could with godly assurance proclaim His name by faith in it to strengthen the weak and release the captives, to give life to the dead and liberty to the oppressed, or (as he said in a later day) to open their eyes, that they might tarn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, receiving remission of sins and inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith in Christ? For free and bold testimony in His name is the fruit of His grace, no less than liberty for one's own soul; and in this order too. We need to be set free from every hindrance and weight and doubt and question, we need the liberty wherewith Christ sets free, before the mouth can open boldly to make known His grace and glory to others. It is not to angels that God subjected the habitable earth to come but to Christ who will give His saints to reign with Him. It is not to angels that He gives the gospel commission but to His servants who were once children of wrath even as others. How soon even Christians forgot His ways and returned to the yoke of bondage, and to fleshly successional order, the rudiments of the world, which played their fatal parts in crucifying the Lord, now to find themselves, if God be believed, set aside and condemned to death in His cross!

But Saul, as he lets us know, when called by grace to have God's Son revealed in him that he might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately conferred not with flesh and blood, but went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Even when he did go up to Jerusalem, it was “to see (or visit) Peter,” not to take holy orders, any more than to go through a theological curriculum, for “he abode with him fifteen days,” seeing none other of the apostles save James the Lord's brother. And on this he speaks with impressive urgency, as a matter of the deepest moment for God's glory that the truth of his independent mission should be established forever and beyond question, bound up as it is with the gospel revealed by him in a fullness and height beyond all others. In Jerusalem too we see his full liberty and his bold testimony to the Lord's name. All was ordered that the truth of the gospel might continue with the Gentiles; but with the Jews also he maintains the same principle and conduct. Alas! it was ill appreciated. For on the one hand, the Gentiles have not continued in God's goodness but throughout Christendom have turned back like a dog to its own vomit; judaizing so egregiously as to give people the impression that the gospel is a sort of half-improved, half-mitigated, law, instead of being the perfect expression of God's grace in justifying ungodly sinners by the faith of Christ in virtue of His death and resurrection. On the other hand, when he turned to the Hellenists, or Greek-speaking Jews, with the loving zeal of one of themselves to impart the truth which had set himself free, seeking not theirs but them, they betrayed how little those are subject to God's law who despise and refuse His gospel, for they went about to kill him They were but Abraham's seed, not his children (John 8): if they had been his children, they would have done the works of Abraham. They had really the devil for their father, a murderer and a liar from the beginning; and his works they did.

It is needless to dwell on the error whether of old MS. or of ancient version, which makes the apostle speak and dispute at this early day with the “Greeks” in Jerusalem. In fact it was with the same class which furnished “the seven” who had been set over the daily ministration; of whom Stephen and Philip had been so highly honored also in the word. Saul was drawn out the more toward them, as being himself a Hellenist, and one who had not only consented to Stephen's death, but had been the prime and most energetic leader in the persecution that followed. Now he himself is exposed to their deadly hatred; “and when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus.” It seems clear that this was not C. Philippi, but rather the seat of the Roman governor, whence he readily went by sea. Nor is Gal. 1:21 any real difficulty; for it only intimates that he then came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, which was easy by ship; and the following verse intimates that he was still unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.

“The assembly then, throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria, had peace, being edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied” (ver. 31).

There seems no good ground to make this verse the concluding sentence of the paragraph, as the state of the church throughout these districts is not meant to be connected with Saul one way or another, It is rather, while attending to their past trial, an introduction to the account of Peter's visit which immediately succeeds, and it can thereon well stand by itself.

NOTE.

A reformer who seemingly never saw the unity of the assembly in a city &c. (the uniform fact observable in God's word, and the habitual practice of all saints who really in faith hold the assembly to be one) has availed himself of the better reading in this verse to defend what is indefensible. What ground does he take then? Scouting any such unity of action in a city, he upholds the independent action of a single meeting, when avowedly acting for itself, and expressly not pretending to bind others at the time. The statement is as far from fact as the deduction from the critical reading is illegitimate and valueless. For it was perfectly open for any meeting if it had a positive duty, and absence of previous bias which must destroy confidence, to propose what it, after careful examination before God, judged to be due to truth and righteousness among all the saints gathered to the Lord's name in the city. Had this been done in godly order about a matter of fundamental moment and their special duty, it would have fairly and holily tested all in unity and left those who were assured that the course proposed was of God to decide together as one, such as could not in conscience join in it going without and being declared so after loving remonstrance. But those meeting at Nymphas (Col. 4:15) were not entitled, if we bow to the word, to bind all the gathered saints in Laodicea. The assembly of Laodiceans, (ver. 16) must join in the decision of the Lord to give it validity everywhere. It is to the assembly in a place that He attaches His promise. It the matter in question were in no way of deep and urgent importance, to press it when it was known that very many godly men differed could only spring from the desire for division; for seasonable and satisfactory measure short of this could readily have been taken, had the honest wish prevailed to heal rather than divide. Had there been a momentous question demanding its solution in proper sphere and after a scriptural fashion, “without partiality and without hypocrisy,” why avoid or abandon the due proposal to all? Be it known that as a fact all were then together,

and there was no break up whatever, till afterward through the attempt, to force on all, similar independency, or the acceptance of what was only a single meeting's decision for itself in a city where were many others. If will and haste and influence had not misguided, there was nothing to hinder the only order ever allowed to be divine, united action among all the saints in a city gathered to Christ's name. Beyond controversy united action in the city was being carried out at that very moment about every other assembly matter, why was it not dune about that on which hung issues so serious for the Lord's name, so heart-breaking for all the gathered saints on earth? Let those who believe that order to be of God, and would have a good conscience, search and see why them only they departed from it. The defense of the departure from truth and even common consistency comes naturally, but from one who abjures the unity, which nevertheless governs what in his present position he must own and does walk with now as before. One is thankful to add that such special pleading does not satisfy but repel and pain intelligent brethren, even those whose practical independency it seeks to support. Our reformer sees that on these principles they are involved in “invincible contradiction.” I admire more those who condemn themselves rather than give up the truth; yet, how can they go on as they are? Nor is this all. For notoriously they did try over and over what was already tried and decided elsewhere. And it is quite true that there is “no unity within.” Never was there grosser confusion, never mere shameless trampling on divine principle. For both a single meeting decided for itself only; and many of the others tried the case over again, both in town and in country. For those who did so, for all going with it, was it not the destruction of practical unity? Unquestionably in my judgment.

Is it not a strange, not to say disgraceful thing, in a time of crisis like the present, to find laborers in France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and America, yea, in Great Britain, asserting this notion of the competency of one meeting in a city to decide for all, so as to destroy common action as a constant duty there? Yet all the while these brethren abide in fellowship with what they in heart reject as a mere tradition, while the more trusted chiefs and the mass of saints accept it as of God. It would seem more upright for such innovators to retire, neither demoralizing their own consciences nor destroying united testimony in the truth which recent circumstances have shown to be so important. They are in this really at one with Loose-Brethrenism, their natural home. To denounce what they are actually walking with is not to the honor of the Lord, of their brethren, or of themselves. And why was it put to, yea, forced on, the assemblies as the general rule all over the land, and here and there over the earth? No doubt it was “a false step” in total opposition to all our usual practice and all that Scripture attests. Every unbiased man of spiritual or even honest judgment must allow that the beat and exigency of forming a party can alone account for this and other errors, especially the demand that “individuals” even should accept what is thus really made a test. It is in vain to say that the foundation of the church was in danger. It was the pettiest sectarianism, as ever, more jealous of its own will and honor than of Christ's glory. Even Popery would scarcely descend so low as to scatter confusion everywhere for a local breach where the doctrine of Christ was not concerned but at most discipline. Every cue acquainted with facts and adhering to unity, as we have all professed and practiced, must allow that a decision avowedly of a single meeting, and not even proposed for the acceptance of the rest of the gathered saints in the same city, is ecclesiastically false; and that the word and Spirit of God call for its rejection, not its acceptance.

But the critical reading entirely falls in with other scriptural truths. Had it been “the assembly in [■ν] Judea and Galilee and Samaria,” there would be some appearance of a dilemma; and the adversaries of unity might urge that consistency demands a central meeting for the saints therein to have joint action. But as it is, there is no shadow of a plea for a result so absurd. The right reading does not touch and therefore cannot weaken all the saints in a city taking common action as God's assembly in that place. The assembly throughout [κατ■] the whole of Judaea &c. definitely by the preposition points to a wholly different fact which has nothing to do with the assembly in a city and its responsible unity. We are simply told here of the peace and progress of the church all over these districts. No scholar ought to confound phraseology so palpably distinct; no believer intelligent in the word could mistake the different truths conveyed, or dare to employ one to neutralize another. “The church” is often introduced in the most general form without any preposition either to restrict or generalize; what would be thought of the argument from an unrestricted phrase that consistency would demand a central meeting for all the gathered saints on earth? It is not really sounder logic so to reason from the verse in question. Nobody believes that Scripture calls for united action beyond (at the most) the limits of a city. It attaches strictly to the assembly in a place: the mere English reader if he adhere to scripture, even if ignorant of one word of Greek, ought to have been preserved from this strange confusion, and real fighting against the truth, as well as obvious antagonism to the prevalent order of his own party. For the Authorized and Revised Versions agree in giving “throughout,” as the true force of the preposition here peculiarly employed; and so all exact translations. But even if any were so loose as to say “in,” no man of sound mind and adequate learning could attach the least importance to it as bearing on working local unity, which is implied in the preposition iv as used in this connection.

It has elsewhere been simply shown that the effort to limit “gathered together into one place” into four walls or a circular building is mere inattention to scriptural usage, which perfectly admits of all the gathered saints meeting here and there in a city: the sole foundation for the unbelieving slur that in that case the assembly never assembles, and practically never exists.

Chapter 41

On Acts 9:32-35

Having given us the peaceful and prosperous condition of the church throughout Palestine, the Spirit of God now turns to speak of Peter. He that wrought effectually in him, the great apostle of the circumcision, had just shown us the mighty vessel of His grace called to do work among the Gentiles. But Saul of Tarsus is dropped for the present and we have the familiar figure of Peter brought before us, not in Jerusalem, nor yet in Samaria as once with John, but alone on a visitation of Judaea. If there was peace for the church, there was no less power than at the first in him who was behind none since Pentecost.

“Now it came to pass that Peter going through all [parts] came down also to the saints inhabiting Lydda. And there he found a certain man named AEneas, for eight years lying on a couch, who was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, AEneas, Jesus [the] Christ healeth thee: arise up and make thy couch. And immediately he rose up. And all that inhabited Lydda and the Sharon saw him, who also turned to the Lord” (ver. 32-35).

Grace thus used the apostle, not merely for the edification of the saints, but for winning fresh souls to God. Lydda or Lod was at this time a considerable town—as Joseph—us informs us, not behind a city in size. And there God wrought a miracle, to arrest unbelievers, in the person of AEneas. It does not appear that he was a believer, being described as “a certain man.” Indeed, as the rule, believers were not objects of miraculous power, however often they may have been its instruments. Timothy is exhorted by the apostle to use ordinary means. “Be no longer a water-drinker but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.” Epaphroditus drew out in his sickness deep exercises in Paul's heart; and Trophimus, the apostle left at Miletus sick, instead of healing him. The Lord has His special dealings with such: not even an apostle would interfere. But as tongues were for a sign to unbelievers, so on such power was free to act to God's glory, and the cure of the long-palsied. AEneas became a striking testimony to all the dwellers around.

The manner of Peter's action and his words are remarkable. “AEneas, Jesus [the] Christ healeth thee: rise up and make thy couch.” And so it was straightway: power to help himself as well as to rise up. The power of God was exercised in a serious case of one palsied for eight years, through the true but rejected Christ. Jehovah-Jesus was the healer of disease. It was but a testimony now. What He did on a small scale during this present evil age is only a sample of the world or age to come. Then He will prove Himself the forgiver of all Israel's iniquities and the healer of all their diseases, according to Psa. 103 when His kingdom ruleth over all.

Meanwhile the word of God acts; the gospel is blessed; for “all who inhabited Lydda and the Sharon saw him, who also turned to the Lord.” Their souls were impressed, so that they gave heed to the truth and turned to the Lord. It was a real work of the Spirit of God, and not mere astonishment at a miracle. But it had also the peculiarity of being very extensive and all-embracing! Whole communities were brought in. Nor was it only that they professed, or were baptized: of this the Holy Spirit says nothing. All in those parts saw the paralyzed man who was on

the spot healed in the name of Jesus; and they turned to the Lord. Some who seem disposed to doubt the work of grace in “households” and anxious to reduce it to a mere intellectual recognition of the Lord if even so much as this, might profitably consider the great work done at Lydda, consequent on the healing of AEneas. The language here is wholly inconsistent with a sponsorial profession; it was a wide but real action of divine grace, the external sign which no doubt followed as a conferred privilege, being not even named.

It may be added that Kuhnol has as utterly failed in the grammar as in the exegesis, when he would have this last passage to mean merely that all the Christians (i.e. all those who had turned to the Lord) saw AEneas restored to health. For though the aorist may occasionally bear or require a pluperfect force in English, in the sentence before us such a rendering is not only uncalled for but destroys the power and dignity of the narrative; whereas the ordinary meaning in the simplest way maintains all that could be desired, crowning the miracle wrought, with a worthy and blessed spiritual result, instead of a close so frigid and feeble as to sink below not scripture only but any writing whatever. Grammatically too the indef. relative is just the word proper to introduce the statement of a moral nature or character.

But it may interest some to know that Lydda in the New Testament is no other than the Lod of 1 Chron. 8:12; Ezra 2:33: Neh. 7:37; 11:35, called Ludd or Lidi to this day, scarcely so “miserable a village” as Messrs. Webster and Wilkinson think, if we are to credit the popular report of Dr. Thomson, who represents it as a flourishing community of two thousand persons, evidently thriving and industrious, embosomed in noble orchards of olive, fig, pomegranate mulberry, sycamore and other trees, and surrounded every way by a fertile neighborhood. One, Hadid, and Neballat, of old associated with Lod, have still their representatives distinctly enough under their modern disguise.

Further, though Calvin lays it down confidently that the Sharon (or Assaron, as he calls it) was a city hard by, and slights Jerome's thought that thereby is meant the plain lying between Caesarea and Joppa, there is no good reason to doubt that the early translator is right, not the reformer. And the minute accuracy of the Greek text affords a striking evidence to the reader in the article prefixed to “Sharon,” not to Lydda. So invariably is it in the Hebrew, where the same district is referred to (1 Chron. 27:29; Cant. ii. 1; Isa. 33:9; 35:2; 65:10); whereas the article is dropt where the same name is applied to a different locality on the other side of Jordan and not improbably a town of the Gadites. “The Sharon” lay north of another district, “the Sephelah,” which in our Version has fared worse than “the Sharon” in having been quite stripped of its character as a proper name and reduced to “the vale,” &c.

Here then it was that the energy of the Spirit was pleased to win glory to the Lord Jesus and to bless souls by Peter, at the very time when sovereign grace was preparing another and yet more favored servant of Christ, not only to proclaim the gospel in the whole creation, but to complete the word of God, the mystery that had been hid from ages and from generations. Yet another and greater exertion of divine power was soon to follow, and a more distinct testimony of grace to the Gentiles through Peter himself, as we shall see in the immediate sequel and according to a wisdom that never failed. But one may not anticipate more at this time. Grace would ere long work more profoundly as well as indiscriminately; the heavenly side of the gospel must shine out more distinctly and suitably to Him who sits, the glorified Man, at the right hand of God. But it was from

no lack of zealous testimony on Peter's part; nor was it that power from above failed in his ministry to put honor on the name of Jesus, or to shed blessing on the souls that believed. But all the divine counsels must be duly revealed as well as accomplished in their season; and God has His fitting ways no less than His counsels. And we do well to take heed to His word which reveals all this and more, that we may be completely furnished to every good work.

Chapter 42

On Acts 9:36-43

Another circumstance of like kind at a different place gave occasion for the power of God to display itself by Peter still more wonderfully.

“Now, in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which, being interpreted is called Dorcas (Gazelle). She was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she fell sick and died: and, having washed, they laid her in an upper room. And as Lydda was near to Joppa, the disciples hearing that Peter was there sent two men unto him, beseeching, Delay not to come on to us. And Peter rose up and went unto them; whom, on his arrival, they brought up into the upper room; and all the widows stood by him weeping and showing the coats and cloaks which Dorcas used to make while she was with them. But Peter, putting them all forth and kneeling down, prayed; and, turning onto the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and, seeing Peter, she sat up. And, giving her a hand, he raised her up, and, calling the saints and the widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout the whole of Joppa, and many believed on the Lord; and it came to pass that he remained many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner” (ver. 36-43).

Will it be believed that a professed and not unlearned translator of the New Testament dared thus to render the opening verse, “Moreover, there was among the disciples at Joppa a woman named Tabitha, who was always doing good works and giving alms”? I cite from Gilbert Wakefield's second edition, ii. 27, though I cannot say (not having its predecessor) whether this is one of its alleged “improvements” or a mere reproduction of the first. It is the note (375) which is so offensive— “I have left out the impertinent explanation in this verse, because, even if no interpolation, it must be either ridiculous or unintelligible in a translation.” It is the more shameless from one who allows himself no such audacity in his rendering, as among many like passages, of John 1:39, 42, 43, with all three of which he deals fairly. Now what is the fact in our case? It is the true Aramaic form of that time and country: so Gamaliel's maid was called; and Josephus (B. J. iv. iii. 5) gives as Luke does the same corresponding Greek same to the mother of a certain truculent John, as the English reader can see in Dr. Train's Tr. ii. 64. The Hebrew word that answers to it means “beauty,” but it is commonly used of a “gazelle,” “hart,” or “roe,” as in Deut.; 2 Samuel; Song of Solomon. So in our own tongue men and woman are called Buck, Doe, Roe, Stag, &c. In Lucret. iv. it occurs only as a term of endearment. Where is the “impertinence” of such an explanation? Only in the empty, presumptuous, and profane mind of Mr. Wakefield. I take the trouble of refuting it, as a caution to the misinformed not to be imposed on by the unconscious impiety of such as believe not the inspired character of Holy Writ. Whenever they assail that word, it would be easy to expose their self-sufficient folly.

Tabitha, or Dorcas, then, is described as a disciple at Joppa, who was a doer of the word and not a hearer only; for her pure and undefiled service before her God and Father was to remember the widows in their affliction, keeping herself unspotted from the world. She was as full of good works and alms-deeds as of faith. Now in those days she sickened and died. Now if washed in the usual

way, she was laid in an upper room, a suitable place to await the arrival of the apostle. For it seems not obscurely implied that the disciples looked for more than consolation, in sending messengers for the apostle just at that moment and admitting of no delay; as he on his part promptly met their entreaty. As usual the scene is livingly before us, though it is with Peter for the central figure, not Paul of whom Luke was the cherished companion. But what mattered this or that if the Spirit inspired him to give us the truth to Christ's praise? He certainly had it all before Him as it was, though Luke was not there: and no jealousy for his leader tarnished one word of his narrative. There they were in the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by Peter, not in tears only but displaying the work of Dorcas' loving hands, the clothes inner and outer which she used to make while she was with them.

But Peter had not come for condolence only nor chiefly, but for the glory of God that Jesus the Son of God might be glorified in her who was gone. So, putting them all out and kneeling down, he prayed. He sought not to display the great work about to be done; he sought the Lord only, and with that grave reverence which became one who walked in presence of the Unseen who alone could avail. Here again how vividly graphic is the recital! yet no eye of man was on Peter and the body of the disciple. He who wrought in power through one servant has told us it through another. Some of old in east and west and south have ventured to add “In the name of [our Lord] Jesus Christ." If they meant honor, they were guilty of a heinous wrong. “Add thou not unto His words.” The inspiring Spirit has given us the truth perfectly. Enough to know that Peter knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body said, Tabitha, arise. Spoil not the word of God, O man, unworthy of the name of a believer, unworthy of the task of a translator, or of an expositor, by thy unallowed glosses. His prayer proved to whom he looked and on whom he leaned; but we may not take from His words in chap. 3:6, nor add to them in 9:40, nor assimilate either one or other to ix. 34. Let us be assured that each is as God wrote it, and therefore as each should be: our place is to receive humbly, believe confidingly, and enjoy to the uttermost.

The power of the Lord was there, according to His servant's prayer, not to heal as before, but to raise the dead. “And she opened her eyes, and, seeing Peter, sat up. And, giving her a hand, he raised her up; and calling the saints [who had the deepest and least interested feelings] and the widows, he presented her alive. And it became known to the whole of Joppa.”

Yet it is to be remarked that the moral or spiritual effect is not to be measured by the comparative character or measure of the power displayed. When the paralyzed AEneas was healed, all who inhabited Lydda turned to the Lord; when the far greater wonder was wrought of raising up the deceased Dorcas in Joppa, no such wide or large effect followed, but “many believed on the Lord “: a blessed result for these souls, and to His glory assuredly, but, as far as we may gather from Scripture, by no means so comprehensive now as then. After all it is the word which is the true and right means of conversion to Him, whatever may be the means used to draw attention to His word. For His grace is sovereign, and refuses the plausible reasoning of men.

There, is another word which the Spirit adds at the close, and not without its importance. “And it came to pass that he remained many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.” The veil drops over the recollections of Dorcas if she had any about her recent experience, as in the case of Lazarus and all others raised from the dead. But of the great apostle of the circumcision, through whom pseudo-apostles claimed succession over the uncircumcision as well as a monarch's patrimony,

we are told that he staid a good many days in Joppa at the house of a certain tanner who bore his own name of Simon. Has this no voice to those who easily believe that they too stand “first” in the church of God in our day? No true apostle according to Scripture ever sought, ever possessed, wealth or rank in virtue of his office. Alas! it is not only power that is departed, but, what is far more serious, the spirit of obedience and the simplicity of faith, which last invests the least thing on earth, which Christ gives or sanctions, with the halo of heaven.

Chapter 43

On Acts 10:1-16

The sovereign grace of God toward all men was about to have another and yet more conclusive formal seal. It was not enough that the scattered Hellenists were preaching the gospel in the free action of the Holy Spirit, or that Philip in particular had evangelized Samaria. It was not enough that Saul of Tarsus had been called from his persecutions to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles no less but more than before the sons of Israel. The apostle of the circumcision must now openly act on the grand principle of Christianity which knows no distinction between Jew or Greek. As the cross proves them alike sinful and lost (Rom. 3:22, 23), the gospel meets them alike where they are (Rom. 10:12), and proclaims the same One to be Lord of all and rich unto call that call upon Him. This was now to be publicly demonstrated by Peter's preaching to the Gentiles, and their entrance into the privileges of the gospel on precisely the same terms of gratuitous, unconditional, and everlasting salvation by the faith of Christ, as to the Jews at and since Pentecost. Henceforth there is no distinction: for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The circumstances of a change so momentous bore the unequivocal marks of divine authority; though, long before, the Lord Himself had announced it (Luke 24:47) to the unwilling and therefore unintelligent ears of His disciples, and Peter had in terms affirmed it (Acts 2:39), however little he seems to have as yet apprehended the force of what he then uttered. Indeed we are here and now carefully shown how reluctantly he set his hand to the work of indiscriminate grace till God left excuses no longer possible. But He would have the activity of His grace tarry no more for the dull sons of men: His message of love to the lost must ran forth in power; and the great apostle of the circumcision must be the one formally to open the gates of the kingdom not to Jews only but to Gentiles also. The moment was come the man with whom to begin appears.

“Now a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of a cohort that was called Italian, pious and fearing God with all his house, giving much alms to the people, and entreating God continually, saw in a vision manifestly about ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in unto him and saying to him, Cornelius. But he gazing on him and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said to him, Thy prayers and thine alms have gone up for a memorial before God. And now send men unto Joppa, and fetch [one] Simon who is surnamed Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea. And when the angel that spoke to him had departed, he called two of his domestics and a pious soldier of those in close attendance, and having recounted all to them, sent them to Joppa” (ver. 1-8).

The Spirit of God is thus careful to make known the godly life of Cornelius. He was already a converted man, though a Gentile. But he did not know salvation proclaimed in the gospel. Therefore was Peter to be sent for, as Peter himself afterward explained (Acts 11:14): else he could only have hoped for his soul in the mercy of God. But now the gospel is to teach sinful man, without distinction; and it seemed good to the all-wise God to bless thereby such an one as this devout Roman, as He had already in the same grace paid honor to the crucified Savior by

converting as well as tilling with peace the penitent robber who hung by His side. They were as different tributes to the grace which came by Him as could well be conceived; but each was seasonable, each to the glory of Jesus, each a display of what God can afford to do through redemption. The pious centurion was only entitled to know his sins remitted on God's message of grace through the blood of Jesus.

The Evangelical school, ignorant of the new and peculiar privileges of the gospel, were wont to regard Cornelius as a self-righteous philanthropist, because they did not distinguish between conversion and the known forgiveness of sins or salvation. But this was their ignorance. Even Bede knew better, when he said albeit in dubious phraseology that he came through faith to works, but through work was established in faith. Had Bede said through the gospel, instead of “through works,” it would have been more in accordance with the truth; but those who cite him approvingly seem not more intelligent than the venerable light of the dark ages. It was really God putting honor on the accomplished sacrifice of Christ; and now, that the Jews nationally had rejected their Messiah, calling Gentiles into equal privilege with believing Israelites by the gospel.

But the known godly character of Cornelius was suited to silence the prejudices of the ancient people of God. He looked to God and served Him in faith, before He knew present salvation. If it were too much to say as Calvin does that, before Peter came, he had a church in his house, we are told on the highest authority that he was devout and feared God with all his household: no idol, we may be sure, was tolerated there. Instead of the rapacity of a Roman abroad, with contempt unbounded for the Jew, he abounded in alms-giving to “the people” in their low estate, and this in Caesarea where Gentiles predominated. Best of all he entreated God continually. To suppose all this in one destitute of life is absurd. Cornelius was born of God and walked accordingly, though he had not yet peace; and God was now about to meet the wants and longings of his soul by the full revelation of His grace in the gospel.

An angel of God he sees in vision by day. It was broad daylight, in the afternoon; nor was he asleep, but inquiring learns that God, not unmindful of his prayers and alms, bids him fetch Simon Peter from Joppa. As the great apostle of the uncircumcision wrote at the end to instruct the slow mind of the believing Hebrews, so the great apostle of the circumcision was to be employed at the beginning in evangelizing at God's command the Gentiles. Does this beautiful interlacing offend you? If so, it proves how little you have entered into the divine ways which cut off all room or excuse for human independence. Neither in Judea nor in Rome (pace Eusebu) nor anywhere else was there to be, if God were obeyed, the unseemly suicidal sight of a Jewish church distinct from a Gentile church. The assembly was on God's part meant to be one on earth, let there be ever so many assemblies; the saints composing but one assembly, of which in due time it could be said, even when Corinthians were splitting into divisions, “all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.” Here however it was a question of getting the gospel, as necessarily is the true order, though the church follows in its proper course: individual blessing must be known before collective privilege and responsibility.

On the other hand, while these messengers were approaching Joppa, about noon of the next day, Peter retired to pray and, growing hungry, saw, in a trance into which he fell, a sheet of striking significance, which he soon learned to apply.

“And on the morrow, when they were journeying and drawing near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour, and he became hungry and desired to eat; but while they made ready, a trance came over him, and he beholdeth heaven opened and a certain vessel descending as a great sheet by four corners let down upon the earth in which were all the quadrupeds and reptiles of the earth and [the] birds of the sky. And there came a voice unto him, Arise, Peter, slay and eat. But Peter said, By no means, Lord; because never did I eat anything common and unclean. And a voice [came] again a second time unto him, What God cleansed deem not thou common. And this was done thrice; and straightway the vessel was taken up into heaven” (ver. 9-16).

Peter had not departed from that condition of dependence on God which he had expressed on the occasion of choosing “the seven” to their diaconal service in Jerusalem. “It is not fit that we [the twelve] should forsake the word of God and serve tables.” “Look ye out therefore...But we will give ourselves closely to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” So he assuredly was doing now when a special mission was being assigned him by God. He had withdrawn to be alone before Him. It was no question of repairing to the temple as once, or even to an oratory. The housetop sufficed; but it is well, when forms vanish, if the spirit abides and grows stronger as here. We cannot afford to be slack in that which God honors in the apostle. The needy should not grow weary in telling out their need to Him and in counting on Him to act worthily of His great Name.

Peter receives a threefold testimony of God's purifying the Gentiles by faith, instead of separating Israel by circumcision. The cross had changed all, and put no difference between believers, Jew or Gentile. The former had lost thereby their old superiority according to flesh; both were now open alike to incomparably better blessings in Christ by faith. It was no question now of the law or of becoming a proselyte, or even of laying hold of the skirt of a Jew. From the opened heaven light streamed on the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, and grace declared the uncleanness gone which Sinai had denounced for a while with rigor. For all was over with the first man under law. The Savior speaks from heaven where such a distinction as Jews or Gentiles has no place, and acts on the efficacy of that blood which has procured everlasting redemption for all believers equally, be they Jew or Greek, barbarian or Scythian, male or female, bond or free. A Jew could hitherto no more eat of an unclean animal than with a sinner of the Gentiles. But the sheet which came down from heaven and was taken up there taught him in due time the immense change which hinges on the cross, answers to the glory of Christ on high, and drew from him on a later day even in Jerusalem itself the gracious confession, “We believe that we shall be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, even as they also:” not merely the Gentiles as the Jews, but the Jews in like manner as the Gentiles.

How far the saints or even the apostles anticipated the grace of the gospel must be evident to the least attentive reader of the inspired narrative. Even up to this hour Peter had no thought of, and ventured to object in the vision to, what the voice commanded from heaven. So little was the special character of the gospel in its free grace indebted to the hearts or minds of its most blessed preachers; so incontrovertibly does the word of God prove that what concerns us incalculably above all else for time and eternity proceeded from God alone, feeling and acting for Christ in His own love and to His own glory, though for these very reasons to our best and surest blessing.

Chapter 44

On Acts 10:17-33

Very careful is the Spirit of God to give as full details: so grave a change as the reception of Gentiles on the same footing as a Jew was not made or owned lightly.

“And as Peter was perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that had been sent by Cornelius, having sought out the house of Simon, stood at the gate, and having called were inquiring whether Simon surnamed Peter lodged there. Now while Peter was pondering over the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men seek thee; but arise, go down, and journey with them, nothing doubting, because I have sent them. And Peter went down unto the men and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause for which ye are here? And they said, Cornelius a centurion, a man righteous and fearing God, and attested by the whole nation of the Jews, was divinely warned by a holy angel to send for thee unto his house: and to hear words from thee. Having therefore called them in he lodged [them]. And on the morrow he arose and went off with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa went with him” (ver. 17-23).

Men were employed throughout after the angelic mission to Cornelius; but God is apparent in every part to disarm prejudice, own righteousness, display grace, and put honor on the name of Jesus to the blessing of man and His own glory, for all which weighty ends the law, of which Israel boasted, had proved altogether unavailing. The great apostle Peter was indebted under God to the Gentile's invitation, to solve the problem of his vision. But the Spirit is the agent of all blessing, intelligence and power in the believer; and so His place is made conspicuous here (ver. 19, 20). It must be a divine impulse, and not a mere deduction of reasoning: a lesson for us and all of inestimable value. At first no doubt, sensible signs and extraordinary power ushered in His presence and manifested the new truth of His action in man; but the reality abides, as He abides with us, forever, though outward signs in divine wisdom are no longer vouchsafed. This draws greater importance than ever to Scripture in these last days when unbelievers turn from it more and more to unprofitable and mischievous fables.

It was thus made plain, beyond doubt, that God it was, not man nor yet the church, nor even the apostles, who opened the door to the nations, equally as to the Jews. So the gospel intrinsically wrought and proclaimed; but even the believer is dull to appreciate the full import of what he has really received, and is wholly dependent on God's word and Spirit to give him growth and progress. The hour was come for the formal and public owning of believing Gentiles in the enjoyment of full gospel privileges. And it was meet that he who was beyond none of the twelve should be the one employed, rather than he who, already called, was designated to be the apostle of the uncircumcision. Thus was the uniting bond of the Spirit best maintained in peace. But it was of all moment that man's will should be excluded as well as man's wisdom. What could be more effectual to this end than the vision of Cornelius on the one hand and of Peter on the other? The character of each gave special weight to what they saw and heard; and their concurrence, as attested by the “three men” from Caesarea, as well as the “six brethren” that accompanied Peter from Joppa, was of high value and unmistakable significance. Men were largely employed, as they

were concerned in the deepest way, but so as to demonstrate to every upright mind that God was the moving spring in it all. The “devout soldier” with the two domestics has his lowly but valuable place and was soon to share the blessing as well as the devout centurion on whom he waited closely: a blessing which is as distinctly characterized by the power of grace that brings down far higher than Cornelius, and lifts up far lower than the Roman soldier, uniting all believers even here below in one heavenly and indissoluble relationship to Christ.

The message delivered by the men from Caesarea was to the point. For a Roman officer in a garrison town to have the good report of the whole nation of the Jews was no small thing; but it was more for his own household to bear witness that he was a righteous man and God-fearing, as his soldier-attendant evidently was also. And the prevalence of Jewish Sadduceanism did not lead to any toning down of the divine communication which was calmly affirmed by men accustomed to frank uprightness. Cornelius, they said, “was oracularly warned by a holy angel to fetch thee unto his house and hear words from thee.”

What a clear communication to Peter when his vision was followed up by the Spirit's application of it! Nor can anything be plainer than the divine authority with which the Spirit speaks and acts here as elsewhere. “I have sent them:” He is God.

How vividly too is set forth the value of “words” in the gospel! Let the law demand “works” of man to prove his powerlessness and that the offense may abound, so as to overwhelm him with despair of himself and cast him only upon Christ. The gospel makes known in its “words” the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and is thus the means of life eternal to every one that believes. The Jew might claim the law as imposed on His people in the solitude of Sinai; not so God's gospel concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, dead, risen, and glorified in heaven, which is now as open to the Gentile as to the Jew, but to neither save by the faith of Christ and His redemption.

Peter then set out with the rest from Joppa. “And on the morrow he entered into Caesarea; and Cornelius was awaiting them, having called together his kinsmen and his near friends” (ver. 24).

Dear reader, have you nothing to learn from the zeal now, as well as the habitual piety and devotedness we saw before (ver. 2, 22), in the Roman centurion? Are we to be less zealously affected because we are more familiar with the wondrous grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ? Sorrowful fruit, not indeed of better light, but of fleshly indifference and worldly ease, which hinder the due activity of divine affections that others may live, as well as our own souls grow, by the knowledge of God.

“And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, did homage; but Peter raised him, saying, Rise up, I myself also am a man” (ver. 25, 26). It was the more remarkable, as a Roman in general never offered the salaam of prostration to a stranger. But the lowly and pious mind of Cornelius was wrought to such a pitch of expectation by the angelic message that he failed to sever the preacher from the truth he was sent to make known, and was thus disposed to pay more than honor meet to him whom God had directed him to send for. On the other hand the dignity which accompanies the truth is not only compatible with the deepest humility but produces and increases it in proportion to the power which grace acquires over the soul. Impossible not to be humble, if we are consciously in God's presence; and this the gospel is

calculated above all things to make good habitually, as it does in the measure of our faith and spirituality. Peter refused such mistaken homage at once.

O you who claim to be Peter's peculiar and exclusive successor, are you not ashamed? Why are you of all men the most distant from his ways, the most opposed to his spirit? Silver and gold you have, which he had not; but the faith he preached you deny and corrupt, and the lowliness he practiced even to an unbaptized Gentile pronounces the most solemn rebuke on your pride, when you (installed as Pope) seat yourself “on the very spot where the pyx containing the host usually stands," and the cardinal princes of the empire repeatedly adore you, each prostrating himself before you and kissing the slippered toe as well as the covered hand. Can contrast be more complete? And this is succession!

“And conversing with him he entered and findeth many come together; and he said to them, Yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another race. And me God showed to call no man common or unclean: wherefore also without gainsaying I came when sent for. I ask then on what account ye sent for me. And Cornelius said, Four days ago till this hour I was fasting and the ninth [hour] praying in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and says, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms had in remembrance before God: send then unto Joppa, and call for Simon who is surnamed Peter. He lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner by [the] sea. Forthwith then I sent unto thee, and thou hast done well in arriving. Now then we are all here before God to hear the things that have been commanded thee of the Lord” (ver. 27-33).

Peter, after entering not only the house but the apartment where Cornelius had his company waiting to hear the gospel, explains first what they all knew, then what God had just shown to himself. For their part, they were aware that for a Jew to be familiar with a Gentile was unlawful; he on his had it shown of God that he was not to call any man common or unclean. Now that the true light shines, the old distinction is gone. It was not so at the beginning; it is no longer in force. If God was entitled to institute such a difference, He was no less free to annul it; and so He had shown Peter in special preparation for Cornelius whom God had directed to send for Peter, who had thereon come “without gainsaying,” as became him. For what has faith to do in such circumstances but to obey? If Christ Himself was beyond all the Obedient Man, the apostles differed from others not more in their gift and power than in the measure of their obedience. And to this is every saint sanctified by the Spirit—to the obedience of Jesus Christ, as distinctly as to the sprinkling of His blood. Let us exhort one another to this, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Cornelius then in answer explains why he sent for Peter. It was not without divine authority. He had been four days also praying, if not fasting also (for the reading is seriously questioned); on that afternoon an angel in a man's guise told him that his prayer was heard, and that he was to call to him Peter, who had well done in coming, as they were all there to hear all the Lord's commands through him.

Hear it, you that desire to honor Peter truly, that you may be saved from the destructive superstitions of his false successors. Were there succession, surely the first and head is peculiarly to be regarded. See how readily he comes, without a word to say against it, at Cornelius' request. Ah! it is not Peter who demanded or received worldly pomp and human honor; it is you who have

lost the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, and are under the dominion of dark and evil traditions which make God's word of none effect, and play into the hands of the god of this age who has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that the light of the gospel of Christ's glory should not dawn on them. Listen to Peter, I beseech you, and learn, not merely your error in departure from the living God, but the precious truth which is able to save your souls.

Chapter 45

On Acts 10:34-48

It was a serious moment for the apostle of the circumcision, prepared though he was by God's dealings with himself and with Cornelius. But there could be no doubt of the Lord's will, and the first step in the new departure must be taken then and there by himself.

“And Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him. The word which He sent forth to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—ye know the matter that came to pass throughout the whole of Judaea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached—Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed Him with [the] Holy Spirit and power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him And we [are] witnesses of all things which He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom also they slew, hanging [Him] on a tree. Him God raised on the third day and gave Him to be manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses that were chosen before by God, to us which ate and drank with Him, after He arose from [the] dead. And He charged us to preach to the people and testify that this is He that is ordained by God judge of living and dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins through His name” (ver. 34-43).

The coming and work of Christ have put all things in their true place. Only since then has God Himself been either manifested or vindicated; for during previous ages, since the flood or at least the law, God seemed the God of Jews only, and not of Gentiles also. Now it is made evident that He cares for Gentiles no less than Jews; but it never was evident in the fullness of the truth, till the Son of God was come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. Not till we know His Son Jesus Christ, can we say, This is the true God and eternal life. Nor had any one more difficulty to pierce through the cloud of Jewish prejudice than the instrument here employed; but God had cast the true light of the cross more fully on his soul; and now he could say, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (even were they Hebrews of the Hebrews); “but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him.” Of this Cornelius and perhaps others of his house were already to a certain extent a living but hidden example. The principle, however, was now to be extended immensely, and what had been comparatively hidden to be avowed and made public through the gospel. The very piety of Cornelius kept him from appropriating to himself as a Gentile what he knew God had sent forth to Israel, till grace sent it him also. Thus should the charge of the risen Lord, hitherto suspended as it were, be applied no longer partially but in all its wide extent: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” The law had been proved and declared powerless; and pretension to keep it unto life became the plain proof that no life was there. Christ is all. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” Peter understood all this as he never did before. Legal mist was passing away from his eyes. But nothing was farther from the truth than that there could be among Gentiles any more than Jews one to fear God or work righteousness without faith in Jesus. The Jewish feeling which denied to

any nation save their own the possibility of the acceptableness with God, he declares to be unfounded. His mission on God's part to Cornelius was expressly to assert His indiscriminate grace, as well as to begin authoritatively, by one whom God set in the first place in the assembly, the sending of the gospel to every creature.

Cornelius and those with him already knew the word which God sent forth to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. But Peter carefully adds that Jesus is Lord not of the Jews only but of all. That which was a thing spoken of throughout Judaea, beginning from despised Galilee of the Gentiles, after the baptism which John preached (as we read in Mark 1:14, 15, where the Lord Himself called men to repent and believe the Gospel), is the only salvation for Jew, or for Gentile when afterward called as he now began to be. Jesus of Nazareth is the object of faith, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. He was come to whom all pointed that had ever been anointed of God. The love of God to sinful man was evident in Him and that love effectual in deliverance; for He went abort doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, because God was with Him. He was the true Messiah, but both in Himself and in His work immeasurably more; and this came out into the brightest evidence on His rejection. Yet was there ample testimony to Him before that rejection; so that man was without excuse. “And we are witnesses of all things that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging Him on a tree.”

Whatever appearances may say, the will and word of God stand forever; and faith knows it. “Him God raised on the third day and gave Him to be manifest, not to all the people but to witnesses that were chosen before by God, to us who did eat and drink with Him after He arose from the dead.” The resurrection is the pivoting and clenching of the gospel. If unbelief hold out against its testimony, what clearer than that man hates both the love and the truth of God, and will not be saved at any price? The same resurrection of Jesus separates those who believe according to the value of Christ's death before God, making in their measure witnesses of Christ men who bowed to the testimony of the fore-appointed witnesses. Be whom they slew on a tree ate and drank with His own after He arose from the dead: not that He needed the food, but they needed the testimony that He was alive from the dead, a truly risen Man, who, having loved His own that were in the world, loved them to the uttermost.

He it was who charged His disciples to preach to the people and testify that this is He that is ordained of God judge of living and dead. Such a testimony clearly goes beyond Israel to take in all mankind within its scope, as the resurrection demonstrated beyond controversy. For if the Son of God deigned to be born of woman, born under law, His rejection by Israel, His death on the cross, broke all links with that people and left Him free for the display of sovereign grace in righteousness now while He is in heaven, as surely as He is determinately appointed by God judge of living and dead when He comes again in glory. What has the risen Man to do with one nation more than another? He is the divinely defined Judge of living and dead by and by, as He is now Savior of all that believe be they who they may. Judgment and salvation are equally cleared by the gospel and concentrated in His person. The law made nothing perfect. The prophets, on the failure of all, bore their precious intermediate testimony; and Peter appeals to them. “To Him bear all the prophets witness that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins.”

To be born again, as has often been remarked, is not a proper privilege of the gospel, as all the Catholic sects of Christendom suppose; for the new birth was always true for souls that believed (before, within, and without, Israel) since sin was in the world. The Old Testament saints were as truly begotten of God as any of the New. Remission of sins is the primary boon of the gospel; though of course the new birth attached by grace to the same persons, and the privileges of the gospel go far beyond that gracious beginning. Here all is confusion, especially in the Christian bodies which boast of antiquity. Nor were even the Reformers at all clear in this fundamental and necessary truth. Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, and others, made baptism to be the means of life! either to all the baptized, or to the elect among them. According to God's word, they are all wrong, and inexcusably so. For Scripture never treats baptism as the sign even of life-giving, but of death with Christ to sin, and of sins washed away, for such as are already quickened. Christian baptism is a blessed institution, as the initiatory sign of the peculiar though primary privilege of the gospel. Blinder than the Jews are they who pervert it into a quickening ordinance, denying too as generally they do that the life given in the Son is eternal life: so that sacerdotal pretension is as vain as the doctrine is false.

And so we find in this very context. “While Peter was yet speaking these sayings, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those that were hearing the word. And the faithful of the circumcision, as many as came with Peter, were amazed, because upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speaking with tongues, and magnifying God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, which received the Holy Spirit even as we? And he directed them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they entreated him to abide certain days” (ver. 44-48).

It is striking to notice the various ways of divine wisdom. At Pentecost the believing Jews had to be baptized before they received the gift of the Spirit. They must solemnly take the place of death with Christ to all the had previously trusted. And even to this day the Jews feel its force; for when one of them is baptized to Christ Jesus, he is viewed and treated as dead to them and their religion. And so do the Brahmins, Mahommetans, or any who are not indifferent to their own profession. But the believing Gentiles as we see received the Holy Spirit while hearing the word, as most—perhaps all of us—have done; and baptism follows. Who could refuse the outward sign to the manifest recipients of that divine seal? Their gifts in speaking with tongues and magnifying God proclaimed the more precious and the ever-abiding gift of the Spirit. His seal is the true ground why those having it should be owned as members of Christ's body: not ecclesiastical intelligence in them; still less the will or the consent of other men. Our business is to honor God and obey, not to legislate. If ways unworthy of Christ be done and persisted in, there is the remedy of Scriptural discipline.

Here, whatever his old prejudices might have been, even Peter bowed. And they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, it would seem, not by Peter, but at his direction by one or more of the brethren who accompanied him. There was neither vanity nor superstition in getting it done by Peter, though he took care in obedience to the Lord that it was duly done. It was of moment that they of the circumcision should go thoroughly with the mighty work of God's grace, in sealing Gentile no less than Jew that believed. It was not too soon to be of moment that all should know that a simple brother may lawfully baptize even in a great apostle's presence, and that the act derives no value from office or gift. Only the evangelist should see that it be done after an orderly sort. No room was left for circumcision or the law. All is of grace reigning through righteousness.

Chapter 46

On Acts 11:1-18

Never had there been so important a step taken by man on the earth; never one demanding faith so urgently and evidently as now. Hence, though the assembly was then in its pristine order and beauty with the twelve acting together, notwithstanding the dispersion after Stephen's death which had scattered the saints generally, the Lord acted by a single servant of His whose own Jewish prejudices were notoriously of the strongest. The assembly is responsible to act together in all ordinary questions of godliness and discipline; it is bound to guard practically the foundations of truth and righteousness according to the written word. But a new departure needed and found a suited instrument, chosen and filled of God to initiate His will, and to take the new step in advance assuredly gathering the will of the Lord.

Peter's faith was severely tried. For the first time since Pentecost he had to encounter doubts on the part of those who stood first in the church, and the fierce opposition of such as knew least of God and His ways. It was now not mere fleshly feeling of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, but the very serious question whether the foremost of the twelve had not compromised the testimony of Christ by the formal reception of Gentiles at Caesarea.

“But the apostles and the brethren which were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles also received the word of God. And when Peter went up unto Jerusalem, they of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in onto men uncircumcised and didst eat with them. But Peter began and set forth to them in order, saying, I was in the city of Joppa, praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending like a great sheet, let down by four corners out of heaven, and it came as far as me. On which having fixed mine eyes, I considered and saw the quadrupeds of the earth and the wild beasts and the reptiles and the birds of the heaven. And I heard also a voice saying to me, Arise, Peter, slay and eat. But I said, In no wise, Lord, because common or unclean never entered into my mouth. But a voice answered a second time out of heaven, What God cleansed make not thou common. And this was done thrice, and all were drawn up again into heaven. And, behold, immediately three men stood at the house in which I was, sent from Caesarea unto me; and the Spirit bade me go with them, doubting nothing. And there went with me also these six brethren, and we entered into the house of the man; and he reported to us how he saw the angel in his house, standing and saying, Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, that is surnamed Peter, who shall speak words unto thee, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house. And on my beginning to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon them as upon us also at the beginning And I remembered the word of the Lord how He said, John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave to them the same gift as also to us when we believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could forbid God? And when they heard these things, they were still and glorified God, saying, Then indeed also to the Gentiles did God give repentance unto life” (ver. 1-18).

It was undeniable on the face of things that Peter had openly traversed the distinction so long set up by God between Jew and Gentile. This he had to justify by God's authority; and so he does by

the simple recital of the vision already before us in the preceding chapter, which he repeats for the conviction of the brethren in Jerusalem. The moment was come for the seeds which the Lord Jesus Himself had sown to germinate and bear fruit visibly. Had He, who in Matt. 10 forbade the twelve to go to any way of the Gentiles, not also when risen told them expressly to go and make disciples of all the Gentiles? The vision of Peter was merely the reduction of this great commission, or at least a kindred one, to practice. For in Luke 24 the Lord about to ascend had declared that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the Gentiles, beginning from Jerusalem. And so it was. With Jerusalem they had begun. But now the tide was turning. From Jerusalem the saints had been scattered abroad. Samaria had already received the word of God, not by the church agreeing to it, nor even by the action of the apostles. And now God had left nothing ambiguous as to His will about the Gentiles. The gospel, henceforth, must go out indiscriminately. The holiness of Israel had come to naught in the cross of Christ. By virtue of the blood of the cross God could and would wash even the Gentiles clean. Ritual had come to its end. Henceforth there must be reality by faith. And as the cross of Christ pronounced all alike ruined, so now salvation was going forth to any that believed, Jew or Gentile alike. Such was the purport of the vision; and grace reasoned with Peter when he in the ecstasy ventured to controvert the Lord Himself. Who then so proper as he to convince the obstinate men of the circumcision? If they were contending with him, could he not tell them truly that he had himself dared to contend even with the Lord, Who had repeatedly and emphatically reproved his prejudices and forbidden him to deem common what God had cleansed?

Peter told them also how the three men from the Gentile Cornelius appeared at that very moment, in person, before the house in Joppa, and how the Spirit bade him go with them without a question. Such a threefold chord could not be broken; each part was independent of the other, and all of them from God. For Cornelius in Caesarea had a vision no less than Peter in Joppa. But Peter had in addition, while he thought on his vision, the Spirit directing him to go with the messengers of Cornelius before he knew that the three men were making inquiry at the gate.

Nay, there was more than this. God had manifestly used His word as only He could. “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as also upon us at the beginning.” It was the gospel of their salvation. To them also the Spirit was supplied, Who wrought powers among them beyond possibility of cavil or question. The promise of the Father was therefore fulfilled in the Gentiles, as much as in the Jews who believed, according to the word of the Lord in Acts 1:4, 5.

Again, let us remark how clearly this discourse of Peter distinguishes new birth from salvation. Cornelius was assuredly born of God before Peter visited him at Caesarea. Nevertheless Peter was to speak unto him words whereby he should be saved. It is a gross mistake to suppose that the salvation which he now found is not far beyond new birth. Present salvation is the first foundation privilege of the gospel. To be born again was always true from Abel downwards. But those who are merely born again do not enter Christian ground, until they have received at least the first and most needful blessing, to which the accomplishment of Christ's work entitles all who believe.

The remarkable care with which God introduced the new standing-point to the Gentiles makes this confusion inexcusable. Now, while faith never was without suited mercy from God, it is one of the most marked signs of unbelief to ignore the peculiar privilege which God is now giving, and to go

back to that mode or means which may have been at a former time. Here, as has been already and often pointed out, the Evangelicals are as dark as the Sacramentarians. For, if the latter party attach exorbitant efficacy to the mere sign of the blessing, the former are as ignorant of what is signified. Both agree in making the initiatory institution of the gospel to be the sign of life or the new birth; whereas it is really of the remission or washing away of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), and death with Christ (Rom. 6, Col. 2), i.e., of salvation (1 Peter 3). Cornelius learned from the apostle that for a Gentile it was no question any longer of God's uncovenanted mercy. He himself, already born of God and acquainted with the Messiah come for the deliverance of His ancient people by faith, had now to learn of salvation's door open to the Gentile believer as truly as to the Jewish. It is not promise, as hitherto even to an Israelite; it is the work accomplished, and soul-salvation henceforth given to all believers without distinction. As the seal of it, the Holy Ghost was manifestly imparted as on the day of Pentecost.

This was conclusive, for the objections of the circumcision then. Who was Peter, as he triumphantly closed his argument, who they, to resist God? None but He could give that gift, which He had granted alike to Jews and Gentiles by faith of the gospel.

But the principle is of immense importance permanently, and as much now as ever. The tree ground of reception is not the acceptance of certain articles of faith, expressed or understood; still less is it a certain measure of intelligence about the one body and one Spirit, which it is improbable that a single soul in Jerusalem then possessed definitely. It is a far weightier fact, the possession of “the like gift.” If not so baptized of the Holy Spirit, one is not really a member of Christ's body. To be born again never did suffice. One must have, through faith of Christ as the gospel proclaims Him and His work, the Spirit given to one as a believer. Without known remission of sins one may be quickened, but there cannot be what scripture calls “salvation,” any more than the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father. There may be conversion, a divinely-given hatred of evil and love of good, God's word prized, and prayer; there may be conscience toward God, yet a real but imperfect looking toward God, with a real but imperfect looking to Christ. But till one knows by faith of the gospel that all is clear between the soul and God through the sacrifice of Christ, the Holy Spirit does not seal the person; when there is submission to, the righteousness of God, He does: then the believer is actually made a member of the one body of Christ. Of course such an one is or ought to be baptized with water; but this is never in scripture connected with that corporate and everlasting relationship. It is individual and bound up with individual confession of Christ; so much so, that whatever God may do in sovereign grace, no intelligent saint would think of presenting a soul for fellowship of the church, unless he had previously taken the ground of a baptized person. But baptism of the Holy Ghost is wholly distinct from water baptism; and this is not even a sign of that, but of salvation by Christ, or burial onto His death.

Even the stoutest defenders of Jewish exclusiveness were overwhelmed by the accumulated and crowning proof that God gave to the Gentiles also repentance unto life. It was now an incontestable and blessed fact. They were more than silenced; they “were still.” Grace had triumphed, as it ought, over law, in Jerusalem, and among none but Jews that believed. It was not yet a day of ruin, when the least right are apt to be the most self-confident and jubilant. It was grace made them glorify God in reversing their previous judgment.

Chapter 47

On Acts 11:19-30

But God works variously to accomplish His purpose; and so we see at this point of the inspired history. The action of Peter was of the utmost moment, and its acceptance in Jerusalem by those whom God had set in the highest place in the assembly. A fresh apostle had been expressly called outside the twelve, called by the glorified Christ in heaven where all for man is and must be of sovereign grace, called as apostle of Gentiles in formal and acknowledged contradistinction from those of the circumcision. Nor was this all. The free action of the Holy Spirit receives a full and rich expression in the labors of brethren, who, when driven by persecution from Jerusalem, began to preach, but were bold enough to preach without trance or vision or personal direction outside the ancient people of God and even proselytes.

“They therefore that were scattered abroad through the tribulation that took place on the occasion of Stephen passed through as far as Phenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none but Jews only. But there were some of them men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming unto Antioch spoke unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And [the] Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. And the report concerning them came unto the ears of the assembly that was in Jerusalem; and they dispatched Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, on arriving and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced and exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide by the Lord. For he was a good man and full of [the] Holy Spirit and faith; and a large crowd was added to the Lord. And he went forth unto Tarsus to seek for Saul, and, on finding brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that even for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd, and that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (ver. 19-26).

It will be observed that the account of this early and free evangelizing, first to Jews, but after a little while to Greeks, is reserved for the introduction of Saul's first connection with Antioch, the earthly starting-point of the great apostle's labors. This is quite in Luke's manner. His order (and none more orderly) is not one of simple sequence, as we may see in the Gospel of Mark; still less does it linger on giving evidences of the change of dispensation, as in that of Matthew. He was led to deal with moral associations, which, if less patent, present a deeper arrangement, and fuller of instruction in God's ways, than a mere chronological series.

Whatever the value, and it was immense, of the episode we have lately had before us in Acts 9:32-xi. 18 (ix. 31 being a sort of transitional link that closes what goes before and introduces it), God took care that the gospel should reach the Gentiles first in a way altogether informal, even while the highest ecclesiastical authorities were there to commence and sanction its inauguration with the seal of the whole apostolic college in Jerusalem. It pleased the Lord that all should be ordered otherwise; and the work among the Gentiles began with not even distinct purpose nor definite intelligence on the part of its promoters, with nothing apparent save the loving zeal that knew the desperate need of the Gentiles as well as the immeasurable efficacy of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It was therefore according to the deepest wisdom as well as divine

goodness that the real beginning of the gospel outside Israel should be simply of love flowing out from God only, as far as understanding went, in the circumstances that ensued on Stephen's martyrdom. Then, as we know, the saints generally were scattered through the persecution that set in. In the course of their passage here and there, Phenicia and Cyprus and Antioch profited by their testimony At first, however, the word was spoken to none but to Jews only. Some of them, however, and these foreign Jews, Cyprians and Cyrenians, ventured farther, and in the last of the places named, at Antioch, addressed the Greeks also with the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus.

Was not this very bold? Certainly it was of God who made use of the providential circumstances for His glory. It was love, it was spiritual instinct, in the heart of those who evangelized, whose very names are unknown. God has taken particular care not to name them, perhaps lest we should attribute to them a deeper perception of His mind than was really due. The momentous fact was there; and simple-hearted laborers were those to whom God gave this mighty and profound impulse by His Spirit. Let us admire these ways of God, which are higher than those even of His people, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Man, even the wisest of His servants, would have expected otherwise. But the same God was now at work, who, if He brought Moses by providence into the house of Pharaoh's daughter, brought him out by faith: who even then did not use him, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, to the deliverance of His people, till he had unlearned man as well as himself, and realized alone what God is in the wilderness, for forty long years: then and then only was he fitted of God to be a ruler and a deliverer. So now did it to God seem meet to begin Gentile Christianity through men of comparatively small account in either the world or the church, before there was the smallest intercourse between Peter and Cornelius. The highest order that ever was established in the assembly on earth could not therefore boast. The Lord is above that or any other order; to Him none can dictate. Nor has He abdicated His rights over the earth into the hands of a vicegerent any more than of the twelve. This having been vindicated by His sovereign employment of the Cyprians and Cyrenians, who first planted the gospel among the nations, He does take care to send Peter to Caesarea and to have Peter's action according to His direct command formally sanctioned by the twelve in Jerusalem. His own call of Saul to be apostle of the Gentiles was independent of both the free action at Antioch and the formal in view of Caesarea at Jerusalem; as it was evidently also prior in time, and in many respects superior in claim and power, one may add, to both, though this was not yet fully disclosed.

Of such weight it was in God's eyes to found, confirm, and authenticate this work among the Gentiles, so supremely interesting and indispensable to us, who without it were mere sinners, “without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” But if to us of such moment, what was it to the glory of His own grace? what to the praise of His Son, the Lord Jesus?

And if these brethren of Cyprus and Cyrene kept speaking to the Greeks also announcing the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus, the Lord's hand was with them; and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. If ever men dared to draw indefinitely on grace—without waiting for outward sign or open commission, if any servants of the Lord ever exposed themselves to a seemingly just taunt of going beyond all bounds, more especially as “the twelve” were not only alive but together not so far off, surely it was these pioneers of grace to the Greeks.

Antioch in Syria was no doubt a suitable place in God's mind. The city was founded B.C. 300 by Seleucus Nicator; and there, as the Jews possessed equal privileges with the Greeks politically, great numbers lived under the government of an ethnarch of their own. God never forgets kindness shown to His poor people even in their fallen estate, and knows how to repay with an interest unmistakably divine. Here first the Greeks heard, believed, and turned to the Lord.

It is well known that large and good MS. authority supports the reading of the common text, Hellenists, Grecians, or Greek-speaking Jews. But the sense afforded by ■corr A Dpm, and if not all the ancient versions, the Armenian, is made decisive by the requirements of the truth stated. For in Jerusalem itself before the scattering not only were “Grecians” objects of testimony as well as other Jews, but notoriously the murmuring was of that portion against the Hebrews, or native Jews who spoke Aramaic. Nay more, all “the seven” chosen to allay the unworthy outbreak, and to relieve the apostles from a work that hindered for an incomparably better, bore Hellenistic names; and one of them was expressly from Antioch. Again, it is recorded in Acts 9:29 how Saul of Tarsus spoke and disputed against these Hellenists in Jerusalem. Thus there would be nothing new or peculiar in similar speech at Antioch; whereas it is declared here that at first none but Jews were addressed, and afterward “the Greeks also,” and this effectively under the good hand of the Lord. Now “Hebrew” stands over against “Hellenist,” but not “Jew,” which includes both. So that “Jew” can only be confronted by “Greek,” not by “Hellenists” which falls under that category. The point therefore is so far from immaterial, that “Greeks" can alone bear rigid or intelligent investigation, and at once conveys a new and important fact. Further, we must on no account suppose their conversion to the Lord by the gospel to have taken place after the disciples had heard of the call of Cornelius. It has been already stated that it occurred before Peter's visit to Caesarea. Evidently all that our chapter implies is, that the report about their conversion only then came to the ears of the assembly that was in Jerusalem. The fact of the conversion itself had of course taken place considerably before; and we have seen how beautifully its priority contributes its quota to the full scheme of God's grace, which called apostolic authority into action no less appropriately.

Barnabas then, who was of Cyprus, though a Levite, comes to Antioch on his mission of inquiry. Nor can we conceive one more admirably chosen, if a genial heart devoted to Christ were wanted to judge fairly of the work in Antioch and to re-assure those in Jerusalem adequately. For he, when he came and saw the grace of God, “rejoiced and exhorted all with purpose to abide by the Lord” (ver. 23). And striking is the comment of the inspired historian, who in no way grudges his due meed, any more than Paul would, because Barnabas subsequently was betrayed into unbecoming heat for his kinsman's sake. “For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith.” Grace sealed his visit also; “and a large crowd was added to the Lord.” Can we doubt that the work had still its mixed character, with Barnabas a fellow-workman in what drew out his joy?

Again there is another trait very characteristic of this “good man,” and not only so but of the real working of the Holy Spirit, both in sending him to Antioch and now in his going off to Cilicia. “And he went forth unto Tarsus to seek for Saul; and on finding him brought him unto Antioch” (ver. 25). Is it thus that we feel and act in presence of a large field of service where we are honored by the Master's use? Do we in the midst of it remind ourselves of another who might be yet more efficient? Or does jealousy still hinder—still play its dark and deadly part to the dishonor of Christ and the loss of souls within and without? It was not so with Barnabas, who had already done a brother's office when all were alas! afraid of Saul (Acts 9:26, 27). Now, having learned his value as

a bold preacher when going in and out of Jerusalem, he bethinks him of the help Saul might render at Antioch; and acting on it, he is enabled to execute his desire. “And it came to pass that even for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly, and taught a large crowd, and that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (ver. 26). It was Christ's flock, not that of either; and His love animated them both, as others also no doubt, to care for it. In those days not one said that the assembly was his own, but served in it the more lovingly and holly because they always remembered that it is God's, and not man's.

It is not without interest that the Spirit of God here adds that Antioch, notoriously famous of old for witty or scurrilous nicknames, first gave the designation of “Christians” to the disciples, within styled faithful, brethren, saints, &e. It was a name which Gentiles gave in reproach; as Jews called them “Nazarenes,” and Julian the apostate at a later day, “Galileans.” Jews would never think of “Christ” as the ground of a contemptuous term: what they scorned was that Jesus is the Christ.

“Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem unto Antioch; and there stood up one from among them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that a great famine was about to be over all the habitable earth; which came to pass under Claudius. And according as any one of the disciples had means, they determined each of them to send help [lit. for service] to the brethren that dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, dispatching [it] unto the elders by hand of Barnabas and Saul” (ver. 27-30).

It is a joy to see that the free activity of the Spirit which began the work and founded the assembly in Antioch was no more restive at the special gifts that ministered in their midst, than it distrusted what the Lord had wrought by simple believers evangelizing as they could. It was not Barnabas and Saul only who labored there, but prophets came down from Jerusalem, and one of them, Agabus, predicts a great dearth (as we know there was more than once) in the time of Claudius. Is it not of deep interest, the faith and love which responded to this, though it was no charity sermon, without waiting for a call from saints already impoverished by their generous love after the great Pentecost which first saw the assembly here below? They believed in the coming scarcity, and thought of the saints in Jerusalem as truly one body; and perhaps we may apply here, if one suffer, so do all, and as they sympathize, they succor also. So even the Jews in Ezra's day were roused by the prophets to build, before the renewed intervention of their foes drew out the great king's decree that canceled the usurper's prohibition. It is blessed to act on heavenly motives in earthly duties; and that what we do should be in the faith that ever honors God's word. So the links of love are maintained on both sides between Jerusalem and Antioch; and this, in things spiritual, yet more than in the carnal, which it was their duty to repay, as Paul afterward did not fail to remind others. The task was entrusted to Barnabas and Saul through “the elders,” of whom we bear for the first time in the associations of the assembly. How they were installed in Judaea we know not from the New Testament; but we have definite instruction in the sphere of the Gentile assemblies, as we may see in Acts 14:23.

Chapter 48

On Acts 12

The last chapter began with liberty for the Gentiles, vindicated in Jerusalem, and ended with love flowing out to the brethren in Judaea from the assembly at Antioch. This drew Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem. God had not forgotten Jerusalem, because He was gathering souls in Antioch; nor was He unmindful of the apostles of the circumcision because He had raised up a suited and energetic envoy for the nations. Nevertheless it is not in the same way that His name was to be celebrated even in the same outburst of persecution. The former had scattered the saints except the apostles; the new trial broke out against the apostles, and in particular against James and Cephas, two of the foremost, one slain and the other kept to be slain: so at least the king had purposing.

“Now at that season Herod the king put forth his hands to injure some of those from the assembly. And he slew James, the brother of John, with [the] sword. And seeing that it was agreeable to the Jews, he went on to seize Peter also (but they were the days of unleavened bread); whom, having taken, he also put in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep, purposing after the passover to bring him forth unto the people.

“Peter, then, was kept in the prison; but prayer was earnestly made by the assembly unto God concerning him. And when Herod was about to bring him forward, on that night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards before the door were keeping the prison. And, behold, an angel of [the] Lord stood by, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck the side of Peter, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals; and he did so. And he saith to him, Throw thy cloak round thee and follow me. And going out he followed and knew not that what was being done by the angel was true, but thought he was seeing a vision. And when they came through a first guard and a second, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which of itself opened to them; and having gone out they went forth one street; and immediately the angel departed from him. And Peter, on coming to himself, said, Now I know truly that [the] Lord sent forth His angel and took me out of Herod's hand and all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And, being conscious, he came unto the house of Mary the mother of John, that was surnamed Mark, where were many assembled and praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gate-way, there came forward a maid to listen, by name Rhoda; and, recognizing Peter's voice, she did not for joy open the gate, but ran in and reported that Peter was standing before the gateway. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she kept maintaining that it was so; and they said, It is his angel. But he continued knocking, and on opening they saw him and were amazed. And, beckoning to them with his hand to be silent, he related to them how the Lord brought him out of the prison; and he said, Report these things to James and to the brethren. And he went out and proceeded unto another place.

“And when it was day there was no small disturbance among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. But Herod, having sought him out without finding [him], examined the guards and

commanded [them] to be led away [? to execution] and he went down from Judaea unto Caesarea and stayed there” (ver. 1-19).

Thus, if one of the sons of Zebedee was to be preserved the last of the twelve, the other fell a victim to the sword of Herod Agrippa, the first martyr among the apostles. The king was in no way a violent arbitrary monarch, like his grandfather, Herod the Great; but as he sought to ingratiate himself with the Romans, so did this grandson of his with the Jews. And those who seemed to be pillars in the church afforded the readiest means and objects to gratify Jewish spite. But God's thoughts are not as man's; and, though the Lord had already shown by what death Peter should glorify God, the time was not yet come. “When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” Herod meant not merely to imprison Peter but to bring him before the people, perhaps for sentence, for execution certainly as a public example. But the Passover intervened; and Herod was too scrupulous a devotee to slight the days of unleavened bread.

Meanwhile the assembly made earnest prayer, whilst the king delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep. Deliverance was at hand, which the church scarce expected, more than the king feared it. As usual, it was just before the critical moment. “At evening time there shall be light.” That night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, not only bound with two chains, but sentinels before the door keeping guard of the prison. All seemed sure on the world's side; and on the other Peter rested in peace through the grace of the Lord who neither slumbers nor sleeps; when, behold, His angel stood by and roused him, freeing Peter of his chains, and minutely directing him, who, as in a vision, complied with each word as he was bidden. Nor did he come to himself till they had passed the twofold watch, and the iron gate opened of its own accord, not to let the angel in but to let Peter out; and they had advanced one street off, when the angel departed. Then Peter realized his deliverance, and in full consciousness of all went to Mary's, where many were met for prayer—we cannot surely doubt—about him who knocked at the door. Nor was it fear but joy that led the maid, Rhoda (or, as we would say, Rose), who recognized the well-known voice, to run back and tell the news, that Peter was standing without. Luke, who all through presents the truth vividly, in no way hides the scanty faith of the saints, who could scarce have forgotten how Jehovah's angel before now opened the prison-doors and brought out the apostles when placed in public custody by the envious high priest and his Sadducean party. Faith appropriates as well as remembers for present need.

Now it was neither the priests nor the people, but the king to please the Jews; but what of God? If magnified in the death of James, He would be more in preserving Peter alive, whatever the pleasure of the people or their rulers. The testimony had been already fully given, even in the temple; and there was no command now to stand and speak there “all the words of this life.” They had heard and despised the gospel of Him risen and glorified, whom they had rejected and crucified. Peter therefore was not to make a similar stand now, though the miracle was as great, but, according to the Lord's ordinary rule, when persecuted in this city, to flee into the other; as, after explaining all to the astonished company, he does at this time.

Cardinal Baronius treats with prudent reserve the story in the Breviary of James' preaching in Spain (where Compostella claims his burial!) with an equally curt reference to what is noted in the Roman Martyrology (''que consulat qui haec cupit''); but he has much to say of the alleged history

of the other apostles, and above all of Peter at this juncture, as it had practical aims for the papacy. That he went to Rome then, and began his first year of reigning five and twenty years there as Pope, is the wildest of dreams; which is not only without a shred of scripture proof but in the strongest way set aside by all that scripture does tell us. For God who foreknew the vain and selfish wishes of men has taken care, not indeed so to speak that superstition and infidelity cannot pursue their several paths of shameless and disastrous self-will, but to give the faithful ample evidence for confuting the adversary and for establishing in truth and peace all who honor His own written word. The apostle Paul, long after A.D. 44 -15 or 16 years, writes to the Romans in terms which imply that no apostle had as yet visited the capital of the Gentile world, and expressive of his own ardent desire to impart some spiritual gift to the saints there, as one who built not on another man's foundation, but recognized in Rome part of that measured province which God apportioned to him. This, which is but a single testimony out of several, is enough to dissipate the tale into thin air. How can upright Christians attach the least weight even to Eusebius of Caesarea, who retails the fable of “another Cephas” to screen the apostle of the circumcision from the reluctant but necessary and instructive censure of the apostle of the Gentiles? And this is but a sample of his departure from or contradiction of plain scripture. It is silent where Peter went; and though one may not agree with the late Dean Alford, that the expression in the end of ver. 17 only implies that Peter left the house of Mary and may have staid secretly in Jerusalem, we can think of intimations of places, not in Palestine only, but among the Gentiles, where the apostle, according to the New Testament, was known. But for believers to build on conjectures is worse than idle, and tends to shake solid truth in the hands of those who least of all should allow themselves such a license. That natural men should have most to say where scripture is reticent one can too well understand: they receive not the things of the Spirit of God and cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

It is beautiful to remark the ways of God with His servants traceable already in this brief book. First of all (ch. 4) we see Peter and John in custody and no miracle to abridge its short duration. Next, the twelve are imprisoned; but during the night Jehovah's angel opened the door and led them out to bear testimony in the temple to the exalted Jesus; whence they are brought before the council, beaten and dismissed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored for the Name. Now, one apostle is slain with the sword, and another is delivered by Jehovah's angel on the eve of a similar end by a king whose habitual mildness toward the people (if we are to credit Josephus) did not certainly binder extreme persecution of the truth when his religious zeal and his political vanity were offended. And his chagrin burst ruthlessly on the guards, as we learn in ver. 18, 19; though not a tittle of evidence pointed to any guilty connivance on their part at the prisoner's escape. No wonder he wanted to go down from Judea unto, Caesarea.

But this is not all. “And he was at bitter enmity with men of Tire and Sidon; but with one consent they came to him, and, having won over Blastus the chamberlain of the king, sought peace, because their country was nourished by the king's And on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel and seated on the throne, made an harrangue unto them. And the people shouted thereon, A god's voice and not a man's And immediately an angel of [the] Lord smote him, because he gave not the glory to God; and becoming worm-eaten he expired” (ver. 20-23). Such was the last act of this solemn drama, if so one may speak of a succession of scenes as full of interest as of profound instruction for man with God: one apostle slain; and another delivered by

an angel: the church's prayers answered beyond their faith; the mortified tyrant next wreaking his vengeance on his guards, not on his intended victim; himself struck at the moment that he accepted the deifying homage of the multitude, when he that gave not the glory to God was given up to worms, even before he gave up the ghost. “But the word of God grew and multiplied.”

What a descent, after this tale so simply but most graphically told, pregnant with moral truth, to read the account of the same circumstances in the statements of the eminent Josephus. “When the third year of his reign over all Judaea was completed, he went to the city of Caeesarea, which formerly was called Straton's Tower. There he instituted shows in honor of the emperor, knowing there was a festival for his safety. Thither flocked a multitude of the men of rank and distinction throughout the province. On the second day of the show, having put on a robe wrought all over with silver of astonishing texture, he came into the theater early in the day. There the first beams of the sun shone on the silver, and dazzled with such surprising luster as to fill with fear and awe those who gazed on him. Forthwith flatterers here and there, far from good to him, began their loud acclamations, calling him a god, and saying, Be propitious; and if hitherto we revered thee as a man, henceforth we confess thee superior to human nature. The king rebuked them not, nor rejected the impious flattery; but after a little looked up and saw an owl sitting on a cord over his head, and understood that this was a messenger (or angel) of evil as it had formerly been of good (xviii. vii. 1), and was struck with grief to the heart. Incessant torment of the bowels supervened with vehemence from the first. Then looking toward his friends he says, I your God am already ordered to depart this life, fate instantly confuting those expressions just now falsely said of me; for I that was called immortal by you am being hurried away already a dead man. The decision that God has willed must be accepted. Yet our life has been by no means despicable, but in a splendor that is counted happy. Saying this, he was tormented with an increase of agony, and in haste was borne into the palace; and rumor spread among all that the king was at the point of death. Then immediately the multitude with wives and children clothed in sackcloth by their country's law were supplicating God on behalf of the king. And all was full of wailing and lamentations. And the king lying in a chamber on high gave himself up to tears as he saw them prostrate below on their faces; but after five days' continual pains in the bowels he departed this life in the fifty-fourth year of his age and the seventeenth of his reign” (Opp. 871-2, ed. Hudson).

Even J. D. Michaelis remarks that this may be better Greek than Luke's, but is far less probable history. I should say it is a Jew's history of what substantially was undeniable fact among the Jews, written to please, and ingratiate them with, their Roman masters. Luke gives us the mind of Christ, as far removed as possible from the taint of ecclesiastical legends. See even the comparatively sober Eusebius' H. E. II. 10, where he tells us that the consequences of the king's attempt against the apostles were not long deferred, but the avenging minister of divine justice soon overtook him after his plots against the apostles. Now it is on the face of the inspired narrative that Luke Calmly states the facts (not without laying bare the motive) of James' death and Peter's imprisonment with a like close designed. But all is said with grace and dignity: expressed feeling is wholly absent. The stroke which cut short the self-exalting monarch beyond doubt turns on his acceptance of the impious incense which the unhallowed fawning of his court and the multitude offered to him. People may talk of similar profanity unpunished in Roman emperors or others; but Herod Agrippa professed scrupulous Judaism, and therefore fell under His hand, who waits for a later day before dealing with the nations that know not God. How different man's word from God's!

But, further, Eusebius goes on to notice the coincidence of Josephus' account with that of scripture; but in citing formally the Jewish historian he leaves out “the owl,” and simply quotes “an angel sitting above his head.” Such is the honesty of the Christian father. It is not improbable that “the owl” was introduced once, or perhaps—both times, in the tale of Agrippa to meet Roman taste for auguries; but we can have no hesitation in branding the bad faith of the Bp. of Caesarea in dropping, without a word of explanation, “the owl” from the cited language of Josephus. It is easy, after this fashion, to make stories agree, and to express one's admiration of it; but such a deceitful handling of things, not uncommon in the early writers, and in full bloom among, the medievals, deserves the reprobation of all who love the truth.

How chastened the triumphant note that follows: “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (ver. 24)! Compare 6:7, 19:20. Its sphere enlarged as its agents increased; the weakness of too many that received it could not hide its own weight and value, any more than the mighty adversaries who had to fall before a Mightier that was behind it.

The last verse is a transition to the still more important movement from Antioch which follows. It shows us two of the highest rank in the assembly not ashamed to render diaconal service toward the poor saints in Jerusalem. Such remembrance had the pillars there; and certainly Paul could say later with truth that he was zealous to do this very thing, as we know how near it had ever been to the heart of Barnabas. We shall hear more ere long of John Mark. “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, having fulfilled the service, taking also with them John surnamed Mark” (ver. 25).

Chapter 49

On Acts 13:1-12

Peter, with the exception of his part in the council held in Jerusalem (chap. 15), disappears from the inspired history before us. Another figure comes not merely into prominence, but into centrality even from this, the first chapter of what may be justly regarded as the second volume of the book of Acts. Not from Jerusalem but from Antioch, already so remarkable for Christian zeal impressing itself strikingly on those without, as well as for the first corporate stand made or mentioned among the Gentiles, we hear of a mission by the Holy Ghost.

“Now there were at Antioch in the assembly that was [there] prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon that was called Niger and Lucius the Cyrenean, and Manaen foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they let them go. They then, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down unto Selencia and thence sailed away unto Cyprus, and, when they were at Salamis, they announced the word in the synagogues of the Jews; and they had also John as attendant. And having gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet, whose name [was] Bar-Jesus, who was with the pro-consul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. He, having called to [him] Barnabas and Saul, desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name interpreted) opposed them, seeking to turn away the pro-consul from the faith. But Saul who also [is] Paul, filled with [the] Holy Spirit, with fixed look at him said, O full of all guile and trickery, devil's son, enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease perverting the Lord's right ways? And now behold [the] Lord's hand [is] upon thee; and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell upon him a mist and darkness, and he went about seeking persons to lead him by hand. Then the pro-consul seeing what was done believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (ver. 1-12).

None can deny a plurality of gifted men, five of high rank in full service of Christ, and this expressly in “the church that was at Antioch.” “Churches” in the same place, each with its own minister, we see here as everywhere ignored. It is not meant that the faithful may not have met to break bread regularly in many houses here or there, as we know they did in Jerusalem; but none the less did they in that city as in every other constitute “the assembly” there. Unity prevailed, which only the Holy Spirit could form or maintain; not unity invisible or for heaven merely, and admitting of actual diversity or even antagonism, but rather living and manifest unity on earth: which as yet the gifts, and the elders where they existed, subserved, instead of being the instruments of expressing their independency.

It is also to be observed that these five prophets and teachers are named neither in worldly style nor in ecclesiastical rank: otherwise Barnabas had not been first, still less had Saul been last. They seem rather arranged in the order of spiritual birth—at any rate so far as they were known to the saints in Antioch. He who was Herod the tetrarch's foster-brother is neither first nor last. But the gracious power of the Lord according to His word in Matt. 20:16 was soon to make him first in

the testimony of His truth who here occupies the last place.

“Whilst they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” The ministering to the Lord here must not be confounded with His service in preaching or teaching; it was no doubt mainly prayer and intercession. That the Lord's supper was concerned is a crude and unfounded idea; for this supposes the fellowship of saints in the remembrance of Christ, and in its principle contemplates all saints; whereas the “ministering” here was simply on the part of the fellow-laborers, it may be presumed, that the Lord might be pleased to direct and bless the work, and that each of them might be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. This is confirmed by the fasting which accompanied their spiritual action toward the Lord, expressive as it is rather of the outward nature abased that the inner might be the more undividedly before Him, rather than of the chief public occasion of the church's thanksgiving and united praise.

It is probable that the Holy Spirit may have used one or more of the prophets to convey the mind of God as to the work to which He had summoned Barnabas and Saul. So it appears to have been in Timothy's case (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:1.4), though we see direct action in that of Philip (Acts 8:29). Here, whatever the channel, the word was not to the church, as Alford assumes, but to the fellow-laborers as a whole to separate those two for the special work before them. The language is very expressive of the Spirit's personal interest and authority as One here below immediately concerned in the highest and most intimate degree. It is the Spirit who says, “I have called them.” Neither Barnabas nor Saul was now called for the first time authoritatively to the service of Christ; for, even the younger of the two had labored notoriously and efficiently for years, both in the gospel and in the church. Ordination by brethren of a rank inferior to themselves would be the result gained by men who are precipitately anxious to extract that rite from the passage. If there was any such thing in the case, the proceedings would be irreconcilable with all its acknowledged principles, and for episcopacy in particular. But the “separation” here described is of a wholly distinct nature and with a different purpose, as the intelligent reader cannot but see if unbiased. Certain it is that Gal. 1:1 repudiates, with marked precision, what many ancients and moderns have erroneously founded on the interesting and instructive circumstance before us. Paul declares that he was apostle (not of men as source, nor of man as channel, but) by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead. It would have admirably suited his Judaizing detractors to have argued that he owed his ministerial title to the three teachers at Antioch who laid their hands on him and Barnabas; but bold as his old adversaries were at Corinth or in Galatia or elsewhere, we are not told that they dared to go so far in their insinuations. Clearly his own statement precludes summarily and forever all effort thus to lower his apostleship or, what comes to much the same result, to exalt ordination at the expense of the apostle Paul in this place or any other.

The third verse confirms the remarks made on the early words of ver. 2, for here we have again fasting with prayer. But though an initiatory ceremony assuming to convey holy orders is not here intended, yet do we see a holy and solemn tone sustained in striking contrast with that which prevails in some modern forms mistakenly built on it. The “charge” and the “dinner” suit well those for whom fasting and prayer offer no attractions. “Ember days” may be formal enough, but at least resemble more and are morally better. The Lord was the one object then, and the Holy Spirit

wrought in power, and a service of self-abnegation to God's glory was the blessed fruit. The outward acts flowed from the life within. So with the laying on of hands. It was a general sign of identification, or of blessing given. In the case before us their fellow-laborers solemnly commended the honored pair to the grace of God with this seal of their own fellowship in the work. “They sent them forth” is here objectionable, because it might be, as it has been, interpreted to mean the mission to which they had authorized Barnabas and Saul. But the word chosen excludes such a thought and simply means “let them go” without a shadow of commission in it. The idea of mission is conveyed forcibly in the beginning of ver. 5: “They then, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down unto Seleucia and then sailed away unto Cyprus, and, when they were at Salamis they announced the word in the synagogues of the Jews; and they had also John as attendant. And having gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet, whose name [was] Bar-Jesus, who was with the pro-consul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man” (ver. 4-7).

Thus we see Saul, not only called by the glorified Christ from heaven, but now sent out with his elder companion by the Spirit from the city remarkable for the first directly named assembly among the nations. Here took place the apostle's “separation” (comp. Rom. 1:1) unto gospel work, though not his only. All was outside Jerusalem and the twelve. His call was heavenly, his mission toward the Gentiles and from the bosom of the first Gentile assembly, but the energy and direction was of the Holy Spirit, though his fellow-servants testified their communion with the two in their work. John Mark waited on them in person, and no doubt helped on the work in his measure. To call him chaplain or deacon would be ridiculous, if such perversion could admit of such a feeling. It is humbling that godly men should descend so low. Let modern practice rest on its true basis: Scripture is no warrant for it.

We may notice the practice of the apostle which answered to the principle so familiar in his inspired words, “to the Few first, and also to the Greek.” When at Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. It was indeed the only place of a religious sort, where any such liberty existed. And such also was God's order till Jerusalem was destroyed or at least the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, when the “no difference” which the gospel declares found a yet more manifest and final application. But till then the door was open, and those who possessed a Jewish title were free to read or expound the scriptures.

But it was at its capital Nea Paphos (not exactly the spot so celebrated as the dissolute seat of Aphrodite's worship), that the gospel came into collision, not with Jewish prejudice only, but with this intensified and embittered by religions imposture and sorcery. “And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer (or, magician), a Jewish false prophet, whose name [was] Bar-Jesus; who was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. He having called to [him] Barnabas and Saul sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is interpreted his name) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the pro-consul from the faith.” Salamis being on the east, as Paphos on the west, they had to cross the island as a whole; as the best copies say, though this is omitted in the common text. The interest of the Roman governor aroused the jealous opposition of the corrupt Jew who had had influence over a mind shocked with demoralizing idolatry but open to displays of power not without some show of revelation. What could be more overwhelming to the Jewish impostor's influence than the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ? But the proconsul (not “deputy” or legate, as in the

Authorized Version) had a conscience in exercise and by grace an ear for the truth, which soon turned toward that which was of God, when the testimony reached his soul. Bar-Jesus (=son of Jesus, or Joshua) called himself “Elymas,” the wise man, or magician, which was a title apparently akin to the Turkish “Ulemah.” This wickedness drew out the solemn rebuke of Saul (henceforward called Paul), accompanied by a sentence from God which the Holy Ghost gave him not only to utter but to execute. The rareness of such judicial inflictions under the gospel makes their occurrence all the more impressive.

The apostle then, “filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him, and said, O full of all guile and all trickery (villainy or craft), devil's son, enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease perverting the Lord's right ways? And now, behold, [the] Lord's hand [is] upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell upon him a mist and darkness; and he went about seeking leaders-by-hand” (ver. 9-11).

Sergius Paulus was precisely in the state for such an intervention to affect him profoundly. And we too can mark the difference of God's dealing here, as compared with the Samaritan who offered a deeper affront if possible by the proposal to buy the power of conferring the Spirit on others. For he had been baptized, and is warned of his awful state, but exhorted to pray and repent. Bar-Jesus becomes the striking figure of the Jews, blinded themselves in their effort to turn aside the blind Gentiles from the light of life. Yet is it not forever, but “for a season;” as God will give them in due time to look on Him whom they once rejected unto death to their own loss and ruin meanwhile.

“Then the pro-consul when he saw what was done believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (ver. 12).

This is worthy of all consideration. It was not the wonder which struck him most, but the truth he was taught. The miracle arrested him, no doubt, as well it might; but how many like Simon Magus may have been amazed, beholding signs and great powers wrought! Faith grounded on such evidence is only natural, and has no divine root. The senses are struck, the reason is convinced, the mind receives the testimony, and the mouth confesses it. But there is no life, apart from conscience exercised about one's own evil before God, and Christ the object of the soul as the gift of God's love to a guilty sinner in pure grace. This was true of Sergius, not of Simon. The one was amazed at the miracle, the other at least as much or more at the teaching which brought God before his soul and himself into His presence. This only is effectual. It is eternal life.

And this is just the difference between a true divine work and a mind convinced by evidence or carried along by tradition. The latter may be all well in itself, and a reasonable homage to facts, which cannot be got rid of fairly but compel honest acknowledgment from all who bow to adequate proofs. Yet this may be and is where the soul has never met God in the conscience, where sin and even our own sins are not an unbearable burden, where the love is not trusted that gave His only-begotten Son and laid the burden on Him to suffer atoningly that the believer might have life, pardon, and peace. No displays of power, however wonderful, are so amazing in the eyes of faith as the grace of God in saving the lost through His own Son. This the governor was enabled to receive from God; and not a word more do we hear of the great man. The gospel gives to the greatest on earth; it receives no glory from man. One Man only it beholds exalted in the highest. In Him we may and ought to boast, for He is the Lord; and His grace in saving us, yea making us one

with Himself on high, to God's glory, is the wonder of wonders.

Chapter 50

On Acts 13:13-31

Henceforward, save perhaps under the shadow of Jerusalem (Acts 15:12, 25), Paul has the chief place, as is indeed conveyed by the well-known phrase, not so used elsewhere in the New Testament (Mark 4:10, Luke 22:49), but familiar in the best writings of Greece (Plat. Crat. 440 C., Ken. Anab. vii. 4, 16, Thuc. v. 21, viii. 63), οἱ περὶ Παῦλον (lit. “those around Paul”), Paul and his company.

“Now Paul and his company, having sailed from Paphos, came unto Perga of Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned unto Jerusalem. But they passing through from Perga came unto Antioch of Pisidia, and having gone into the synagogue on the sabbath-day sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren (lit. men-brethren), if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, speak” (ver. 13-15).

The separation of John is remarked by the Holy Spirit. It was not a trifle in God's mind, and the difference it occasioned afterward, when Barnabas would have joined him again with Paul, proved serious for servants so ardently and justly attached. John had not faith and courage for the work opening before them and returned to Jerusalem where were his mother and the associations so dear to the natural heart. But on the other hand we must not exaggerate with those that affirm that a stumble is fatal. It may be so in a horse; but one might suppose that Christian men knew better both their own probable experience and the teaching of Scripture expressly in this very case. Grace turned past failure to future profit; and at a later day the great apostle was as earnest to commend his ministry as he could not but blame it when in progress.

We next see Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia in the synagogue on the sabbath. It is remarkable what measure of liberty was enjoyed. After the reading of the law and the prophets, a message came to them from the synagogue-rulers to speak if they had any word of exhortation for the people. Can there be a more painful contrast with the habits of Christendom? Assuredly one might from Scripture expect more liberty where grace rules than among those born and bred in the trammels of the law. Yet who ever hears of such an invitation now-a-days? So completely has the church departed from the enjoyment of that holy liberty, which is characteristic of the Spirit of the Lord. In this case too the visitors were but strangers, unknown to any, it would seem, save as grave godly-looking Jews. Routine governs in modern times on solemn public occasions, were the strangers ever so well known by report for their gifts and labors.

It was Paul who rose to address the congregation. “And Paul stood up and beckoning with the hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hear. The God of this people chose out our fathers and exalted the people in their sojourn in [the] land of Egypt and with a high arm brought them out of it; and for a time of about forty years bore them nurse-like in the desert; and when He had destroyed seven nations in [the] land of Canaan, He gave them their land for an inheritance, in about four hundred and fifty years. And after these things He gave judges until Samuel the prophet; and then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of [the] tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And having removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to

whom also bearing witness, He said, I found David, son of Jesse, a man according to My heart, who shall do all My will. From his seed, according to promise, did God bring to Israel, a. Savior, Jesus, when John had preached before His entrance a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was fulfilling his course, he said, Whom suppose ye that I am? I am not [he], but behold, there cometh One after me the sandal of Whose feet I am not worthy to loose" (ver. 16-25).

It is all-important to observe the basis of fact on which the gospel hinges, no less than the hopes of Israel. It is not so in the religious systems of men. In India, for instance, all is but speculation and reasoning, as in ancient heathenism mere fable. So it is with the Buddhist and the Confucian. Nor is it different with Mohammedanism, as far as it puts forth any distinctive claim. Nowhere do men even pretend to a sub-stratum of fact such as that on which respectively repose both the Old and the New Testaments. Shake the facts and their foundations are alike gone. If the facts abide irrefragable, the most momentous consequences ensue both to faith and to unbelief. And although there are weighty differences in the history of the Old Testament as compared with the one commanding figure of Christ in the New, there is nothing more marked and unstinting than the seal of truth which the New everywhere puts upon the certainty of the Old in all the wonders it records. This is the more striking, because the New Testament has no enemies more determined and deadly than the Jews, to whose custody the ancient oracles were committed. The witnesses of the New Testament, on the contrary, maintain a uniform and unhesitating testimony to the absolute truth of the Old Testament; which they prove to have no adequate result, apart from the appearing and work of the Lord Jesus. And we may add that there is no sufficient key to the present abnormal state of the Jews, without taking into account the rejected and suffering but risen Messiah; on which rock they have made shipwreck through unbelief, however else they themselves essay to explain their actual ruin as a people.

Accordingly there come to view these solemn yet plain facts, which only prejudice can overlook or deny. On the one hand the real, living, priceless value not only of the New but of the Old Testament is found by sovereign goodness in the church of God. On the other hand, alas! the ancient people of God have ears but they hear not, eyes but they see not, and hearts which do not understand at all for the present; else conversion, healing, and glory would doubtless be theirs. For the light and the love of God, inseparable from Him who sits at His right hand on high, are only enjoyed among those who were once dogs of the Gentiles, but are now, in pure mercy yet according to the righteousness of God in Christ, made free in the riches of His grace and the counsels of His glory in Christ the Lord.

First the dealings of God from His choice of the fathers are at once connected with the exodus of the people from Egypt, and His nurture of them in the wilderness till He gave them to inherit the land. It is the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua in miniature, centering in Israel beloved for the fathers' sake. The gospel confirms, instead of annulling, God's love to Israel, though it announces "some better thing for us" as in Heb. 11.

The reader will notice the beautiful expression of ver. 18 weakened in the more favorite ancient MSS. ■ B Ccorr D H L P &c. but happily preserved in A Cpm E, as well as in most of the ancient versions, as it seems truest to the Hebrew in Deut. 1:31 which the apostle, beyond just doubt, had in view. Here Tregelles and Westcott and Hort part from most moderns as well as others of weight.

In verses 19, 20 there is a notable difference from the common words. It is not giving by lot which is the point, though in itself true, as (by the least and lowest possible testimony) in the received text, but causing them to inherit their land. But here there is a more united front among the Editors of late; for, excepting Dean Alford, almost all accept ■ A B C, &c. and the ancient versions save the Syrr. and Aeth. This connects the date of about 450 years with the accomplishment of the promised inheritance (under law, which made nothing perfect). The common text makes it the duration of the judges. But it appears to me that the dative of epoch suits the sense of the critical text as distinctly as it disagrees with the common one. Both before and after this phrase the accusative is given to express a term of continuance, here only the dative. Now if the idea intended were the supply of judges for 450 years, the accusative would here also be the natural construction. At any rate, it is a date within which a certain action occurred, and not duration as in the other cases. If the oldest vouchers be accepted, it was in about 450 years that Israel was made to inherit this land, after the promise to “our fathers” i.e. from the birth of Isaac as the starting-point. Indeed so Junius and others take the common reading, not as the space for which judges were given, but in which God had fulfilled His promise at least provisionally, till judges were given in the low estate of His people. It cannot therefore be assumed that Paul assigns a duration of 450 years to the judges, and so invalidates the date in 1 Kings 6:1 of 480 years from the Exodus to the founding of Solomon's temple. More than one period of considerable duration has been added to the space of the Judges which really fell within other assigned dates. But it suffices here to note that the extended space for judges drawn from the verses before us is illegitimate. Ussher (xii. 70, xiv. 340) firmly holds to the integrity of both the Hebrew and the Greek texts in both these scriptures, rejecting the bold conjectures of Luther and others as wholly needless and of course improper.

The apostle then rapidly sketches God's deep and constant interest in His people till a king was given, but stops with David, the known type of the Messiah, as his own psalms abundantly testify. From him easy transition is made to his promised seed, whom, he declares, God “brought" to Israel, a Savior, Jesus. Was not this like Him? Was it not assured in the law and the prophets as well as the psalms? Were they not looking for Him? Did they not miserably need Him?

Nor could it be said that God had failed to alter His long promised intervention by renewed testimony, the more impressive because the living voice of a prophet was unheard for more than four centuries. And as all took John for a prophet, so did our Lord bear witness to him as more than a prophet, Jehovah's messenger before Messiah's face to prepare the way before Him, as Isaiah and Malachi previously intimated. So, before the face of His entering in, John preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; nor was it moral only, in self-judgment before God, but saying unto them that they should believe on Him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. It was avowedly a token of His manifestation to Israel (John 1:31). Of his meaning which they quite mistook, ready as human nature is to exaggerate man and to depreciate God, no ground for doubt was left by the fore-runner. “And as John was fulfilling his course, he said, Whom suppose ye that I am? I am not [he]; but behold, he cometh after me, the sandal of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.” Here again were new facts which could not be disputed. John is spoken of as a known witness, though none knew better than Paul that grace alone gives the truth efficaciously by delivering from the self-will which enables Satan to forge his chains of dark unbelief. But who better than he to press the value of a testimony which he too had once ignored like the rest, and

would now commend as having proved its worth?

Next comes his appeal, but an appeal grounded on fresh facts of the gravest and most affecting significance.

“Brethren (men-brethren), sons of Abraham's race, and those among you that fear God, to us was the word of this salvation sent forth. For the dwellers in Jerusalem and their rulers, having ignored Him and the voices of the prophets that are read on every sabbath, fulfilled [them] by judging [Him] And though they found no cause of death, they besought Pilate that He might be slain. And when they fulfilled all things written about Him, they took [Him] down from the tree and put [Him] into a tomb; but God raised Him from [the] dead, and He appeared for many days to those that came up with Him from Galilee unto Jerusalem, the which are now His witnesses unto the people” (ver. 2631).

The sending forth to Israel of “the word of this salvation” (for no less does the gospel carry) stands solemnly confronted by the stubborn ignorance of those who most boasted, the dwellers in Jerusalem and their rulers; who had the voices of the prophets read sabbath by sabbath, yet fulfilled them in unbelief, knowing neither themselves nor Him whom they presumed to judge, the Judge of Israel smitten on the cheek, the Judge of quick and dead hung on the tree, the meek and most holy bearer of all curse from God and man on the cross. Yes, they blindly fulfilled all things written by God concerning Him, law, psalms, and prophets centering in Him whom most of all they ought to have known, whom least they knew; for their eye was not single and their body full of darkness, consummated in the death of their own Messiah extorted from the reluctant Pilate (blind indeed and not without warning and moral witness, the contrary of the false witnesses that destroyed each other), but not so blind as they who said they saw, and so their sin remained, and remains, alas! to this day.

“But God raised Him from the dead.” Paul differs not from Peter in putting forward this foundation truth of the gospel. What a fact proved by all conceivable evidence, that grace could, would, and did supply, of which such a thing admits suitably to God's character and glory as well as man's sin and folly! Nor is it only “the great exception” to rebuke the vanity, pride, and will of unbelieving man; but what a spring and supply of peace, light, joy and blessing to all who believe!

Here however it is not the victory of righteousness which God's grace secures and gives freely to faith that is set forth, and the apostle loved to enlarge as to the saints, but the demonstration of the world's and especially of Israel's blindness, when they had unconsciously fulfilled all that was written concerning Him till they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. “But God raised Him from the dead.” It was not only the object of promise come, but when all seemed lost, through unbelief, in His rejection and death, God's intervention in raising Him up from among the dead. To this answers nearly the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, where the Lord Jesus is presented, first, as Son of David according to the flesh; then, as Son of God in power by resurrection of [the] dead according to the Spirit of holiness. Glad tidings in good sooth! glad tidings victorious over all that sin could do up to death itself. The victory is won over evil in Satan's last stronghold, by God's grace in Christ, that man may believe and be saved before He executes judgment on His persistently unbelieving adversaries. It is therefore no question of man's desert, for righteousness he has none before God, unrighteousness much in every way. God's righteousness alone avails—God righteous in His estimate of the efficacy of Christ, and above all

of His death, on behalf of those who in themselves are wholly lost.

But here the apostle points out the gracious care and wisdom of God in giving the risen Christ to be “seen,” and this not once or twice only, but “many days.” Now who could be valid witnesses of this stupendous fact? Comparative or absolute strangers to His person, or those most familiar with Him when alive? Unquestionably the latter; and to such accordingly He appeared when risen, the slowest of all to believe Him alive again for evermore, in proportion to their deep grief and disappointment over His cross and grave. His enemies remembered His words that He was to rise in three days, and vainly sought to Make all sure by sealing the stone that closed the sepulcher and by the watch, which only turned to their own confusion, when the guards trembled and became as dead men through fear of the angel after the Lord arose. But the very slowness of His friends to believe, inexcusable as it was, turned to account when He was seen “of those that came up with Him from Galilee unto Jerusalem, the which are now His witnesses to the people.” The common text with more than one excellent MS. of antiquity omits the adverb, though it is really emphatic and important. They are at this moment, says the apostle, His witnesses to the Jews; and none the less does he insist on it because he was not one of them. Indeed with this class he contrasts himself and Barnabas; for grace provided another character of testimony if by any means the mouth of gainsayers might be stopped. Witnesses were raised up, who were wholly unacquainted with Him when here in the days of His flesh. Nay, Paul himself was bitterly hostile till He revealed Himself to and in His enemy, henceforward His devoted bondman, outside Damascus. What possible testimony other or more could be wisely given or desired? Alas! unbelief of God is as deadly in its nature and working, as in its source, its aims, and its results.

Chapter 51

On Acts 13:32-41

From ver. 32 comes the application of the facts as to the Messiah, already given in ver. 23-31, especially His death on man's part, His resurrection on God's not without ample witness of His appearing subsequently among those who knew Him best.

“And we (we, emphatic) declare to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God hath fulfilled to us their children, having raised up Jesus; as also in the second psalm it is written, Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee. But that He raised Him from [the] dead, no more to return unto corruption, He hath spoken thus, I will give you the faithful mercies of David; wherefore also in another [psalm] he saith, Thou wilt not suffer Thy holy (Merciful) One to see corruption. For David, after having in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, and was added to his fathers, and saw corruption. But He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Be it known to you therefore, [men] brethren, that through this Man remission of sins is preached to you; and from all things from which ye could not in Moses' law be justified, in Him every one that believeth is justified” (ver. 32,39).

Here the apostle goes over the all-important points doctrinally. The coming of Christ was the accomplishment of the promise to the fathers; their children now had the glad tidings of it in His person here below. The raising up of Jesus in ver. 33 does not therefore go beyond the Child thus born, the Son thus given. And with this agrees Psa. 2:7, which refers not to His resurrection from the dead, as many have supposed, but to His birth, as the words simply express it; so that a further or mystic meaning here is not only uncalled for but improper. He, the Messiah, born of woman, born under law, was the object, accomplisher, and heir of the promises. Yea, how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea. So to the Romans (1:2-3) the apostle describes himself as separated unto God's gospel (which, he adds parenthetically, He had before promised through His prophets in holy scripture) concerning His Son come of David's seed according to flesh, just as it is treated here in the first place. But then he goes on, “marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead,” just as here too he proceeds to cite Isa. 55:3 and Psa. 16:10 as prophecies of Christ's proper resurrection. Indeed it is surprising that any intelligent and careful reader ever understood the passage otherwise: For it is as certain as it is plain that, to God's raising up the Messiah according to promise and the prophecy of the second psalm, verse 34 appends as another and still more momentous truth that God raised Him up “from the dead.” It is no mere reasoning on the verse before, no epexegetic explanation, but a further teaching of the highest value. Hence it is thus introduced, “And,” or “But, that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return unto corruption, He hath spoken thus,” &c. Calvin accordingly is justified in his statement (Opera vi. Comm. in loco) that the word “raised up” has a wider significance than where repeated just after. For it is meant that Christ was divinely ordained and as it were by God's hand brought forth into light that He might fulfill the office of Messiah; as scripture here and there shows us kings and prophets raised up by the Lord. Acts 3:22- 26; 7:37, are clear cases of this usage in the same book; so that the Authorized Version in the wake of Tyndale is not safely to be defended in going out of the way to insinuate resurrection

into ver. 33. “Raised up” is correct; “raised again” might have been said, if the text had certainly pointed, as it does not really at all, to the resurrection. But “raised up again” is unjustifiable. In any case the compound can only yield either “up” or “again,” not both; and here we have seen on good and cogent grounds that “up” is right, “again” inadmissible, because rising from the dead is not intended in ver. 33.

It would not have been necessary or advisable to spend argument on the question, if Dean Alford and Canon Cook, following Hammond, Meyer, &c., had not unwittingly played into the hands of enemies who ridicule this very misapprehension of Psa. 2:7, for which not Paul but his expounders are responsible. It has also been noticed that the addition of “now” in the English Version of verse 34 is not only needless but misleading, as it might imply a previous turn to corruption. Here too Tyndale misled all the public Protestant versions since his day, even to the Revised one.

Psa. 2 is quoted then for Christ as Son of God in this world. It is neither His eternal sonship, as some of the earlier Christian writers conceived, nor His resurrection, as the misapprehension of Acts 13:33 was used to teach. His birth in time as Messiah is the point, “Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee.”

Psa. 16 is cited (ver. 35) in proof not of His Son-ship as man and Messiah here below, but of His resurrection, and therefore stands in close and logical connection with ver. 34. Peter had already used this psalm similarly in Acts 2:24-32; and it is strange that any who believe the Christian revelation can allow a doubt that Christ's resurrection is the just and only meaning of the tenth verse of the psalm. I do not speak of their modesty in preferring their opinion to the Apostle Paul's, if they count it becoming to slight the apostle Peter. The question is, Is there such a thing as inspiration in any true sense?

The application of Isa. 55:3 in 34 is no less certain if we bow to apostolic authority, but not so easy, though where seen most instructive. But only the death and resurrection of the Messiah could make the covenant everlasting; only so could the promised holy or merciful blessings of David be made inviolable. Thus they are, as the LXX translates, ■σια Δ. τ■ πιστ■. Thus only could the soul even of the Jew live, or the door of grace open widely enough to take in a Gentile. Hence it will be seen that the chapter begins with the call of God to “every one that thirsteth.” He who was lifted up on the cross will draw all, not Jews only; and a risen Messiah, though He thereby gives the utmost sureness to Israel's promises, cannot be bounded in grace any more than in His glory, but will certainly have all peoples, nations, and languages to serve Him with an everlasting dominion.

It is difficult in any rendering short of a paraphrase to mark for the English reader the close link between the “Holy One” in Psa. 16:10 and the “mercies” in Isa. 55:3. Psa. 89:1 compared with ver. 19 as in the Authorized Version may help: very far different is the Revised Version of the Psalm here which can only darken. But the reader should know that the true force is, “Then spakest Thou in vision of Thy merciful (or Holy) One,” the personal concentration of the sere mercies of which the Psalmist sings in ver. 1. They are “the mercies” of David no doubt, but, what is of all consequence, of Jehovah also; and so this psalm also everywhere speaks of David, and therefore confirms the truth in question. Christ beyond controversy is here in the mind and word of the Spirit of prophecy. Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel (in this case quite a distinct word and thought), speaks of Christ as His Holy or Gracious One. It is not the same truth which the same apostle asserts in Rom. 1:4: Christ declared or determined Son of God in power according to the Spirit of

holiness by resurrection. The same power of the Spirit in which He ever walked superior to all evil was proved by resurrection. In Acts 13 it is the holiness of grace and mercy manifested and operative in Him risen from the dead. After His baptism of suffering, known by Him as by none else, straitening was over, Jewish barriers righteously gone, the floods of grace could flow forever and overflow.

The apostle of the uncircumcision, in ver. 36, 37, reasons pretty much as he of the circumcision in Acts 2:29-31; and both with unanswerable power. But one man, the Messiah, was, while tasting death, to see no corruption. David in his own generation served the counsel of God, but saw corruption: as did all his descendents, save that One of Whom he in the Spirit prophesied. Scripture cannot be broken. One man alone does and must fulfill the condition: who was He but Jesus, the Christ? As a fact the witnesses attested His resurrection on the fullest evidence, apart from the predictions. All proofs center in Him. God's glory and love are His infinitely; so are man's salvation, blessing, holiness, service in any true way and to the highest degree of which the creature is capable.

And thereon the apostle, though of course limited by the state of his audience, brings out the message characteristically beyond what Peter had done to hearers more informed than those of Pisidia. “Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this Man remission of sins is preached to you; and from all things from which ye could not in Moses' law be justified, in Him every one that believeth is justified.” Was it not, is it not, grandly, yea divinely simple? What does a sinner supremely need? Forgiveness of sins. This the gospel proclaims: it is no question of a promise only. Remission of sins is through Christ dead and risen preached. It is a free gift of grace, as is eternal life in Christ: the two wants of a sinner there alone found, and by Him freely given. To all it is preached, there is no limit to the grace of Christ, any more than to the efficacy of His blood. It takes effect only, among those that hear the gospel, upon all that believe. For faith glorifies the savior God, as it abases the sinner man; and repentance accompanies it, real if faith is, shallow or deep in like manner, or alas! as unreal as may be the faith. But it owns God's grace in Christ, and so His righteousness revealed in the gospel. Of faith therefore is the blessing that it might be according to grace; and thus alone man can either be assured of it or God is glorified thereby.

But there is more than remission of sins, that most deeply needed, in itself inestimable but initiatory, boon of the gospel. “And from all things, from which ye could not in Moses' law be justified, in Him every one that believeth is justified.” How boldly the apostle can speak! and this, not because his preaching or the style of it was any peculiarity of his position in the church, but in honor of the Savior's victory over every hindrance and all evil. To speak timidly might be well, if it were a question of man addressing or of men addressed. But the preacher of the gospel is not only free but bound to forget himself by grace in his magnifying of Him Who died and rose, in order that divine mercy might triumph for the worst, and this without money and without price from the sinner: Christ has paid the penalty—paid it long, long ago. Here Moses' law is wholly unavailing, whatever the pride the unbelief, Or the ignorance of the Jew might think. There is no possibility of justification by that law, holy as it is, and the commandment holy and just and good. Law is all in vain to save. It can give neither life nor pardon, neither holiness nor power. It puts a restraint on, and so alike discovers and provokes, lust; it is the power of sin, and works out wrath; it is thus a ministration of condemnation and death. What possible deliverance can it bring the needy and lost

sinner? Negatively indeed it is used by grace to break him down, to deepen his distrust of self even when converted, and to cast him wholly on Christ outside and on high, Who gives him to know that he died with Himself, that he might walk and serve under grace, as alive to God in Him.

But the grace of God in the gospel justifies the believer “from all things.” Indeed, if it were not so, how could the sinner's condition be met in a way worthy of God? If justification were partial, it might no less satisfy man, yea far more readily, than that free and full display of divine goodness in Christ which alone is the truth. Nothing is so excellent, so holy, so strengthening, so God-glorifying as the revelation of His grace in Christ, and this undiluted as well as unadulterated. But it seems extreme to some minds, lax to others, and dangerous to more. So it is in Him in and by Whom the gospel came. He was wholly misunderstood and unintelligible to the “wise and prudent “; as the mass believed not on Him, so many from among the rulers did not confess Him through fear; for they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God. Even John the Baptist was more reasonably right in their eyes than his Master and Lord; as those that refused Him who came in His Father's name will by-and-by receive him that comes in his own. Nothing is so condemnatory of fallen man, and especially when he glories in his character or in his religion, as grace; nothing so foreign and even repulsive to his mind and his self-righteousness. For it levels all mankind, high and low, learned and ignorant, loose or moral, superstitious or profane, in one indiscriminate grave of sin and ruin Godward—of spiritual death; while it proclaims to faith, and only to faith, a present, full, and everlasting redemption. This is offensive to man's thought and title who can soon find reasons to argue himself into unbelief and rejection of God's word, as if it were but the opinion of fallible and mistaken man, and thus makes manifest his unremoved heart-enmity to God.

The work of grace however goes on, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for men, nor waiteth for the sons of men. Conscience-stricken souls, hearts pining after God long slighted and sinned against, are won by the name of Jesus, and gladly receive that remission of sins which is preached to them, and adore as they take in the wonder of mercy in Jesus, in Whom every one that believes is justified from all things, from none of which could he be justified in Moses' law or in any other way. Justification for a sinner is essentially a Pauline expression; being of faith, not of law, it was open to a Gentile as well as to a Jew. It was a word eminently suited to that great messenger of the gospel of God's grace. And here we have it tersely in the first discourse of his which Luke reports or at least summarizes. So deals God's righteousness which is now manifested apart from law: God just and justifying the believer as he is, the ungodly as he was (Rom. 3 - 4). How truly divine! No wonder man as such misses the truth: Christ is the only key that opens all.

But the apostle does not conclude without a warning appropriately drawn, for the Jews that listened with reluctant ears, from their own volume of inspiration. “See therefore that what is spoken of in the prophets come not on you, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe if I declare it to you” (ver. 40, 41). It is especially Hab. 1:5 which is in substance cited, with perhaps Isa. 29:14 and Prov. 1:24-31 in view. Unbelief is the same evil scorn of God's word, whether of old or by-and-by, and never worse than now when grace beseeches men as they are to be reconciled to God. And whatever the work to be done in the future, none can ever match what God has wrought already, the basis on which the gospel is proclaimed to every creature. The coming execution of judgment by the Chaldeans was sufficient to arrest any soul that heeded the warning voice of the prophet; and a destruction

was about to fall on Jerusalem and the temple, as the Lord had predicted, by the Romans (Luke 19:43, 44; 21:20-24). But what is either providential work of God or any other that can be gleaned from the harvest of judgment in the future, compared with that which in His rejection and atoning work befell our Lord Jesus? And as is the immeasurable grace to sinners in that work which cost God and His Son all things of unsparing vengeance on sin—our sins, so is the wrath of God not yet executed, but revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? says the same apostle writing to the Hebrew confessors of Christ. Is there less sin, less danger, for those who in Christendom have grown up in the constant iteration of the same gospel, and are now exposed as none ever were to the apostate infidelity of our day, which finds its life in nature and sets up natural law as the idol of its worship, if along with Jesus soon to supersede Him, as none can serve two masters. It must be God, or the creature, not both, even if God were not as He ought to be a jealous God, as He is the True, and therefore necessarily intolerant of all spurious rivalry.

On Acts 13:42-52

Such was the discourse with which the great apostle of the Gentiles opened his missionary labors in the Pisidian Antioch (only about fifty years ago identified as Yalobatch by an intelligent British traveler). The result was cheering. And as they were going out (for the service was over, not interrupted as some have singularly imagined), the hearers besought that they might have these words spoken to them the next sabbath, the great occasion for such a discourse. Later, when the gathering was broken up, many of the Jews and the proselytes, attracted and impressed beyond the rest, followed Paul and Barnabas (for henceforth, at least away from Palestine, Paul has the precedence); as they on their part spoke more freely to them than the synagogue could permit, and urged them to abide in the grace of God. Gentiles there were none as yet to hear, beyond the proselytes; but the ensuing sabbath beheld them drawn by the report in crowds; and the effect was as marked on them for good, as on many Jews for evil, as we shall see.

Ver. 42 has suffered not a little both from copyists and from commentators. The ordinarily received text instead of “they” (α■τ■ν) has with some cursives, the interpolation ■κ τ■ς συναγωγ■ς τ■ν ■ουδα■ων, which may have been due to the public lessons of early days, though more common in the passages taken from the historical books than in selections from the epistles. But this addition, though unauthorized, does not contradict (though it may alter) the sense, like τ■ ■θνη, “the Gentiles,” which is made the subject of the sentence, to the confusion of the passage as a whole, and without the least to commend it in itself. The verse is quite general. “And as they were going out, they kept beseeching that these words might be spoken to them on the following sabbath. Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the worshipping proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who (ο■τινες) speaking unto them persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And on the next sabbath almost all the city was gathered together to hear the word of God “ (ver. 42-4.4).

Dr. J. Bennett conceives that the critical reading points to the sense that they, i.e. Paul and Barnabas, entreated that the same things should be spoken to them (again). But this is quite a mistake. The true reading leaves us open to the people's thus entreating the apostles; which appears to me much more simple and becoming as well as “delightful.” Even Calvin, who understands the sense to be that Paul and Barnabas went out while the Jews were yet assembled, holds that they (the apostles) were then requested &c., though he was misled by the misreading to think it was the Gentiles who made request. But what could have brought “the Gentiles” to the synagogue on that first sabbath? It is easy to understand that they flocked there on the second; and this it was doubtless, and yet more their heed, as well as the free grace proclaimed, which roused the envy of the unhappy Jews. But even this premature introduction of the Gentiles though unfounded does not yield so strange and repulsive a meaning as that Paul and Barnabas! entreated that their discourse should be spoken on the next sabbath. That souls struck by the truth might beseech that “'these things,” blessed yet so startling, so momentous yet solemn, should be spoken to them again, is very intelligible, as it is the unforced sense of the true text.

Tyndale completely missed the point of time intended, for he took ε■ς τ■ μεταξ■ σ■ββατον of the intervening week— “betwene the Saboth dayes.” But this was from oversight of the later usage of μ. which signifies “after,” not “between” only, as Kypke, Ott, &c. have noticed with illustrations. Calvin was quite wrong therefore in censuring here the Vulgate and Erasmus who were right; and still more is Beza to be blamed, because he was a better scholar than the great theologian he followed, and ought to have known how thoroughly Josephus, Plutarch, and Clem. Rom. 44 (twice), justify the text of the Authorized Version against the marginal alternative, as Dr. 3. Lightfoot plainly confirmed it from his vast Rabbinical learning.

As ver. 42 lets us know the general interest in what had been announced, which prompted the desire to hear all again, ver. 43 adds that, on the break up of the congregation, many of the Jews and of the worshipping or devout proselytes followed the preachers thereon, who not only spoke to them but urged them to abide in the grace of God, which the gospel declares and they professed to receive. What can one think of a man like Calvin doubting whether it was not these young converts who exhorted Paul and Barnabas that they should not faint but stand firmly in the grace of God? He does not however (as Dean Alford thought) incline so strongly to this interpretation as to decide for it against the common and only correct view, that the gracious speech and confirmatory exhortation came from the apostles to those on whose hearts God's grace had just dawned.

Again, in the beginning of ver. 44 stands the expression on the “coming” sabbath, vouched by both the most ancient uncials of highest character and the mass of cursives, and so not only adopted by Erasmus, the Complutensian, Colinaeus, R. Stephens, the Elzevirs, but also by Tischendorf (eighth edition), Tregelles, and by Westcott and Hort. On the other hand at least two of the great uncials with several good cursives testify to the exactly technical word which differs by a letter less, for “next following,” “ensuing.” Acts 18:21 used to be cited for the former, till the critics omitted the clause; but there is no doubt that the rival reading is a standing usage of the inspired writer (Luke 13:33, Acts 20:15; 21:26), as it is in the language generally. No wonder therefore that Alford, Bengel, Green, Griesbach, Lachmann, Scholz, and Wordsworth accept it as right: an instructive instance, by no means uncommon, where a few copies are more accurate than the weight of both antiquity and number combined.

“But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, For you it was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken; but since ye thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn unto the Gentiles. For thus hath the Lord enjoined us, I have set thee for a light of Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the uttermost of the earth” (ver. 45-47).

How base as well as evil and malignant is jealousy, above all religious jealousy as here! In general they had hailed the joyful sound when it first reached their ears, even though closed with a most serious warning; and “many” had gone farther than the entreaty to have the truth spoken again. For many of the Jews, as well as of the devout proselytes, followed the apostles who exhorted them to abide as they had begun. But “the crowds” were too much for religious prejudice which hitherto dormant, and awakened the most malignant feelings in antipathy and abuse. Such is flesh in presence of grace and truth, and at the sight of hearts attracted and consciences touched. Had

the gospel been powerless, the Jews had retained their equanimity; where the long preaching of Moses had never so wrought, its immediate effect in winning such large attention was intolerable. But the hatred of grace, ruinous to those guilty of it, only enlarges the field of work, as it also liberates the messengers from an over-careful waiting on the men of tradition and its narrow channels. Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, instead of being shocked into silence by Jewish blasphemies, pointed out how faith denies not but defers to law in its own place, and, now that the ancient people of God were ignorantly spurning the best blessings of grace, announced this matchless road open to the needy and long despised Gentiles (ver. 46).

The application of Isa. 49:6 in the following verse is as striking as richly instructive. It is the Messiah rejected by Israel, Who has this consolation vouchsafed by God: His humiliation opens the door to wider glory. This the slighted servants of Christ appropriate to themselves. Infinite grace, under like circumstances, warrants the men of faith: what was said of Christ is no less true of the Christian. “Thus hath the Lord enjoined us.” It is a principle of far-reaching explanation, which faith knows how to guard from irreverence, however much of direction, comfort, and strength may be reaped from it. The reader may see another instance no less bold in the use made of Isa. 1:7-9 in Rom. 8:33-34. The spirit of obedience, we may add, finds an injunction where no other eye could discern one.

Here first Gentiles as such come into prominence: others in this country who had heeded the apostles were proselytes from among them. Scripture was express as to the principle.

“And the Gentiles, on hearing, rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained unto life eternal believed. And the word of the Lord was carried abroad through the whole country. But the Jews excited the women of rank that worshipped, and the chiefs of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and sent them out of their borders. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy of [the] Holy Spirit” (ver. 48-52).

The tide of blessing in God's grace was now turned to the Gentiles. Christ is a light for revealing them now, as He is the glory of God's people Israel. The nations had been long hidden as well as outside; they are now disclosed to view, the direct object not of law as Israel once, but of divine mercy in the gospel. The righteousness of God is unto all, though it takes effect only upon all that believe. So here they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained unto life eternal believed.

The evil and the ruin are man's: all the good is of God's grace exclusively, and the believer enjoys it of His sovereign mercy. Thus the word of the Lord was carried abroad through all the country. And this roused a more systematic effort of opposition, as usual on the part of the Jews, who urged on the devout women of position and the chief men of the city against the apostles with such a flood of persecution as to cast them out of their borders. As these ladies had been drawn into Judaism to their immense relief from the uncleanness as well as debasing follies of heathenism, one can understand how the sex would be peculiarly open to exciting influence against the testimony which left the law in the shade; and they would know how to reach the first men of the city, as being of their own rank and in all probability nearly connected with themselves, so as to get the preachers expelled. But the apostles, bowing to the persecution, acted on the Lord's word not only in fleeing to another city, but in shaking off the dust of their feet against their persecutors;

while joy in the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, left behind as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Chapter 53

On Acts 14:1-19

If the Pisidian Antioch has only of late been identified, there is no doubt that Koniyeh, a considerable town of some forty thousand souls, represents in our day the changed scene of apostolic labors which now opens to us. It was then an important city, having rapidly grown up from Strabo's estimate in the reign of Augustus, as we may gather from Pliny's account, a few years later than the inspired one, though far below what it became as the capital of the Seljukian Sultans.

Here, as in the city just left, the Jews had a synagogue, to which Paul and Barnabas repaired as usual. Persecution had in no wise daunted their courage or cooled their love and zeal in the gospel.

“And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed. But the Jews that disobeyed stirred up the souls of the Gentiles and aggravated [them] against the brethren. A considerable time therefore they stayed, speaking boldly in reliance on the Lord that gave witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when an effort was made of both the Gentiles and Jews with their rulers to outrage and stone them, becoming aware of it they fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the [country] round about, and there they were preaching the gospel” (ver. 1-7).

There was without doubt marked blessing at Iconium where the Lord honored and used largely the bold preaching of His grace: “a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed.” This roused the enemy; and the Jews that disobeyed the glad tidings (cf. 2 Thess. 1:8) stirred up the souls of the Gentiles and made them evil-affected against the brethren. It was not a visit from without but the alienation of the Jews that refused God's message on the spot; as is confirmed by the correct form of the word (■π.) in the more ancient witnesses as against the received text. But this only drew out a pretty long stay and plain speaking in dependence on the Lord, Who on His part displayed His gracious power not only in the more ordinary testimony to His word but in confirmatory signs and wonders, of which we heard nothing at Antioch in Pisidia. It is a solemn fact however that such deeds of divine energy, as the rule, do not turn the stubborn heart. Men judge mainly in accordance with their feelings, whatever be the qualms of conscience; and where the will is set on its own way, none so hardened as those that breathe a constant atmosphere of miracle, as we see in the wilderness history. So here in the face of all, the multitude of the city was rent in twain; and if some held with the apostles, others as decidedly with the Jews, the hereditary enemies of the gospel, ever ingenious in perverting and undermining what might have told on upright minds. But the intent of violence, which had oozed out, brought the testimony to a close: for a plan or start of this kind seems to be the force of what is meant here, rather than an “assault,” as may be inferred safely from the context. Had there been an actual “rush,” there seems little propriety in the words “becoming aware of” what could not be doubted and made escape hard. Nor does the form of the

verb admit of the rendering “was making;” for the aorist must signify a definite fact instead of anything merely in course, which would be rather the imperfect. If they got cognizance of purpose to outrage and stone them, so, generally formed as to carry along Gentiles and Jews with their rulers, they judged it wise to leave with all haste. And so they fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the country around; and there they pursue their gospel work.

“And there sat a certain man at Lystra powerless in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who never had walked. This [man] heard Paul speaking, who fastening his eyes on him and seeing that he had faith to be made whole, said with a loud voice, Rise upright on thy feet: and he leaped up and walked. And the crowds seeing what Paul did, lifted up their voices in Lycaonian, saying, The gods are come down unto us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas Zeus,. and Paul Hermes, because he took the lead in speaking. And the priest of the Zeus that was before the city, having brought balls and garlands unto the gates would have sacrificed with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard [of it], they rent their garments and sprang out unto the crowd, crying out and saying. Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like affections with you, preaching and evangelizing to you that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all things in them; who in the bygone generations suffered all the Gentiles to walk in their own ways. And yet he left not himself without witness in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. And saying these things they wick difficulty restrained the crowds from sacrificing to them. But there arrived Jews from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds and stoned Paul, they dragged [him] without the city, supposing that he was dead. But as the disciples encircled him, he rose up and entered into the city” (ver. 8-20).

The healing of the hopelessly lame man was eminently suited to arrest a rude heathen crowd, besides its being a practical as well as extraordinary witness to the gracious character of God so foreign to the thoughts of man left to himself. All was in contrast with the mysterious mumblings with which their wizards practiced their charms. The addition to ver. 10 was made early to save the appearance of pretension on the part of him who wrought the miracle. The absence of the clause is the instructive lesson that as such words would be unavailing in another mouth (definitely proved long after at Ephesus), so they are by no means called for where all the life and testimony were set on magnifying Christ. There was no legally required formula. Of all men Paul was most conspicuously, as he loved to call himself, the “bondman of Jesus Christ;” so that in his case it was the less necessary by a formal declaration to disclaim any virtue to heal by his own power or holiness.

That heathen should conclude as the Lycaonians did in consequence was the more natural, as they had the fabulous tradition made current a little while before by a Latin poet of the Augustan age that these very deities had been entertained in a part of Asia Minor. Physical differences would lead to the respective identification of their superstitious minds, besides the specific reason assigned as to Paul; and the proposal to do them sacrifice followed as matter of course. The scene is as usual set graphically before us; the crowd, the priest of Zeus (whose temple, or statue, was before the city), with the oxen and garlands all ready brought to the gates (of the house or court probably, where the apostles lodged). On the other hand we see the indignant and most earnest rejection of the God-dishonoring honor by Barnabas and Paul (for so they are presented in accordance with their assigned place), springing forth with garments rent and loud remonstrance.

Their words were no less uncompromising though courteous. And what a difference from Catholic missionaries doing evil that good might come, or rather accepting a gross sin in order to propitiate their way, and to make a new and not less grievous and more guilty idolatry perpetual!

But the witnesses of the Lord Jesus are jealous for a living and true God and refuse to allow a sinful personal influence at His expense. “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are of like affections with you, preaching to you that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God” &c. Substantiality it was an appeal akin to what Paul afterward uttered to the Athenians on the Areiopagus. How debasing is heathenism! The ignorant Lycaonian and the refined Athenian needed the same sort of discourse. They are set to spell the alphabet of creation. Here however it is not so much the unity of God and man's true and near relationship to Him, in contrast with his absurd reverence of idols or God-making; it is God's active beneficence attested to the Lycaonians in rains and fruitful seasons, with their results in plenteous food and gladness. That the gods are envious at human gladness was the lie and curse of paganism. Not such is He who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. Who could deny that He in the generations bygone suffered the nations to proceed in their own ways? If He sent the gospel now concerning His Son, was it not in full accordance with the active goodness He had testified to all lands and times in those bountiful gifts from heaven which overspread the otherwise barren earth with every good thing for man's life and heart? We need not dwell on each phrase; but it would not he hard to prove how telling was every word, and how all the undeniable truth thus conveyed indirectly dissipated the mischievous and destructive and demoralizing falsehoods of heathenism, to which their minds and habits had been inured, not only in their religion, but in the whole of their outward relations saturated with that poison, as their own literary remains show and Rom. 1 briefly declares in the burning reproofs of its latter verses.

So inveterate is the idolatry of the heart that it was with difficulty the crowds were kept from sacrificing to the Lord's servants (ver. 18). How awful to think that Christendom over its largest half pays divine honors to men of like affections as themselves! It is admitted that apotheosis goes beyond canonization; but the dishonor to God and the injury to man can scarcely be said to be less. For the distinctive truth now is the unity, not of the Godhead only, but of the One Mediator; and consequently the peculiar assault of the enemy is not by honoring more gods than the living God, but by setting up other mediators or intercessors, as the Virgin, angels and saints, as well as nullifying the full and intimate knowledge of God as the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Here Romanism is the chief offender, though others are not free from the taint, as indeed the tendency is common to the natural man.

But idolatry was not the only danger at Lystra, though others entered the scene characteristically to oppose, calumniate, and persecute. This is mostly the work of men who know some truth, but are jealous of more and better. These are the men who stifle conscience and are athirst for blood—blood of God's saints and Christ's servants, whom their ill-will blinds them to regard as the most wicked of men. So it was, and so it is. “But Jews arrived from Antioch add Iconium; and having persuaded the crowds and stoned Paul, they dragged him without the city, supposing that he was dead.” These adversaries were not wholly ignorant of God's testimony in the gospel. They knew enough to feel how immeasurably it rose above the law; and that it exceeded in glory was enough for their hard and proud hearts, which disdained to own their ruin, any more than God's righteousness which can justify the ungodly through the faith of Christ. To the law they adhered,

because it was theirs rather than because it is God's; to the law, even though it can as such show no mercy to the guilty, and itself bears witness to the Messiah, the only Savior of the lost. But to this witness they were wholly blind, being only alive to the pride of possessing it from God to the exclusion of all others. Yet when the gospel went out to others, they were eager to persuade these poor despised heathens that the word of God's grace which Paul preached was nothing but imposture. Alas! they found them there, as ever since, ready victims. And why? That very refusal of homage, which the Lystrians were ready to pay, is most offensive to man, and disposes him to believe the most odious misrepresentations of those he was about to worship. Men exalt themselves by human adoration; and to be baulked of it soon turns to the hatred and perhaps death of those who seek the honor of the only God. So it was here. Instead of changing their minds like the Maltese (who from a murderer regarded Paul as a god), they listen to Jewish calumny though ordinarily despised, and stone him as a false prophet, to whom they had been so lately wishing to sacrifice, leaving him dragged without the city as a dead man.

But his life was in him, as he himself said later of Eutychus; and as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and entered into the city (ver. 20). Paul's work was only beginning, not done. To abide in the flesh was needful for many sinners as for all saints. It could not be that he was to expire thus, though Jews had incited Gentiles to do their worst, and imagined all was over. Grace had called him to its own great work of salvation, as well as of edifying the body of Christ. Nor was it enough that he rose up; he entered into the city, from which he had just been dragged outside as a corpse. Such was the faith and love of this more than martyr soul: Of him, if of any, we may surely say, the world was not worthy. Christ alone was and is the worthy One. He could say, as he did, “to me to live is Christ” —not the work, but Himself, which is of all things the most elevating, purifying, and strengthening of motives in that work. It is the spring of lowliness as of love, of courage as of faith. So rising up he entered into Lystra. Fear would have said, Go anywhere else just now. Self would have whispered, Stay there and see what a future triumph for the gospel! But the thoughts of man are in neither suggestion the mind of Christ; and this the apostle had and acted on. May it be ours in His grace.

Chapter 54

On Acts 14:20-28

The apostle had now nearly reached the extreme point of this the first missionary journey.

“And on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe.” This, or the country round about, was the farthest limit westward for the present. It might have seemed an inviting opportunity to have visited Cilicia or even Tarsus; but he who blamed John Mark, who left them and the work to return to Jerusalem, was not the man to allow such a claim; as even Barnabas seems to have done when he took Mark with him and subsequently went to Cyprus.

“And, after preaching the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned onto Lystra and unto Iconium, and unto Antioch, establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God” (ver. 21, 22). It was in this neighborhood and during this visit apparently that Timothy was brought to the Lord through the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2); for in Acts 16:1 he is spoken of as already a disciple in Derbe and Lystra, well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Here no reference is made, though grace had great things in store for him. It was enough to add about Derbe that the preaching was blessed to many there as elsewhere.

We next hear of their return, visiting in reversed order Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. The circumstances gave a new character to the work. First they were “establishing the souls of the disciples.” For this is a necessary part of the labor of love, and a real need for new-born souls; and many who are blessed in awakening have little power to confirm the young disciples. Here were servants of the Lord. fitted beyond all to help on the unestablished; and we are told of their exhorting them to abide in the faith. How much there is to alarm in it if not to seduce from it. But they are also warned of the difficulties in the way, especially of the numerous severe trials which intervene, or, as it is expressed, “that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.” So the Lord had told the early disciples who as Jews might and did expect things smooth and bright, now that the Messiah was come. But He was come to suffer and to go on high, rejected of men and of His earthly people; which gives room to a yet deeper aggravation of the suffering path before glory dawn. And if Paul was a great preacher, not less was he a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Christ was ever his theme; “Whom we announce,” as he says himself, “admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, to the end we may present every man perfect in Christ: whereunto also I labor, combating according to His working that worketh in me in power.” He never took any Christian duty lightly, least of all that which lies so near to God's purpose and Christ's affection, even for those who had not seen his face in the flesh; that their hearts might be encouraged, being united together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the recognition of the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For those are not wanting anywhere, who, deceived themselves, seek to deceive the saints by persuasive speech. The word dwelling in us, and praise and prayer flowing out to God, with diligent testimony in love within as well as without, are grand safeguards; but withal the mind made up with joy for all endurance and long-suffering, as we wait for Christ and the

kingdom.

Secondly, another task which the first visit could not effect, yet remained— “And when they chose (or appointed) for them elders in each assembly and prayed with fastings, they commended them to the Lord on Whom they had believed” (ver. 23). Naturally the differences in Christendom warp the minds of too many in their impressions of this instructive verse. Jerome, though by no means so extreme as some of the early fathers, interprets the word χ. (which all the early English as well as the Authorized Version had rendered “ordained,” Tyndale, Cranmer, and Geneva adding “by election,") of ordination by laying on of hands, as if χειροτον■α=χειροθεσ■α. This Mr. Humphry rightly treats as untenable, or at least unsupported by any clear example of such a sense. But we may go farther than Dean Alford and must affirm that scripture nowhere points to the churches selecting elders by show of hands or in any other way. Indeed the phraseology before us excludes any such thought; for, first, if χ. necessarily implied any such etymological import here, the meaning must be that Paul and Barnabas chose elders by that method of suffrage, which nobody holds or wishes, but the contrary. And, secondly, this is confirmed yet more abundantly by the pronoun “for them,” which excludes the disciples from their desired part in the election, and distinctly makes the apostles choose the elders for the saints concerned. Of all interpretations therefore none is so bad as the amiable compromise that the apostles ordained those whom each church elected. The words simply teach that Paul and Barnabas chose elders for the disciples in each assembly. No doubt the word may mean to stretch out the hand, and this especially in voting; but it had long been used, where no such form could be, to express choice or appointment. And this is certain in the New Testament without going outside it, and in Luke's usus loqueudi, as the most prejudiced must allow in Acts 10:41, and here too, unless he contends for Paul and Barnabas holding up their hands in each of these cases. This however is not what Congregationalism wants, but that the disciples should thus decide their choice of each elder and of one only in each church; whereas the text declares that the apostles chose elders for them in each assembly: the most distinct and conclusive disproof of popular election which language can convey. And if laying on of hands followed, it is in no way taught here, for the word refers only to the choice of the presbyters. Nor does 2 Cor. 8:19 support the idea of an election of the elders popularly; for the question there was solely of brethren acceptable to the assemblies for conveying funds to the saints in distress elsewhere. And it is certain that scripture does warrant the saints at large in choosing those they confide in for such work, as we seek in Acts 6 Still less is there the slightest analogy with the two put. forward (not elected) in Acts 1:23, as to whom they prayed the Lord to choose for the vacant apostolate. The lot is a wholly different principle, on which turned the numbering or enrollment of Matthias with the eleven. In short, the procedure here was, just what Calvin denies, the apostles choosing solely in virtue of their peculiar office; as afterward Titus was commissioned by Paul to appoint the elders in every city of Crete, without a hint of sitting as moderator of a free election by the consent of all. Not only is the book thus in harmony, but the New Testament as a whole. Where man gave, man was allowed to choose; where the Lord gave, He chooses and sends apart from man; where it is a question of order, the authorized envoys of the Lord appointed in His name, not only directly as here, but indirectly through a distinctly recognized channel.

After the choice of elders for the saints, the apostles prayed with fasting and commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed. The saints in general were the object in view, not the elders

only And whatever the supplication which assuredly preceded and accompanied the delicate work of appointing the elders, it would appear from the language and connection that, the prayers and fasting here specified followed that appointment and concerned the saints cast on the sustaining grace of the Lord.

“And having passed through Pisidia they came unto Pamphylia; and having spoken the word [of the Lord) in Perga they went down unto Attalia; and thence they sailed unto Antioch, whence they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they arrived and brought the assembly together, they repeated all things God had wrought with them and how He had opened to the Gentiles a door of faith. And they tarried no little time with the disciples” (ver. 24 -28).

Thus the first great evangelistic journey to the heathen by the apostles was brought to a close, Perga having heard the word on their return, if not on the earlier occasion saddened by the departure thence of John. And now Attalia (the modern Satalia, or Adalias) was touched, instead of Paphos, of any other part of Cyprus and from that port to the Syrian Antioch, their point of departure, the voyage was readily made.

Two remarks it is of moment to add. The latter part of ver. 26 defines yet more, if it were needed, the import of that which had preceded this missionary visit. It was in no true sense an “ordination of Barnabas and Paul; but, as here described, their recommendation to the grace of God for the work which they hart fulfilled. Indeed from chap. 15:40 it would seem to have been repeated on the apostle's second journey with Silas. The notion of holy orders founded on the beginning of Acts 13 is therefore not only without value but strips what was done of all its gracious meaning. It is part of that Judaizing which for most has darkened New Testament scripture.

Next, we may observe that, though sent out authoritatively by the Holy Spirit (chap. 13:4), and so placed directly under responsibility to the Lord, whose bondmen they were, they are quick to share all His doings with them: they call together the assembly whence they had gone out that all might rejoice in His grace, and especially His grace to the Gentiles. The church is not the source of mission, but the scene of communion with divine grace using the truth for the blessing of the Genesis tiles by Paul, not Peter, and from Antioch as a starting-point on earth, not Jerusalem nor yet Rome. Patriarchal jurisdiction there was none, till men forgot that the true spring of the authority, power, and blessing, was Christ in heaven, and ere long began to dream of rival sees and their hierarchs. How had the little seed become a tree, so that the birds of heaven, which snatch away what was sown in the heart, came and lodged in its branches! (Matt. 13)

We should bear in mind that the stay of Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch was not short.

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Chapter 56

The Altar at Bethel

1 Kings 12:25- 13

The inspired commentary on idolatry which we find in Rom. 1 gives us to know that it had its source in the corruption of the human mind: the haughtiness of the intellect becomes the parent of it (ver. 22-25). The apostle tells us also that the “heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12) is an “evil” one. And at the opening of this scripture we find that it was the love of the world that erected the idolatrous altar at Bethel. Jeroboam thought it was the only way by which he could secure the kingdom.

He corrupted the religion of the people. He did not in infidel scorn deny it, because he owned that God's people had been brought out of Egypt; but he corrupted it—as guilty a thing; for it was turning it to his own account, or making it serve his own ends.

At the opening of chap. 13 we learn how the Lord deals with this corruption. It is according to His usual method. He sends His servant, under a fresh communication of His mind and a fresh anointing of His Spirit, from the land of Judah to the altar at Bethel, to denounce it and deliver the judgment of God against all who had connected themselves with it; but staying the execution of that judgment until the time of Josiah, the future king of David's house. But He also gives a present pledge of such execution; for the altar was rent at the moment, and the ashes that were upon it were poured out. The judgment here pronounced was executed to the very letter (2 Kings 23), Josiah being prophesied of by name, as was Cyrus afterward (Isa. 44).

This is His common way. He pronounces judgment, but delays the execution, though giving present pledge of it. The interval is called “His long-suffering;” and we know it is “salvation,” a time for quickening and gathering (2 Peter 3:15). Enoch pronounced the judgment of the ungodly; and we know from God that this judgment is still to be executed; but the Flood was as a pledge-fulfillment. The Lord pronounced the judgment of Jerusalem in Matt. 24, and we know from the very terms of the sentence that it is still to be executed; but the Roman invasion was a pledge-fulfillment of it.

Jeroboam was indignant at the man of God who had pronounced this sentence against his altar, and he stretched out his arm as commanding his servants to lay hold of him. But the hand of God laid hold on Jeroboam; and his outstretched arm became rigid and withered. Then his mind is changed: he repents himself, to be sure he does; he is gracious when pangs come upon him; and he sues the man of God to pray for the restoration of his arm. This is done: and he invites the man of God to come home with him to his palace for refreshment and reward. But in the spirit of Daniel he lets the king know that he may keep his gifts to himself and give his rewards to another. He leaves the scene of God's curse and sets himself on the way back to Judah, having done the business committed to him by “the word of the Lord.” The altar and its fruits are left to meet the judgment of God in its season.

Now however, and from hence to the end, the scene changes We have no further sight of the man of God and of the king together; but we are to see the man of God in company with an old prophet

who at that time lived in Bethel.

We are exposed to special temptations, if we live on border-lands or in equivocal circumstances and conditions.

The old prophet, saint of God as he was, lived (something in the way of a Lot in Sodom) near the altar. The devil uses him; and with a lie in his mouth, that he was bidden of an angel to do so, he brings the man of God back, from the road that was leading him down to Judah, to eat and drink with him in his house at Bethel.

The man of God was not on the apostle's elevation or in the apostle's strength, who could and would stand for the word of the Lord in the face of all pretension or assumption. Paul would pronounce an anathema upon even an angel, if he dared to gainsay that word which he had received from God. He cared not who it was, so to speak, come he from earth, hell, or heaven. He would hold by the word of God in the face of them all (Gal. 1, 2), just as he could turn his back upon Jerusalem and rebuke the chief of the apostles, even Peter, and withstand him before all.

But the man of God was not in this vigor of Paul. He surrendered the word which he had received from God to the word (as he judged it to be) of an angel; and he goes back to eat and drink in the place of which the Lord had said to him, “Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there.”

And here another divine principle gets a very striking illustration. God is judging according to every man's work (1 Peter 1:17); that is, He is disciplining His people now. Judgment at the house of God has begun (1 Peter 4:17). And so it is here. The judgment on Jeroboam and his priests is delayed; the judgment of the man of God shall be immediate. He shall now be judged of the Lord that he may not be condemned with the world (or Jeroboam) by-and-by. (See 2 Kings 23:17, 18.) The word alights upon him—falls in judgment on him, as he sits at the table of the old prophet eating and drinking; for he was eating and drinking judgment to himself. And shortly after, as he resumes his journey home to Judah and is on his way thither, a lion meets and slays him

How very arresting of our thoughts, and full of solemn meaning, all this is! The judgment of the world is stayed; the discipline of the saints is proceeding. So it is here: yea and more. There was a personal pledge of the future judgment of the world; and there shall be now a present pledge of the future salvation of the saint. The altar was rent, as we saw, and the ashes poured out; and, so also, the lion is not allowed to touch the carcass of the man of God, or to lay his deadly paw upon the ass that had carried him. His body is reserved for final honor, though his life was a present forfeit to the righteous judgment or holy discipline of God. It would have been the nature of the lion to kill the ass as well as its rider, and to devour the carcass; but he acted as truly, under divine commission in the death of the man of God, as the man of God himself had acted when he pronounced judgment on the altar. What varied and instructive illustrations of truth all these things are!

And the old prophet too is to be again before us. There was in him that which was of God, as well as that which was of nature or the flesh. But he was now old, and gray hairs were sadly numerous upon this Ephraim, as Hosea speaks He had lived carelessly as a saint; he had taken up his dwelling in an unclean place; he was too much like an old professor that needed reviving virtues. Satan uses him (as we have seen, but sad to tell it) to corrupt his younger brother, a freshly anointed vessel of the Spirit. But still he seems to have been a “righteous man,” like Lot, though

living in a Sodom. His lamentation over the man of God was genuine, and as that of one saint over another—genuine as the lamentation of David over Jonathan. It was the sorrow of a saint of God; and he charges his sons, when he should die, to bury him in the same sepulcher where he was now religiously laying the remains of him whom he calls his “brother,” the man of God.

All this bespeaks the better nature in him. And when the hand of the Lord executes by Josiah the judgment He had now pronounced by the man of God; when the power of His hand comes to make good the declarations of His Spirit, and the day of the world's doom arrives—this Jeroboam—world of which we are speaking, the hand of God respects the old prophet as it does the man of God. Josiah saves the sepulcher of these men, and preserves the bones of each of them from the common penal burning, under. which he was putting all others found in that unclean place around the altar at Bethel, as we read so fully and strikingly in 2 Kings 23.

It is thus; and all this reads us a lesson of very various moral instruction. We see the way of God in the judgment of the world, and in the discipline of His saint; we see the danger of living near Sodom; and we learn afresh that God's word must be clung to in the face of all and everything. J. G. B.

Chapter 57

The Assembly of God: Its Present State and the Duties That Result: 1-4

1. The Lord's Design As To The Gathering Of The Faithful Here Below

It is the desire of our hearts, and, we believe, God's will for this economy, that all the children of God should be gathered together as such, and consequently outside the world. Jesus died, “not for that nation only (the Jews), but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” This gathering, then, was the immediate object of Christ's death. The safety of the elect was as certain before as after He came. The Jewish economy which preceded His coming into the world had in view not to gather the assembly on earth, but to display God's government by means of an elect nation. Now the aim of the Lord is to gather as well as save—to realize unity not only in heaven where the counsels of God shall assuredly be fulfilled, but here on earth by one Spirit sent down from heaven. “For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.” This could not be denied of the assembly as it is presented in the word. It may be proved that hypocrites and wicked men crept in; but the conclusion cannot be evaded that there was an assembly into which they crept. The gathering of all the children of God into one body is evidently according to God's mind in His word.

2. Position of Nationalism

As to nationalism, its existence cannot be traced higher than the Reformation; such an idea is found nowhere before. The only thing in the least analogous, the Galilean privileges and the voting by nations in certain general councils, differs too much to call for discussion. Nationalism, that is, the division of the assembly into bodies made up of such or such a people, is a novelty which dates little beyond three centuries, though in this system are many dear children of God. The Reformation did not touch directly the question of the true character of God's assembly; it did nothing directly to restore it to its primitive estate; it did what was much more important—it put in evidence the truth of God as to that which saves souls with far more clearness and with a far more powerful effect than the modern revival. But it did not re-establish the assembly in its primitive powers; on the contrary it brought about its subjection generally to the state in order to get free of the pope, because it counted, the papal authority dangerous, and considered all the subjects of a country as Christians.

3. Position of Dissent

We are then agreed that the gathering of all the children of God in one is Recording to the Lord's intention expressed in His word. But I ask in passing, Can we believe that the dissenting “churches,” such as they are in this or any other country, have attained or are at all likely to attain this end?

This truth of the gathering of God's children scripture shows us realized in different localities! and in each central locality the Christians residing there formed but one body. The scriptures are

perfectly clear on this. Objections are raised on the possibility of this gathering; but they present no evidence drawn from the word. How could this be in London or Paris? It was practicable in Jerusalem where more than five thousand saints gathered; and if they met in private houses and upper rooms, they were none the less but one body led by one Spirit, with one government in one communion, and they were owned as such. Hence at Corinth or elsewhere a letter addressed to the assembly of God would have reached a known body. I can go farther and say that evidently we ought ardently to desire pastors and teachers to guide and instruct these congregations; and that God did raise them up in the assembly as presented to us in the word.

If these important truths are owned, first, the gathering of all God's children, and, secondly—this in the same district; if it is owned besides, that they are clearly so brought out in the word of God; the question might seem settled. But wait.

It cannot be denied that this fact affirmed by the word (for it is a fact, not a theory) has ceased to exist. The question then to settle is this: How ought a Christian to judge and act when a state of things described in the word has ceased to exist? You say, Restore it. Your answer is a proof of the evil; it supposes power in yourselves. Understand the word, I reply, and obey the word as far as it applies to a like state of ruin. Your answer supposes, first, that it is God's will to restore the economy after its failure; and, secondly, that you are capable of restoring it and sent for the purpose. I doubt each of these pretensions.

Suppose a case: God made man innocent; God gave man His law. Every Christian will confess that sin is an evil, and that one ought not to commit it. Suppose one convinced of this truth should undertake to accomplish the law, or to be innocent, and so to please God. You will say at once that he is self-righteous, he trusts in his own strength, and does not understand the word of God. A return from the evil which exists to what God first established is therefore not always a proof of understanding His word and His will. Nevertheless, to own What He originally set up was good, and that we have departed from it, is evidently at least a sound judgment.

Apply this to the assembly. We all (for it is such alone I address) own that God formed assemblies; we own that Christians, in a word the assembly in general, have sadly departed from what. God set up, and that we are guilty therein. To undertake to restore it all on its original footing is or may be an effect of the same spirit as that which leads a man to restore his own uprightness when lost.

Before I can accede to your pretensions, you must show me, not only that the assembly was originally such, but that it is God's will to restore it to its original glory, now that man's wickedness has spoiled all that and it has gone astray; and, further, to come to facts, that the gathering of two or three, or of two or three and twenty, has the right to call itself God's assembly, for this was the assemblage of all the faithful. You must show us, moreover, that you have received of God the mission and the gift to gather the faithful, so that you can treat those who do not answer to the call as schismatics [heretics] self-condemned, and as strangers to the assembly of God.

And here let me insist on a most important point overlooked by those bent on making “churches.” They have been so preoccupied with their churches that they have lost sight of the church or assembly. In scripture all the gathered saints compose the assembly; and the church or assembly in a given place was just the regular association of what formed part of the entire body, that is, of all the body of Christ—here below. He who was not of the assembly—where he lived was not at all

of God's assembly; and he who says that I am not of God's assembly where I reside has no right to allow that I am of God's assembly at all. There was no such separation of ideas between the little assemblies of God in a given district and all the assembly. Each member of Christ was in the assembly where he lived. Nobody imagined himself to be in God's assembly if outside—where he lived. Making “churches” has separated the two and almost destroyed the idea of God's assembly.

Returning to the case already before us, let us now suppose the man's conscience touched, and life received by the Spirit of God: what will be the effect? In the first place it will make him acknowledge his state of ruin by sin and the utter lack of uprightness; in the next place he will feel an entire dependence on God and submission of heart to His judgment on such a state.

Apply this to the assembly and all the economy. Whilst men slept, the enemy sowed tares. The assembly is ruined, plunged into the world and lost there, invisible if you will, whilst it ought to present as from a lampstand the light of God. If it is not in this state of ruin, I ask of our dissenting brethren, why have you left it? If it is, confess this ruin, this departure from its primitive state. Alas! it is too evident. Abram may receive men-servants and maidservants, oxen, camels, and asses; but his spouse is in Pharoah's house.

What then is the effect of the Spirit's operation? what the fruit of faith? To own the ruin-state, to have the conscience exercised by faith, and to be humbled in consequence. And shall we who are guilty pretend to restore all that? No: it would but prove that we are not humbled. Let us rather search with humility what God in His word says of such a state of things; let us not, like a child who has broken a precious vase, attempt to put together the broken bits in the hope of hiding the damage from the eyes of others.

4. Can Man Restore The Fallen Economy?

I press this on such as pretend to organize assemblies. If they exist, they are not called to make them. If, as they say, they existed at the beginning and then ceased to exist, in this case the economy is ruined and gone from its original standing. Their pretension then is to restore it; and this is what they must justify: else they have no foundation for their attempt.

It is objected that the assembly cannot fail, Christ having promised that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I agree, if it be understood thereby that the glory of the risen assembly will triumph over Satan, God securing the maintenance of the confession of Jesus on the earth till He comes. This however is not the question, nor the safety of the elect, which was sure before there was an assembly gathered. But if people mean to assert that the present economy cannot fail, it is a great and pernicious error; and if so, why have you separated from the state around? If His economy in the gathering of the assembly subsists without failure, why are you making new “churches?” Popery alone is consistent here.

But what says the word? That the apostasy is to come before the judgment (2 Thess. 2); that in the last days perilous times shall come (2 Tim. 3), when there should be a form of godliness without the power. It adds, “From such turn away.” And the idea that the economy cannot fall away is treated in Rom. 11 as a fatal presumption which leads the Gentiles to their ruin. The Holy Spirit condemns those who so think as wise in their own eyes, and teaches us on the contrary that God would act toward the present economy exactly as He did toward the past that if it continue in His goodness, His goodness would continue toward it; if not, the economy must be cut off. Thus the

word reveals, not restoration, but cutting off in case of unfaithfulness. To set about re-making the assembly and the assemblies on the footing they had at first is to own the ruin, without submitting to the witness of God as to His mind in reference to such a state of ruin. It is to act according to our own thoughts and to rely on our own strength for realizing them; and what has been the result?

The question is not, whether such assemblies existed at the epoch when the word was written, but after that by man's iniquity they ceased to exist and the faithful were scattered (and such are the acknowledged facts), whether those who have undertaken the apostolic work of restoring them on the original footing, and thereby re-establishing the entire economy, have understood God's mind and are endowed with power to accomplish what they have taken on themselves—questions widely distinct. I do not believe that even the most zealous of those who, with a desire ever so sincere (and David was sincere in his desire to build the temple, though this was not God's will for him), have sought to restore the fallen economy, are in a condition to do so, or that they have the right to impose on my faith as God's assembly the little edifices they have reared. Nevertheless I am far from believing that there have not been assemblies when God sent His apostles for the purpose of establishing them; and it appears to me that he who cannot distinguish these two states of things, what it was of old, and its present condition, has not a very clear judgment in the things of God.

Chapter 58

The Assembly of God: Its Present State and the Duties That Result: 5-10

5. If Restoration Cannot Be, What Is To Be Done? (through 10)

It will be said that the word and the Spirit abide with the assembly. This is true, God be praised; it is this which gives all my confidence. To lean thereon is just what the assembly needs to learn. Therefore do I ask what the word and the Spirit say of the state of the assembly when fallen, in place of pretending to claim competency to make good what the Spirit has said of the primitive state of the assembly. I complain that people have followed the thoughts of men imitating what the Spirit describes as having existed in the primitive assembly, instead of seeking what the word and Spirit have said of our actual state.

The same word and the same Spirit which by Isaiah bade the inhabitants of Jerusalem remain quiet, and God would deliver them from the Assyrian, said by Jeremiah that he who would go out to the Chaldeans would save his life. What was faith and obedience in one of these cases was presumption and disobedience in the other. Will it be objected that this embroils the simple? I answer that those who would re-organize the assembly ought to be well taught in the word and to abstain from pleading such simplicity. The humbleness which feels the true state of the assembly, it may be added, would have been preserved from a pretension which reaches forward in an ill-founded activity.

The truth is that even those scriptures, which have been cited already, prove that the state of the economy at its close will be entirely opposed to that of its beginning. And the passage quoted from the Epistle to the Romans (11:22) is positive that God will cut off the economy, instead of restoring it, if it has not continued in His goodness. The passage “My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not” (Hag. 2:5) is a very sure and precious principle. The presence of the Spirit is the keystone of all our hope. But this prophetic encouragement of Haggai never led Nehemiah, faithful to God when Israel returned from captivity, to pretend to do the work of Moses, who had been faithful in all His house (Heb. 3) at the beginning of that economy. No; he owns in the clearest and most touching terms the fallen state of Israel, and that they were “in great affliction.” He does all that the word authorized him to do in the circumstances wherein he found himself; but he never pretended to make an ark of the covenant as Moses had done and because Moses did so, nor to establish the Shechinah which God alone could do, nor Urim and Thummim, nor to arrange the genealogies as long as they had not Urim and Thummim. But we are told in the word that the enjoyed blessing which had not been since Joshua's time, because he was faithful to God in their actual circumstances, without pretending to do again what, Moses had done and what Israel had spoiled. If he had done so, it would have been human confidence and not obedience.

Obedience, not imitation of the apostles, is as to this our place. It is much more humbling; but at any rate it is more humble and sure; and this is all that I seek and ask—that the assembly be more humble. To be content with evil as if we could do nothing is not obedience; but no more is it to

imitate the apostles. The conviction of the presence of the Holy Spirit delivers us at the same time from the bad thought of being obliged to abide in evil, and from the pretension to go beyond what the Holy Spirit is working at this moment; or from considering one or other of these positions a state of order.

Am I asked, Do you wish our arms to hang down and ourselves reduced to do nothing till we have apostles? By no means. I only doubt that it is God's will for you to do what the apostles have done; and I say that God has left to faithful Christians directions sufficient for the state of things in which the assembly is found. To follow His directions is to obey far more truly than if one try to imitate the apostles.

6. Direction Of The Spirit For The Present State Of Things

Besides, I say that the Spirit of God is always present to strengthen us in this way of true obedience. God's Spirit who foresaw all that was to befall the assembly has given in the word the warnings and at the same time the helps that are needful. If He warns us that difficult times would come in the last days, and if He describes the men of those times, He adds, From these turn away. If He says to me, Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14), and this warning is for all times; if He tells us that we, the many, are one body, for we are all partakers of the one bread; and if nevertheless I do not find a like union of the saints, He tells me at the same time that, where two or three are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, He is in the midst of them.

Those who would form assemblies appear, though with a good desire, to have entirely forgotten the need of power as well as of directions. When they tell us that all the directions for the assemblies are for all times and all places, I ask if they are for times and places when assemblies do not exist. And we always come back to this question: If the economy is in a state of ruin, who is to make assemblies? Once more, Is the direction, given by the apostle for the exercise of the gift of tongues, for our times? Undoubtedly if the gift exists; but this condition is purely a very important modification of your rule, and the very turning point of the question.

7. Does The Word Of God Authorize The Naming Of Presidents Or Pastors?

Those who are so strong for making and organizing assemblies quote with the most perfect confidence the Epistles to Timothy and Titus as serving for direction to the assemblies in all ages, whilst they were not addressed to any assembly whatever. Observe, that the quotations from God's word on matters of most moment for those who organize assemblies, such as the sanction of elders, deacons, &c. can be drawn from these Epistles only. And it is remarkable enough that the confidential companions of the apostle were left in the assemblies, or sent to them, when they already existed, to make these selections for them: a clear proof that the apostle could not confer that power on the assemblies, even when assemblies existed which he had formed himself. And yet this is presented as guidance for the assemblies in all ages!

8. The Children Of God Have Only To Meet, Relying On The Promise Of The Lord

To what end have I then pleaded? That nothing should be done? No; but in the desire that there should be less presumption; that there should be more modesty in what we pretend to do; and more sorrow at the state of ruin to which we have reduced the assembly.

If you tell me, “I have abandoned the evil which my conscience disapproves and which is contrary to the word,” well and good. If you insist on what the word of God wishes, that the saints should be one and united, on what it says that, where two or three are gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus, He is in the midst of them, I repeat, well and good. But if you tell me that you have organized an assembly, or that you have united with others in order to do so, that you have chosen a president or a pastor, and that thus you are the assembly of God in the place, I would ask you: Dear friends, who has authorized your doing all that? Even according to your principle of imitation (though to imitate power is a very ridiculous idea, and “the kingdom of God is in power”), where do you find all that in the word? There I see no trace of the assembly having elected presidents or pastors. You say, For the sake of order it must be so. I answer that I cannot abandon the word or swerve from it. “He that gathereth not with me scattereth.” To say that it must be is only human reasoning. Your order, constituted by the will of man, will soon be found to be disorder before God. If two or three only are gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus, there will He be found. If God raises up in your midst pastors, or if He sends them to you, it is well; for it is a great blessing. But, since the day when the Holy Ghost formed the assembly, nothing is found in the word as to the assembly choosing them.

What is to be done then? you will say to me. What faith is always to do; that is, to recognize its own weakness, and to put itself under dependence on God. God is enough at all times for His assembly. If you are only two or three, gather together; you will find Christ in your midst. Appeal to Him. He can raise up all that is necessary for the blessing of the saints, and most surely He will do it. It is not pride and pretension to be something when we are nothing which will assure us blessing. In how many places has not the blessing of the saints been injured by choosing presidents and pastors! In how many has not this been the occasion of the ruin of the presidents themselves! In how many places would not the saints have assembled with joy in virtue of the promise made by Christ to two or three, if they had not been frightened by this pretended necessity of organization, by the accusations of disorder.(as if man were wiser than God), and if this fear had not made them continue in a state of things which they recognized to be bad! And in these bodies which man had thus organized, one often ruled alone or several disputed. That which the church particularly needs is the sense of its ruin and of that which it lacks—a sense which makes it take refuge in God with confession which separates itself from all known evil, recognizing the Spirit of Christ as the only government of the assembly, and each of these He sends according to the gift he has received, and that with thanksgiving to Him who, by this gift, makes such and such a brother the servant of all.

To recognize the world as being the assembly or to, aim at re-establishing the assembly are two things equally condemned by the word and destitute of its authority.

If you say to me, What is to be done then? I answer, Why are you always thinking of doing something? To recognize the sin which has brought us where we are, to humble ourselves completely before the Lord, and, separating ourselves from all we know to be evil, to lean upon Him, who is able to do all that is necessary for our blessing, without aiming ourselves at doing anything above that which His word authorizes us to attempt—this is indeed a position truly humble, but, in proportion, blessed of God.

A point of the greatest importance, and one which those who wish to organize assemblies seem to have entirely forgotten, is that there is such a thing as power, and that the Holy Spirit alone can gather and edify the assembly. They seem to believe that; the moment they have a few passages of scripture, all they have to do is to follow them. But, under the appearance of faithfulness, there is this most fatal error: they put aside the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. We cannot follow the word but by the power of God. The constitution of the assembly was a direct effect of the power of the Holy Spirit. To lay aside this power while pretending, to copy the primitive assembly, is strange self-deception.

I know that those who consider these small organized bodies as the church of God, view every other meeting of God's children simply as an assembly of men. As to this there is a very simple answer. These brothers have no promise which authorizes them to re-form the assemblies of God when they are divided; whilst there is the positive promise that where two or three are gathered to the name of Jesus, He is in their midst. Thus there is no promise in favor of the system which organizes assemblies, whilst there is one for the despised gathering together of God's children.

And what is the effect of the pretensions of these bodies? It is to nourish pride in their presidents and in their members, and to disgust and repel those who compare these pretensions with the reality. And this hinders the desired result, which is the union of the children of God. In such or such a locality the gifts of the pastor may produce great effect; or it may happen that all the Christians are united, and there will be much joy. But the same thing would take place where there was no pretension to be the assembly of God.

9. Summary

I conclude by a few propositions—

1. The object to be desired is the gathering of all God's children.

2. The power of the Holy Spirit alone can effect this.

3. Any number of believers need not wait till that power produces the union of all, because they have the promise that, where two or three are gathered together to the name of the Lord, He will be in their midst; and two or three may act in reliance on this promise.

4. The necessity of ordination in order to administer the Lord's Supper nowhere appears in the New Testament; and it is clear that it was to break bread Christians came together on the Lord's day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-23).

5. A commission from man to preach the gospel is unknown to the New Testament.

6. The choosing of presidents and pastors by the assembly is altogether unwarranted by the New Testament. The election of a president is merely human and quite unauthorized. It is a mere intervention of our willfulness in the concerns of God's assembly, an action pregnant with evil consequences. The choice of pastors is a daring encroachment on the Holy Spirit's rights who distributes according to His own will. Alas! for him who does not profit by the gift which God grants to another. When elders were appointed, it was either by the apostles, or by those whom they directed for the purpose to the assemblies. If the assembly is in ruin, even for such a state God is sufficient; who will lead on and guide His children if they walk in humility and obedience, without

setting about a work to which God has not called them.

7. It is clearly the duty of a believer to separate from every act that he sees to be not according to the word, though bearing with him who unintelligently does so. And his duty requires this of him, even though his faithfulness should cause him to stand alone, and though, like Abram, he should be obliged to go out, not knowing whither he goes.

10. Conclusion

My design in these few pages has not been to show, either the ruined condition of the assembly, or yet that the present dispensation cannot be again set up, but rather to propose a question which usually is altogether misapprehended by those who undertake to organize churches. The ruin of the assembly has been briefly considered in another tract. But as a brother, to whom these pages were read, felt that this question of present ruin was awakened in his mind, and desired to have some proof to satisfy such as were in like manner exercised, I add a few sentences.

a. The parable of the wheat-and-tare field gives us the Lord's judgment on this point—that the evil wrought in the field where the good seed had been sown was not to be remedied but to continue until the harvest. Let it be borne in mind that the parable has nothing to do with discipline among God's children, but relates to the question of a remedy for evil brought in by Satan whilst men slept, and to the restoring the economy to its primitive footing. The question is decided with summary authority by the Lord in the negative; for He tells us that throughout its course no remedy shall be applied to the evil—that the time of the harvest, or the judgment at the end of the age, will extirpate it, and that till then the evil is to go on. Let us here call to mind that our separation from evil, and the enjoyment of Christ's presence with the “two or three,” are altogether distinct from the pretension to set up again this economy now that the evil is come in. The former is both a duty and a privilege; the latter is fruit of pride and neglect of the word.

b. Rom. 11, already quoted, expressly tells us that the present dispensation shall be dealt with like that which went before it, and that, if it continued not in God's goodness, it would be cut off, not restored.

c. 2 Thess. 2 teaches us that “the mystery of iniquity” was already working, and that, when an obstacle which then existed was to be taken out of the way, the “wicked one” would be revealed, whom the Lord is to consume with the breath of His mouth and to destroy with the manifestation of His coming. Thus the evil that began in apostolic days was to continue, ripen and manifest itself, when it would be consumed by the Lord's appearing.

d. 2 Tim. 3 shows the same thing, that is, the ruin (not the restoration) of the dispensation; for in the last days perilous times are to comb and men be lovers of their own selves (from whom the Spirit calls us to “turn away"), evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

e. Jude also shows that the evil which had already crept into the assembly would be the object of judgment when the Lord came (compare verses 4 and 14); and this awful truth is confirmed by the analogy of all the ways of God with man. For man has perverted and corrupted what God had given him for his blessing; and God has never repaired the evil, but brought forth something better after judging the iniquity. And this better thing has been in its turn corrupted, until at length

everlasting blessing is brought in. When the economy was a revelation to sinners, God gathered a feeble remnant of believers from among the unbelieving, and transferred them into that new blessing which He established instead of what had been corrupted; as for example the residue of Jews into the assembly at Pentecost, and so on. So in Rom. 11 we are taught that the Lord will similarly deal with the present dispensation.

f. The same thing is seen in the Revelation. As soon as “the things that are,” or the seven churches, are brought to a close, the prophet is taken to heaven: and all that follows has to do, not with anything acknowledged as an assembly, but with divine providence in the world.

I have done no more than refer to a few express passages; but the more God's word is studied, the more do we find this solemn truth confirmed. I say then, Do all that you can, but pretend not to do what exceeds that which the Lord has given you, which would but betray the pretensions and the weaknesses of the flesh. Humility of heart and spirit is the sure way not to be found fighting against the truth; for God giveth grace to the humble. May His name of grace and mercy be forever blessed! J. N. D.

Chapter 59

Babylon

Revelation 17, 18

“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” This is a saying much to be remembered. It teaches us that we are not to make ourselves the judges of what sanctification or holiness is; God's word is to determine this, because holiness is that character or mind which is formed by God's word or truth.

We are apt to think that our own moral sense of things is the rule of holiness. But the word of God claims to be such, a rule: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). An act may be unholy, though done with a good conscience, because “the truth,” and not the conscience, is the rule of holiness.

If that rule were applied to many a thing which the moral sense or the religions sense of man approves, how it would change its character! And the Lord cannot change His standard of holiness, though He may be infinitely gracious to the shortcomings of His saints.

Those other words, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth,” which stand in connection, have their own force and value also. Thus, in the whole of His utterance in John 17, the Lord strongly takes a place apart from the world, and puts His saints in the like place, praying that they may be kept there. In this sense, I believe, He speaks of sanctifying Himself. Through all this church-age He is apart from the world and the earth; and sanctification depends on our communion with Him in that separated place. “The truth,” testifying as it does of Him, links us with Him in that place; and sanctification is thus “through the truth,” leading us to fellowship with an unworldly Jesus.

We may see instances of such sanctification from the beginning.

When the ground was cursed for man's sake, holiness was separation from it, as in the persons of the antediluvian saints; uncleanness was cleaving to it, as did the family of Cain.

When the earth again corrupted itself, and God judged it by the scattering of the nations, holiness was separation from it, as in Abraham; and apostasy was a clinging to it in spite of judgment; as Nimrod did.

When Canaan was judged, Achan's sin savored of the apostate mind; but Israel became a holy people by separating from it, and from all people of the earth, by the ordinances of God and the sword of Joshua.

But Israel revolts. The circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and with them all on the face of the earth or in the world becomes defiled, and holiness is separation from it in companionship with a rejected and heavenly Christ.

The whole system, the world, is the judged or cursed thing now. It is the Jericho. While the camp lingers in the wilderness, we may be at charges or in labors on a mission to draw out the Rehabs;

but we cannot seek the improvement of Jericho, or display the resources and capabilities of the world. The world, as including other thoughts, is also any moral or religions system or undertaking which does not act in company with a rejected and heavenly Christ. Such doings would be unholy, not according to “the truth,” however morally conducted or benevolently intentioned.

To glory without going on to “perfection” in a crucified Christ will not, if alone, be the “perfection” in this age; there must be companionship with a rejected Christ also. Babylon, I believe, the mystic Babylon of the Revelation, may be brought to boast in a crucified Christ, and be Babylon still. For what is it as delineated by the Spirit? Is it not a thing worldly in character, as well as abominable and idolatrous in doctrine and practice? Rev. 18 gives us a sight of Babylon in its worldliness, as chap. xvii. more in its idolatries. Babylon of old, as in the land of Chaldea, was full of idols, and guilty of the blood or of the sorrows of the righteous. But it had also this mark: it displayed greatness in the world in the time of Jerusalem's depression.. So with the mystic Babylon. She has her abominations in the midst of her, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus stains her; but still more fully is She disclosed as great and splendid and joyous in the earth during the age of Christ's rejection. She is important in the world in that day when the judgment of God is preparing for the world; she can glorify herself and live deliciously in a defiled place.

It is not that she outwardly ignores the cross of Christ. She is not heathen. She may publish Christ crucified, but she refuses to know Christ rejected. She does not continue with Him in His temptations, nor consider the poor and needy Jesus (Luke 22; Psa. 40). The kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth are her friends, and the inhabitants of the earth are her subjects.

Is not, then, the rejection of Christ the thing she practically scorns? Surely it is. And again, I say, the prevailing thought of the Spirit about her is this—she is that which is exalted in the world while God's Witness is depressed, and in defiance of that depression, for she knows of it. Babylon of old well knew of the desolation of Jerusalem; Christendom externally knows and publishes the cross of Jesus.

Babylon of old was very bold in her defiance of the grief of Zion. She made the captives of Zion to contribute to her greatness and her enjoyments. Nebuchadnezzar had done this with the captive youths, and Belshazzar with the captive vessels.

This was Babylon, and in spirit this is Christendom. Christendom is the thing which glorifies herself and lives deliciously in the earth, trading in all that is desirable and costly in the world's esteem, in the very face of the sorrow and rejection of that which is God's. Christendom practically forgets Christ rejected on the earth.

The Medo-Persian power is another creature. He removes Babylon, but exalts himself Dan. 6). And this is the action of “the beast” and his ten kings. The woman, mystically Babylon, is removed by the ten kings; but then they give their power to the beast, who exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, as Darius the Mede did.

This is the closing crowning feature in the picture of the world's apostasy. But we have not reached it yet. Our conflict is with Babylon and not with the Mede, with that which lives deliciously and in honor during the age of Jerusalem's ruins (i.e., of the rejection of Christ).

Chapter 60

The Call of Abraham

Genesis 12:1-9

This chapter occupies a place of great importance, being the first public call by which the saint is separated from the world. The book of Genesis brings out the great principles of God's dealings with those taught of the Spirit to know His mind. He acts as the God of Abram, as later of Isaac and of Jacob; not here as the God of the whole world, though this is true, but specially of His elect. He is pleased to identify Himself with them, and is not ashamed to be called their God (Heb. 11), as they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly. We are partakers of heavenly calling, not of earthly like Israel. The time is soon coming when God will bind Satan and take the world as a whole for His kingdom (Rev. 11:15); as He anticipatively proclaimed Himself “Lord of all the earth” when Joshua in His name led Israel across the Jordan on dry ground. Till then He is the God of those called out to Himself.

Within the chosen family, Abram is the depositary of promise, the root of the olive-tree of testimony; Isaac figures the son in resurrection and heavenly places, after the sacrifice; as Jacob sets forth Israel's history, an outcast from the land, but brought back again. In Joseph we see the beloved of his father, handed over by his brethren to the Gentiles, but out of the depth of humiliation exalted to the right hand of the throne, whence in famine he ministers to both Jew and Gentile. But further we see him who was separated from his brethren, and then glorified in another and a larger sphere, making himself known to his brethren in sovereign grace and earthly blessing, when they are brought down, in the person of Judah, to own their sin against their guileless brother and their loving father. So rich are the germs of truth in Genesis—the wonderful introduction to the Bible.

In Noah another principle had been brought out: government for the restraint of evil; and then the whole order of the earth, in not only the families of men, but their tongues, countries, and nations. For corruption had come in, man set up in responsible rule having failed (as we see in Gen. 9, and more and more in Gen. 10, 11). It was not only violent self-exaltation in Nimrod, nor the rebellious unity of men in the confederacy of Babel; but another evil entered (Josh. 24:2), Satan elevating himself as head of power and object of divine worship. For “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20). Thus came in the destructive delusion of the heathen—ascribing those things which God did to Satan, and setting Satan in God's place; which seduced even the forefathers of Abram, not the sons of Ham or Japheth merely but the line of Shem too. “They served other gods.” Separation therefore became imperative: God's witness must be called and come out thence. For what communion has light with darkness? and what agreement has God's worshipper with an idolater? Abram is therefore called of God to get out of his country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house.

The chapter divides itself into two parts: ver. 1-9, and ver. 10-20. The first tells us what Abram was, blessed in connection with God; the second, what he became in failure through his own thoughts and ways. On the latter we do not enlarge at this time.

In the first part (ver. 1-9) two things appear, God calls Abram out to a land which he is to show him. Abram is thereon a pilgrim and stranger. But again Abram worships when in the land. He pitches his tent here and there in Canaan, and in Canaan he builds an altar here and there (ver. 7,8).

The special blessing of the believer then as now cannot be without separation from all God's natural order of things, where Satan had succeeded in setting himself up. God did not say, Leave the worship of Satan (or of other gods), but “Get thee out” (ver. 1). So in the days of our Lord the Jewish system, or God's natural order regulated by His law, had fallen so completely under Satan as to be the main power in crucifying the Son of God. Therefore He called His sheep outside, as He tells us in John 10, “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him for they know His voice.” God's ties before were by natural order, by family blessings and inheritances. But out of all these, as well as the idolatrous evil, Abram was called. The link of false worship must be thoroughly broken. Correction of one's ways in the old country is not enough. “Get thee out,” is the word, “into a land that I will show thee.”

Then Abram, “chosen” and “called,” has the “promise” of blessing—not Adam, but Abram. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (ver. 2, 3). We do not hear, of “thy seed” till ver. 7. Abram is made to be a head and center of blessing, with a curse on him that cursed Abram; for it is not heaven but earth as yet, “a land that I will show thee.” The “one” seed is in ch. 22:18, where nothing is said of the stars or the sand. Compare Gal. 3:16.

The same principle applied even to Israel when defiled by idolatry (Ex. 32): only that here judgment was at once executed on the guilty leaders. The people mourned and no man put on him his ornaments (Ex. 33). “And Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp” (ver. 7). Compare Heb. 13:13.

So there is nothing for us now to rest on but God's word. What God calls us to is to believe His word. By His word all things were made and subsist; by His word heavens of old, and an earth having its subsistence out of water and in water, the then world, perished under a deluge. To the believer His word is a necessary authority, he being governed by the obedience of faith; as here we see that all turned on “Jehovah had said” (ver. 1).

But a believer may be hindered when right in the main. Abram departed, but did not for years get into Canaan; he could not because of Terah his father. “Terah took Abram and they came unto Haran and dwelt there” (Gen. 11:31). When Terah died there, “they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came” (ch. 12:5). The call of God had been only partially obeyed. Abram got out of his country, but not from his father's house; and nature, thwarted the results of faith. He went with Terah to go into Canaan, but not in the simplicity of faith, and therefore did not get there; for they came to Haran and abode there. Now Haran was not Canaan. Nature cannot break from nature; but faith can. Here it was failure from natural order in the flesh resisting faith. It was not faith really, though Abram was a believer. Nothing can set aside

the immediate and personal responsibility of obedience to God's word; nothing can rightly be between the soul and God but His word. The error in Christendom at all times springs from putting something between. All the instrumentality of the Lord is by the word and Spirit to bring the soul to God; as He suffered once for sins to accomplish it. This principle God never gives up—the immediate claim of obedience to His word.

Abram blessed in Canaan answers to the Christian united to Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 1, 2); and as now our conflict is with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, so for Abram “the Canaanite was then in the land” (ver. 6). Thus is here presented to us our actual position by union with Christ, which faith has to make good against the wiles of the devil. Our bodies are here on earth; but we are seated in heavenly places in Christ and have to resist the enemy there, who would make us forget and act inconsistently with our calling and position as one with Christ.

Hence our walk is to be preeminently by faith, not only our justification and salvation, but our walk and our worship. It will not be so unless founded like Abram's on the divine revelation of Himself in Canaan. “And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land; and there builded he an altar unto the Loan who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD” (ver. 7, 8). Faith acts on the word, receives God's testimony, and finds itself not of the world—yea, of heaven, as Christ is, and in virtue of Christ. Such is the true and proper worship of the Christian, heavenly, and (we may add) of the Father, His Father and our Father, His God and our God, founded on His full revelation of Himself. And the true and proper walk of the Christian, as a stranger and pilgrim here below, goes with it. It supposes peace with God known and enjoyed, and Christ Himself our peace in heaven, blotting out all legal distinction of Jew and Gentile, which kept up distance from God and between men. Now that we have redemption in Christ through His blood, and draw near in spirit where He is—into the holiest, the old reserve and all that appertained to it are gone forever; and in this as in other ways we are called, as God's assembly, to make known (not to the world, but) to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the all-various wisdom of God.

On the latter half of the chapter, the history of Abram's failure in faith, we do not now speak: what we have seen is the call, worship, and walk of faith.

J. N. D.

Chapter 61

The Cambridge Critical Greek Testament

Having brought to a close the examination of the Revised Version with the American Suggestions, I may now turn to a review of these volumes on which two very able and learned men have spent the ungrudging labor of some twenty-seven years. Their outward appearance is at once unpretending and elegant; and the Editors have certainly given the most decisive proof that the old interest of our Island in the study of this, the latest nearest and deepest portion of divine revelation, has revived and extended notably. More strictly than the well-known works of Dean Alford and Bp. Wordsworth, is it a critical contribution, which stands rather with the late Dr. Tregelles' book, and challenges comparison, not so ranch with Lachmann's latest Edition merely, as with Tischendorf's eighth, scarcely yet completed. The difference however is so marked between them, that, while no careful scholar can dispense with the fullness of information furnished only by the great German Editor, it is surely incumbent on him to weigh this W H Testament, not only for its text in Vol. i. framed with scrupulous care on a full consideration of all ancient evidence, but for its distinctive conclusions according to the principles and their application discussed elaborately in Vol. ii. with notes on select readings throughout. Characterized very differently, they are both indispensable to those who would have before them the variants in the MSS. as well as the judgment arrived at by the most recent Editors on the evidence. Perhaps no edition of the Greek New Testament has exhibited greater boldness than the one before us; yet it may relieve some to know that, according to the estimate of our Editors, not more than one eighth of the text affords questions to all the critics; that much the largest part of that eighth consists of most trivial differences; and that, setting aside orthographical discrepancies, one-sixtieth part might cover what is debatable.

Nevertheless I confess to no small surprise that, whatever may be the value of their book in the hands of competent scholars, the Editors should conceive it to be at all adapted for popular use as a manual text of the New Testament, as intimated in ii. 289: why, will appear in the sequel. This notice may suffice as an introduction to a detailed test.

Their method is thus described (ii. 17, 18), “The mode adopted from the first was to work out our results independently of each other, and to hold no counsel together except upon results already provisionally obtained. Such differences as then appeared, usually bearing a very small proportion to the points of immediate agreement, were discussed on paper, and where necessary repeatedly discussed; till either agreement or final difference was reached. These ultimate differences have found expression among the alternative readings. No rule of precedence has been adopted; but documentary attestation has been in most cases allowed to confer the place of honor as against internal evidence, range of attestation being further taken into account as between one well attested reading and another. This combination of completely independent operations permits us to place far more confidence in the results than either of us could have presumed to cherish had they rested on his own sole responsibility. No individual mind can ever act with perfect uniformity, or free itself completely from its own idiosyncracies: the danger of unconscious caprice is inseparable from personal judgment. We venture to hope that the present text has escaped some risks of this kind by being the production of two editors of different habits of mind, working

independently and to a great extent on different plans, and then giving and receiving free and full criticism wherever their first conclusion had not agreed together. For the principles, arguments, and conclusions set forth in the Introduction and Appendix both editors are alike responsible. It was however for various reasons expedient that their exposition and illustration should proceed throughout from a single hand; and [P therefore] the writing of this volume [ii] and the other accompaniments of the text has devolved on Dr. Hort." This will explain some singular results which appear here and there from first to last throughout the work and will in due time call for notice.

The effort throughout is to reduce all to the level of "the scientific." How this works practically remains to be seen.

The following table, copied from p. 15, will be found in several ways helpful to the student and not without interest to every Christian reader who will bear in mind that the great Uncials are conventionally cited under capitals, Roman, Greek, or Hebrew.

Fragg=Fragments|Select Readings|Collations|Continuous Texts|

à all books complete|1860||1862|

B all books exc. part of Heb., Epp. Past., and Apoc.|(1580)|1788, 1799|(1857) 1859 1867, 1868|

A all books||1657|1786|

C fragg. of nearly all books|1710|1751, 2|1843|

Q fragg. Lc. Jo.|(? 1752)||1762, 1860|

T frag. Jo. [Lc.]|||1789|

D Evv. Act.|1550|1657|1793, 1864|

D2 Paul|(1582)||1852|

N fragg. Evv.|(1751) + 1773 + 1830||1846, 1876|

P fragg. Evv.|(? 1752)||1762, 1869|

R fragg. Lc.|||1857|

Z fragg. Mt.|||1801, 1880|

[Σ Mt. Mc.]|(1880)|||

L Evv.|1550|1751, 1785|1746|

Ξ fragg. Lc. |||1861|

Δ Evv. G Paul exc. Heb.||1710|1836 +1791|

E2 Acts|||1715, 1870|

P2 all books exc. Evv.|||1865, +1869|

This, compared with the various editions since the Complut. and Erasmian, may serve to show “the disadvantages under which the Greek text of the New Testament was first printed from late and inferior MSS.; the long neglect to take serious measures amending it; the slow process of the accumulation and study of evidence; the late date at which any considerable number of corrections on ancient authority were admitted into the slightly modified Erasmian text that reigned by an accidental prescription, and the very late date at which ancient authority was allowed to furnish not scattered touchings but the whole body of text from beginning to end; and lastly the advantage enjoyed by the present generation in the possession of a store of evidence largely augmented in amount and still more in value, as well as in the ample instruction afforded by previous criticism and previous texts.”

The resources of textual criticism are shown to rise, in judging between variants, from Internal Evidence of “readings” (intrinsic and transcriptional) to that of “documents” and “groups of documents,” as well as to what is called “genealogical” evidence (sometimes complicated by “mixture"); yet there are confessedly rival early readings which do not yield to what is here designated “the highest evidence” but are intrinsically to be condemned. The chief faults in this description are two, and they are very grave to a believer: (1) the reasoning proceeds as if the New Testament stood on no better grounds than any other book; and (2) that the Spirit of God has nothing to do with enabling the believer to form a sound judgment!

Chapter 62

The Captives in Babylon

The Babylonish Captivity, considered as an era in the progress of divine dispensations, was most important and significant. We may well treat it as a very principal station in our journey along that path of light and wisdom which is cast up in scripture for God's way-faring men to tread, and tarry there for a little and look around us.

We may speak of it, generally, as the great conclusive judgment upon the people of Israel in Old Testament times; but it was preceded by a long series of other judgments of an inferior or less weighty character. And it is well to trace them shortly, that we may be moved and humbled by such a sight as they afford us of the incompetency and unfaithfulness of man under every condition of stewardship and responsibility.

These judgments began, I may say, by the retirement of Moses for forty years in the land of Midian. Israel, then in Egypt, lost their deliverer, because they knew not that by his hand God would redeem them; as we read in Acts 7:25.

After they left Egypt, and got into the wilderness on their way to Canaan, they were doomed or judged for another forty years to wander there, because they did not receive the report of the Spies, but disesteemed the promised land.

When they have reached Canaan and are settled as a nation there, they are for renewed iniquity chastised again and again by the hand of their neighbors, but at length are more signally judged by being put under the tyranny of King Saul (see Hos. 13:11).

In process of time they flourish into a kingdom: God gives them the choicest of His people, the man after His own heart to reign over them. This was one of God's gifts; Saul had been one of His judgments. The reigns of David and Solomon were the exhibition of strength and honor in Israel. But, the house of David becoming reprobate, judgment visits it by the revolt of the Ten Tribes.

The kingdom of the Ten Tribes is thus erected—erected as a judgment upon the house of David, as the kingdom of Saul had afore been raised in judgment on the nation of Israel. But that kingdom of the Ten Tribes proving reprobate in that day, judgment visits them (carrying Israel captive) by the king of Assyria.

The house of David, during this time, was borne with. As a dismantled thing, having but two tribes instead of twelve as its inheritance, it still provokes the anger of the Lord; and then judgment visits Judah by the hand of the Chaldean, as before judgment had visited Israel by the hand of the Assyrian. Judah is a captive in Babylon. So this, as I said, was the great conclusive judgment upon the people of God during the times of the Old Testament. The Lord God of Israel had linked His name and His glory with the house of David, and with the city of Jerusalem; and when that house had fallen and that city was spoiled, judgment in that measure and at that time had completed its work.

Our business from henceforth is with the captives of Judah and Babylon: Israel in Assyria are lost sight of. They are not kept in view by the Spirit of God. They are called “backsliding Israel,” as a people whose distinctness, for the present, is lost and gone; but the prophets of God anticipate their future, and we can foresee that they will be manifested, and brought home, and set in their place again in honor and beauty.

Ere looking at the captives of Judah in Babylon, I would consider the new conditions in which all things are set by the captivity itself. The glory (the symbol of the divine presence), the Gentile, and the Jew, are all affected by it, and at once enter into new conditions.

The glory leaves the earth, and goes to heaven. It had been with Israel from the days of Egypt until now. It had seated itself in the chariot-cloud, and led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness; and then it seated itself in the sanctuary between the cherubim. Israel was the place or people of its dwelling upon the earth. But now, as was seen by Ezekiel, it takes its leave of the earth for heaven, or for the mountain (Ezek. 1-11).

The Gentiles become supreme in the time of Judah's captivity. The sword is formally and solemnly put into the hand of the Chaldean by God Himself; and subjection to him, as ordained to be chief in political or imperial authority in the world, is demanded by God for him. But the glory does not accompany the sword. Chaldea is not the seat of theocracy; divine worship is not established there.

The people of Israel become strangers on the earth. “Ichabod,” the glory is departed, in a more fearful sense than ever, becomes true of them. They are ruined for the present, as a nation once set in glory, honor, strength, and independency. Judah is a captive and stranger.

Such are the new conditions into which all have now entered—the glory, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel.

But here I must notice, for it is a subject full of interest and value to our souls, that there is character unfolded in each of these, by reason of their new conditions.

The glory shows itself most graciously reluctant to leave its ancient-dwelling place. We learn this from the early chapters of Ezekiel; the glory is there seen in uneasy restless action, as I may say. The time had come for its leaving Jerusalem, and it feels the sorrow of such a moment. It passes and repasses between the threshold of the house, which still connected it with the temple, and the wings of the cherubim, which were waiting to bear it away; and this is a sight of deep mysterious consolation. What a secret does it carry to our hearts! The holiness, which must depart, could not cool the love which would fain, if it could, remain: and what a shadow of the Jesus of the Evangelists this is! Israel could not be the rest of either the glory or Jesus. They were polluted; but the glory will linger on the threshold, and Jesus will weep, as He turns His back on the city. Nor will the glory seek any other place on the earth. It had chosen Zion for its rest; and if its rest there be disturbed, it will leave the earth; it will be faithful to Israel, though Israel grieve it and send it away. These are the perfections that give character to the glory, as I may speak, in this the day of its departure from Jerusalem—the day of Judah's captivity in Babylon.

The Gentiles, in this same day, betray a far different sight. No moral beauty distinguishes them—altogether otherwise. They become proud. Elevation under God's hand lifts them up in their

own esteem. They have no care for the sorrows of God's people, but avail themselves of their depression, and rise, all they can, upon their ruins. Ezekiel shows us, as we have already seen, the moral or the character of the departing glory, as Daniel shows us the profane haughtiness of the Gentiles in this same day. It becomes intolerable, as we know, and ends in judgment.

The people of Israel, now humbled, are exercised. Psa. 137 is a breathing which speaks a very gracious state of soul, in the midst of the captives at the waters of Babylon and such men as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, among the returned, and such as Esther and Mordecai, among the dispersion, tell us of a generation or a remnant in character beyond what may have been commonly known in Israel; and thus, as is common with men, prosperity did moral mischief to the Gentile at this time, while depression and trial worked healthfully for the Jew.

This interval of a captivity must, however, come to a close. The rod of the tribe of Judah could not be broken till Shiloh came (Gen. 49). To fulfill this promise, rehearsed in various ways, as it was, again and again, by the prophets, Judah must return out of captivity, and be at home, to receive, if they will, the promised Messiah—the One who, as we, see in Ezekiel, had left them, with such reserve and reluctance.

A return is therefore accomplished; and it is marked by much of the fruit of that healthful exercise, which I have already observed as giving character to the captives. There was nothing of the same glory as that which marked their earlier return from the land of Pharaoh. In that respect the exodus from Babylon was a thing very inferior to the exodus from Egypt. There was no rod of power to do its marvels; no mystic cloud-conductor; no mediator standing in intimacy with the Lord for the people; no supplies from the granaries in heaven. But there was the energy of faith on the journey; and spirits awake to the presence of God, His mind, His will, His glory, and His sufficiency for them.

This return, however, was not universal; nor, even as far as it is extended, was it simultaneous. There was still the dispersion; as well as the returned captives. The books of the captives—Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, give us something of the story of each. Mordecai was of the dispersion; and of those who returned, some came at an earlier moment, like Zerubbabel; others afterward, Like Ezra at one time, and Nehemiah at another.

But I would inquire, Under what warrant or authority were the captives in Babylon enabled to make a return? It will be said, and justly, that God had so purposed and promised it by the mouth of His servant Jeremiah. He had declared that, when the captivity had numbered seventy years, it should end; and, according to this, Daniel, who lived through the whole age of the captivity, but never returned to Jerusalem, made his Supplication for this promised mercy, just as the seventy years were drawing near to their close. The return, we therefore fully own, is to be dated, so to speak, from the sovereignty and counsels of God. The great source of it lies there. But there was a secondary and more immediate warrant for it, the occasion of it, as we speak; and this is, as clearly, seen in the decree of Cyrus, the king of Persia: a decree which he passed in the very first year of his reign, or as soon as God had transferred the sword from the hand of the Chaldean into his hand.

Babylon, which had been the captor, was not given the honor of being the deliverer of Israel. This honor was reserved for another, and such another as was as distinctly named by the prophets of

God, as the period of seventy years had been named.

Cyrus is mentioned in Isa. 44 and 45; his own very name appears there, and had been there two or three hundred years ere he was born. And he is mentioned as the one who was to be the builder of the Temple at Jerusalem. We cannot say that it was so, but we may suggest, that he heard of this amazing fact from some of the captives; and if he did, was it not the instrument by which the Lord stirred up his spirit? And enough, and more than enough, it was to put him upon that great and generous action which he accomplished, and the record of which closes the Books of Chronicles, and opens the Book of Ezra.

We may rather wonder at his not doing more, if he ever had a sight of those divine oracles, than at his doing so much. We might expect that he would himself have become a proselyte; for Isaiah there lets him know, that it was none other than the God of that people (who were then his subjects, and, as I may say, his captives), who had gone before him to clear his way to conquest and dominion.

But be this so or not, his decree, as we know, was the immediate cause, and the full authority for their return.

Further, however, as to this great event and era, the times of the Gentiles, as the Lord Himself speaks, began with the Babylonish captivity; the Gentiles then became supreme, as we have already said, one kingdom succeeding another. And these times of the Gentiles continue still. The return from Babylon has made no difference as to this; for that event left Gentile supremacy unaffected. But these times will end in the judgment of the Apocalyptic beast, and his confederates (Rev. 19), when the stone cut out without hands smites the image.

And we may further say, as to Israel, that this captivity worked a reformation among them. From that time to the present “the unclean spirit,” as the Lord Himself also speaks, has been “out.” Idolatry has not been practiced since then; but though the Jewish house be thus emptied and swept, it is not furnished with its true wealth and ornament. Messiah has not been accepted; and, in principle, Israel has returned to Babylon, where they will remain, till the day of redemption and the kingdom under the grace and power and presence of the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 63

The Captives Returned to Jerusalem: Part 1

(Ezra 1-4)

When we enter the Book of Ezra, we begin the story of the returned captives; we see them in their circumstances, and in their behavior; and from both one and the other we gather instruction.

In much of their condition we read much of our own: and from their behavior, we are either taught, or encouraged, or warned. As we trace their story, we may well be struck by the resemblance it has to our own; so that, from moral kindredness in their condition and ours, we may call them our brethren in something of a special sense.

Having accomplished their journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, we find them at once in much moral beauty; they are what they have, they do what they can, but they do not assume or affect what they have not and what they cannot. They have the word, and they use it. They do their best with the genealogies, so as to preserve the purity of the priesthood and the sanctuary; but they do not affect to do what the Urim and the Thummim would enable them to do, for they have it not.

This is beautiful; they do not refuse to do what they can, because they cannot do all that they would. Their measure they will use, and not quarrel with it because it is small. And yet they stretch not themselves beyond it, but wait till another comes with a further and more perfect measure.

They are quick to raise an altar to the God of Israel. They need not build their temple first. An altar will do for burnt-offerings and for the feast of Tabernacles; and, as a revived people, as a people consciously standing on holy ground again, on the mystic day, the first day of the seventh month, they raise their altar and begin their worship.

This was very fine. It was as the instinct that prompted Noah, as soon as he got out of the ark, to offer his sacrifices; or, as that of David, as soon as he reached the throne, to look after the ark of God.

Israel raised no altar in Egypt—they must go into the wilderness, ere they could offer a sacrifice, or keep a feast, to the Lord. Egypt was the place of the flesh, and of judgment; and deliverance out of it must be accomplished, ere God could duly receive worship at their hand. And so in Babylon: Israel raised no altar there. One might open his window, and pray towards Jerusalem; three or four might make common prayer for mercy and wisdom; in a day of perplexity, they may all together hang their harps upon willows, refusing to sing the songs of Zion there; but they raised no altar in that land of the uncircumcised. But now again in Jerusalem the altar is built, and sacrifices rendered; worship is restored, as Israel is revived. The two things which God has joined together, the glory of His name, and the blessing of His people, are at once seen in the returned captives.

But, further, as soon as the foundation of the Temple is laid, a strange thing is heard—that which could not but be a discord of harsh sounds in the ear of nature, a harmony of hallowed voices in the ear of God and of faith. There are weepings and cries for sorrow, there are shoutings for joy. But, weighed in the balances, all this was harmony; for all was real, all was “to the Lord.”

As some observed a day, and some might once refuse to observe it, and this may appear to be disorder; but each doing what they did “to the Lord,” the highest order was maintained (see Rom. 14): the Spirit so esteems it.

There is, however, more than this. There is real confusion, and that in abundance, as well as this apparent occasional discord. The condition of things is incurably intricate and confused. What a godly Jew must have felt, when he found himself again in the land where David had conquered, where Solomon had reigned, where the glory had dwelt, and the priesthood unto Jehovah had waited on its service!

Such an one may, at that moment, have given the first look at himself; and he would have had to recognize in himself a strange sight in the land where he then found himself, the subject of a Gentile power. Next, looking at his brethren, he would have to say, that some of them were with him, but some still far away among the uncircumcised; and then, taking a wider gaze at the people of the land, he would have to see a seed of corruption, half Jew half heathen, in the place which had once been shared among the seed of Abraham, and them only!

What sights were these! What needed light and energy to deal with and act upon this strange mass of difficulties and contradictions! But that light and energy are beautifully found amongst them. They, who had maintained their Nazariteship in Babylon, would keep it, if need be, in Judge; they, who would not eat the king's meat there, will not have Samaritan alliance in the building of the Temple here. And they distinguish things that differ; they know the Persian, and they know the Samaritan: bowing to the sword and authority of the one, as set over them by ordination of God; and refusing the proffered aid of the other, as being themselves untrue to the God of their fathers.

This is like an anticipation of the Lord's own judgment to returned captives in His day; “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” And it reminds me of their fathers in the wilderness, where they knew the Edomite and the Amorite in their different relations to them; as here, their children know the Samaritan and the Persian. They do nothing in a spirit of rebellion. They will be subject to the “powers that be,” as knowing them “ordained of God.” But religious impurity they repudiate. It is full of instruction, all this, and very pertinent to present conditions among ourselves. These things, or the principles which are found and involved in them, re-appear among the saints of this day.

Faith still recognizes that “salvation” is the ground of “worship” (John 4). That is, that while we are in the flesh, God gets nothing from us; that the place of discipline, such as Babylon was to Israel, is to witness only the service and the rendering of harps hung on willow trees.

Faith still uses the written word in all things; affects nothing beyond its measure; while it does what it can according to its measure. It does not cast away what it has, because it has not more. It does not say, “There is no hope,” and sit idle, because power in certain forms of glory does not belong to us; but it will not imitate power, or fashion the image of what is now departed. And it waits for the day when all will be set in eternal order and beauty, by the presence of Him who is the true light and perfection, and who will settle all things in the kingdom according to God.

Faith, likewise, still listens with a different ear from that of nature. As I have already alluded to it, so here again, I may say, that Rom. 14, like Ezra 3 tells us, that that which is discordance in the ear of flesh and blood is harmony in the ear of God.

And surely, I may add, faith still recognizes confusion. If we see it in Israel in the day of Ezra, we see it among the saints and churches in the day of 2 Timothy; and the day of 2 Timothy was but the beginning of the present long day of Christendom, or of “the great house.” Strangely inconsistent elements surround us, as they did the returned captives. Gentile supremacy in the land; the offered aid, and then the bitter enmity, of Samaritans; some of God's Israel still in Babylon, while others have returned to Jerusalem. All this did not afford them stranger, more singular or anomalous materials, to distinguish and act upon, than the present great house of Christendom, with its clean and unclean vessels, some to honor, and some to dishonor, affords to us.

We may, however, be encouraged as well as instructed by these captives. For, while ancient glory and strength are not seen among them, Urim and Thummim lost, ark of covenant gone, the mystic rod and the cloudy pillar no more known and seen; yet was there more energy and light, and a deeper exercise of spirit, in the returned from Babylon, than in the redeemed from Egypt.

5, 6.

This is so, indeed, as we have seen.

We soon find, however, that we have more to say; that if we be instructed and encouraged by the returned captives, so surely may we be warned by them. They need a revival, though now returned to Jerusalem, as they needed it, when they were still in Babylon.

The decree of Artaxerxes had stopped the building of the Temple. Nature, or the flesh, takes advantage of this: and the captives begin to adorn their own houses, as soon as they get leisure, and are free of their labor in building the Lord's house.

What a warning this is! It has been said, that it is easier to gain a victory than to use it. We may conquer in the fight, but be defeated by the victory. The returned Jews had gained a victory, when they refused the offers and the alliance of the Samaritans. They were right to resent any help which would have compromised their holiness. But they now abuse the victory. The Samaritans had got a decree from the Persian king to stop the building of the Temple; and the leisure thus generated becomes a snare to the remnant. They use it in ceiling and adorning their own houses: very natural; but very humbling to think of it. Abraham had done far better than this. With his trained servants he gains the day in his encounter with the confederated kings; but then one victory only leads to another, for he refuses the offers of the king of Sodom immediately afterward. But here leisure conquers those who had but lately conquered the Samaritans. This was more like David, if unlike Abraham. David fought his way nobly from the day of the lion and the bear to the day of the throne; but he betrays relaxation, carelessness of heart, on the very first occasion which occupies him as a king. David puts the ark of God on a new cart drawn by oxen!

“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your celled houses, and this house lie waste?” says the convicting rebuking Spirit by the prophet Haggai.

This is humbling and yet a healthful warning. Our hearts well understand this—how nature takes quick and earnest advantage of these its opportunities. But though the captives be led under Persian rule, yet the Spirit of God is unbound, and can revive His ancient grace in sending His prophets to them. For this was His ancient grace. This had been His well-known way all along,

from before the day of king Saul, till after the day of king Zedekiah, i.e., from the first of the kings of Israel to the last, from 1 Sam. 1 to 2 Chron. 36 All along that course of time, generation after generation, prophets had been sent again and again to rebuke, to instruct, or to encourage kings and their people. Samuel, and Nathan, and Gad, Shemaiah, Jahaziah, and Azariah, Elijah and Elisha, with others, had thus ministered while Israel was a nation; and now Haggai and Zechariah are sent, as kindred prophets with them, to the returned captives: the sweet witness that the old form of the grace of God towards His people was still to be in use, that they might know, in every age and in all conditions, that they were not straitened in Him.

God did not come forward to establish them on the original footing. To do so would not have been morally suitable, either with respect to the position in which the people stood with God, or with regard to a power which He had established among the Gentiles, or with a view to the instruction of His own people in all ages, as to the government of God. This is very just. Things are left, as the hand of God in government had put them. The Gentile is still supreme in the earth; nor does the glory return to Israel. The throne of David is not raised up from the dust, nor is Urim and Thummim given again, nor the ark of the covenant; but the Spirit is not gone from His place of service. He raises up prophets, as in other days when the throne of David was in Jerusalem, and the temple and its priesthood in their glory and beauty.

It would be profitable to mark the way in which these prophets conducted their ministry in reviving the returned captives; but this I do not here. The house, however, is again attended to under their word; the zeal of the people revives; their faith and service live again; and in about four years, from the second year of Darius, when Haggai and Zechariah began, to prophesy, to the sixth, when the house was finished, they work with renewed earnestness.

The dedication of the house then takes place. And this is a beautiful witness of the moral state of the remnant. It is but little they can do—little indeed—but they do it. Solomon had slain 22,000 oxen and 124,000 sheep at the dedication of the first house, while the returned captives can only render a few hundred bullocks and rams and lambs. But they do what they can; and who will say, that the mite of that earlier widow was not more than all the offerings of their richer forefathers? They did what they could, without blushing for their poverty. “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give thee.” There is preciousness in such feebleness, something specially acceptable in such sacrifices—when “in a time of affliction, the abundance of joy and deep poverty abound unto the riches of liberality.”

And then they keep their passover; they can do this, and they will do it. The house they can dedicate, and the feast they can keep, and they will; and priests and Levites are alike purified now, as they had not been in the royal time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:34; and Ezra 6:20). So that indeed, we may say, though the want of all manifested glory, such as shone in the day of Solomon, may be marked here, Test is there more attractive moral grace and power; just as the exodus from Babylon, some twenty years before, had been marked in contrast with the exodus from Egypt. There are features in the second exodus and in the dedication, features of personal beauty, which had not so appeared in the brighter, far brighter, days of Egypt, and of Solomon.

Chapter 64

The Captives Returned to Jerusalem: Part 2

Ezra 7-10

As we enter these chapters, we have passed an interval of about sixty years, and are in company with a new generation of captives, and are about to witness a second exodus from Babylon.

This portion of the book gives us the story of Ezra himself. It consists of two parts: his journey from Babylon (7, 8); his work at Jerusalem (9, 10).

We find him, in each of these, eminently a man of God. He is in ordinary circumstances: no miracle distinguishes the action; no display of glory or of power accompanies it; nor have we the inspiration which filled the prophets Haggai and Zechariah on the last revival, as we saw in ch. v. vi. All is ordinary: his resources are only what ours in this day are, the word and the presence of God. But he used them, and used them well and faithfully throughout. Ere he began to act, he prepared his heart to seek the Lord; he had meditated on His statutes, till his profiting, as we may surely say, appears to all of us. And as soon as he begins to act, and all through to the very end, we see him in much communion and in secret with the Lord. And he will carry the word of God through every difficulty and hindrance.

He leads home from Babylon to Jerusalem a comparatively small remnant; but he exercises a spirit of faith and obedience in no common measure.

In starting on the journey he is careful to preserve the sanctity of holy things. In such a spirit had Jehoiada the priest acted, as he was bringing back Joash to the kingdom. He would not sacrifice the purity of the house of God to any necessity of the times (2 Chron. 23). And so now, in leading his remnant back to Jerusalem, Ezra will not sacrifice the sanctity of the vessels of the house to any hindrance or difficulty of his day. He will look out for the Levites to bear them home, though this may delay him on the banks of the Ahava for twelve days. He is far above king David in all this. David, in an hour when he might have commanded the resources of a kingdom, did not keep the book of God open before him, but hastily set the ark of God on a new cart. But Ezra is as one who has the word of God ever before him; and, though in the zeal of David, takes care against the haste and heedlessness of David (1 Chron. 13).

It is very sweet to see a saint thus in weakness of circumstances, with nothing but ordinary resources, so carrying himself before God, and through his services and duties.

And further, as we next see him, he is one that will not take a backward step. He had boasted of the God of Israel to the king of Persia, and he will not now (beginning a perilous journey) ask help of him, gainsaying in act the confession of his lips. He will get strength from God by fasting, rather than from the king by asking.

There are beautiful combinations in all that we have now traced in this dear man. He used God's word and God's presence; richly instructed as a scribe, he was much in secret with the Lord. He was a diligent meditative student at home, but he was energetic and practical and self-devoting

abroad. He would not go behind his conscience or sacrifice the word of God to any difficulty or hindrance; and if his confession did for a moment go beyond his faith, and he found himself not quite up to the place he had been put in, he will wait on God to have his heart strengthened, and not timidly or idly let his confession be reproached.

And yet all his circumstances were as ordinary as ours of this day. He had God's word and God's presence, as I have said; and so have we. But that was all: he had not even the inspiration of a Haggai or a Zechariah to encourage him. It was simply the grace of God in the power of the Spirit, awakening a saint to fresh service by the word.

If other portions of the story of the returned captives have instructed and encouraged and warned us, surely, we may now say, this may well humble us. In Ezra's condition, how coldly and how feebly are our souls exercised in his spirit of earnest service and secret communion!

The journey was accomplished, the second exodus from Babylon is performed, and Jerusalem is reached by Ezra and his companions without any mischief or loss by the way. The good hand of their God was with them, and proved itself enough without help from the king. The treasures were all delivered in the Temple, as they had been weighed and numbered at the Ahava. All that, in the days of Noah, had gone into the ark came out safe and sound. Not a grain falls to the ground of such treasures at any time; and here all arrive at Jerusalem that had left Chaldea.

In due time Ezra has to look around him in Jerusalem. He meets what he was but little prepared for; and the sight is overwhelming. Decline among the returned captives had set in rapidly, and corruption had worked wonderfully. What a sight for the spirit of such a man! Ezra blessedly illustrates “the godliness of weeping for other men's sins” —a Christ-like affection, indeed; and the sample of it in this man of God may well further humble some of us.

Israel has] again married the (laughter of a strange god. The holy seed had mingled themselves with the people of the land. The Jew had joined affinity with the Gentile.

To maintain anything of purity in the progress of a dispensation, reviving power has to be put forth again and again; and a fresh separation to God and His truth has to take place under that reviving virtue. So is it now with Ezra at Jerusalem. But we here pause for a moment, to consider some divine principles. When sin entered, and the creature and the creation became defiled, the Lord God had to set up a witness to Himself, that there was now a breach between Himself and that which had been the work of His hands, and the representative of His glories. The ordinance of clean and unclean did this service at the beginning (Gen. 8:20).

In the progress of His ways we find two other operations of His of like character—I mean, His judgments, and His call. He separated defilement from Himself and His creation by judgment in the day of the Flood, about to make the earth the scene of His presence and government in the new or postdiluvian world. But when that world defiled itself like the old world, He distinguished between clean and unclean by calling Abraham to Himself, to the knowledge of Him and a walk with Him apart from the world. And these are samples of what He has ever since been doing, and is doing now, and will do still.

Separation from evil is, in a great sense, the principle of communion with Him. The truth, the knowledge of God, life in Christ, is the positive ground, means, or secret of communion, surely; but

separation from evil must accompany that. For if we meet the Blessed One Himself, we must meet Him in conditions suited to His presence.

Ezra soon finds that the returned captives had practically forgotten all this. They had mingled themselves with the people of the land. They were involved again in that evil from which the call of God had separated them. They were defiled. For sanctification is by “the truth;” the washing of water is “by the word;” and, if holiness be not according to God's word, and God's word as He applies it at the time, or dispensationally, it has no divine quality. There is no Nazaritism in it, no separation to God. The children of the captivity had been marrying, and giving in marriage, with the Gentiles. Ezra sets himself to the work of reformation, and does so, in the same spirit in which he had set himself to be for God before his journey, and on his journey. And this is what we have very specially to mark in Ezra. He was, personally, so much the saint of God, as well as a vessel gifted and filled. This shows itself in Ezra more than in any who had served among the captives before him. He was a vessel that had, indeed, purged itself for the Master's use; for the reformation in Jerusalem is accomplished in the like zeal as the journey from Babylon; and the blessing of God awaits upon it. There is no miracle; no displayed glory; no mighty energy bespeaking extraordinary divine presence: nothing is seen out of the common measure, or beyond ordinary resources. Service is, if done and rendered according to the written word, for the glory of the God of Israel, and in the spirit of worship and communion. It is but a sample of what service with us at this day might be, and, as we may add, ought to be. Ezra, throughout, does not listen to expediency, or yield to a difficulty, or ref use diligence and toil; he maintains principles, and carries the word of God through every hindrance.

Deeply do I believe, that the saints of God in this our day may read the story of the returned captives, as very good for the use of edifying; and find plenty to instruct, to encourage, to warn, and to humble them.

“How precious is the book divine

By inspiration given!

Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine

To guide us on to heaven.”

Chapter 65

The Captives Returned to Jerusalem: Part 3

Nehemiah 1-6

It is after an interval of twelve years from the time of Ezra's action, that Nehemiah appears. He was a captive still in Babylon (or Persia, the same thing, in principle), while Ezra was doing good service to the Lord at Jerusalem. But, connected as he was with the palace of the Persian king, he may not have been free to take part with the movement or revival in Ezra's day—or, it may be, he was not then quickened by the Spirit, so as to do so.

He represents a fresh revival; and all is in increased weakness. He is not a prince of the house of David, like Zerubbabel, nor a priest of the family of Aaron, like Ezra. He is, as we speak, a layman; cup-bearer to the king

There is something, however, in all this, that magnifies the grace that was in him. The burdens of his brethren have power to detach him from the Persian palace, as they had once separated Moses from the Egyptian. No miracle distinguishes these days of returned captives, but there are many witnesses of fine moral energy among them.

Ezra had been a scribe, as well as a priest. He was a meditative, worshipping student of God's word; for he found the springs and the guide of his energy in that word. Nehemiah was not that. He was a practical man, a man in the business of every day life, amid the circumstances and relations which make up human history. But he was of an earnest spirit, like Ezra, and he took what he heard, as Ezra had taken what he read, and dealt with it in the presence of God.

He had heard of the desolations of Jerusalem, and he weeps over them before God; as Ezra had seen the sins of Jerusalem, and wept over them before God. But here, we may ask, how was it that these desolations had not moved Ezra? He was all this time at Jerusalem, while Nehemiah was in the Persian palace, and could only hear of them by occasional reports. Was it that the energy had declined in Ezra? and that he himself now needed to be revived, though some years since he had been the instrument for reviving others? Such things are, and have been. Peter led his brethren on, in Acts 1:15; but he had need himself to be pulled up, corrected, and led on, in Gal. 2 A younger Paul re-animates his elder brother Peter who had been serving the Lord for years, while he was blaspheming Him. And here, it would seem, a younger Nehemiah, a layman too, has to revive the venerable scribe who had crossed over to Jerusalem to serve God there, years and years before him.

If it were not this, it may show us, that the Lord has one business for one servant, another for another; one purpose by this revival, another by that. Zerubbabel had looked to the Temple, Ezra to the reformation of the religion; and Nehemiah is now raised up to look to the city-walls, and the civil condition of Jerusalem. It may have been thus, for such things, again I say, are and have been. Of old, there was the Gershonite, the Merarite, and the Kohathite service. And it has been surely thus, in a series of revivals, century after century, in the course of Christendom, since the Reformation, which was a kind of return from Babylon.

I say not, in which of these ways we are to account for Ezra apparently remaining unmoved, though the ruined walls of the city were before his eyes day after day for years. However, he is honorable, highly so, in the recollections of the people of God, as Nehemiah is.

Nehemiah was a simple man of very earnest affections. His book gives us, I may say, the only piece of auto-biography, which we get in Scripture. It is this dear man of God writing his own history in the simple style that suits truth-telling. He lets us learn, how he turned to God again and again, in the spirit of a trustful confiding child, as he went on with his work. His style reminds me of a word which I met, I believe, in some old writer, “let Christ be second to every thought.” That is, let the soul quickly turn to the Lord in the midst of occupations, be habitually before Him, not however by effort or watching, but by an easy, happy, natural, exercise of soul.

And, together with this exercise of his spirit towards God, Nehemiah's heart was alive to his brethren. In deep affection, and in that eloquence that comes fresh from the heart and its suggestions, he calls Jerusalem, “the city of his father's sepulchers.” And all this presents to us a very attractive person. We love him, and do not grudge him his virtues, or envy him because of his excellencies. We trace him with affectionate admiration.

The exercise of his spirit, ere he got his royal master's leave to visit Jerusalem, is very beautiful. From the month Chisleu to the month Nisan, that is, from the third to the seventh month, he was mourning before God on account of the city. At length he comes before the king, and leave is given him, and a given time is set him, to take his journey and pay his visit—a captain and horsemen are also appointed to guide and guard him on the road. He had been much alone in all this: revivals commonly begin with some individual; and when he reaches Jerusalem, he is still, at first, alone. By night he inspects the city walls, acquainting himself with the nature of the work that now lay before him. He proves what he is about to publish. Very right—it is the way of Spirit-led servants. “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” Nor is he a patron but yokefellow, a fellow-laborer, like Paul, or like Paul's divine Master, Who, while He was Lord of the harvest, served in the harvest-field also.

And, indeed, these are always the forms after which the Spirit prepares the servants of Christ. They prove what they teach, and they labor in the principle of service and not of patronage. They are not lords of the heritage, but ensamples of the flock; they affect no dominion over the faith, but they are helpers of the joy.

Then, as we go on to chapter 3, and look at his companions in the work, we see much to instruct us, and much that tells us of our own day and our own circumstances.

All are a working people together—the nobles and the common folk. The service of God's city had put them all on a level. The rich are made low, the poor are exalted: a beautiful sight in its time and place. Then, some are distinguished: Baruch, the son of Zabbai, works “earnestly,” ver. 20; the “daughters” of Shallum work with their father, ver. 12; some of the priests “sanctified” their work in their part of the city-walls, while others of them worked after a common manner, ver. 22, 28. And, painful to have to add to all this, the nobles of the Tekoites worked not at all, ver. 5.

There have always been such distinctions as these, and there are the same abundantly in this our day. In raising the Tabernacle in the wilderness, in fighting the battles of Canaan, in accompanying David in the days of his exile, as here in the building of the wall of Jerusalem, and afterward

among the yoke-fellows of the Apostle Paul, we see these distinctions. And surely, like the daughters of Shallum, or like the wife of Aquila, females in this our day are doing good work in the gospel, and in the service of Jerusalem. But we may remember, and it has its profit to do so, every man shall receive his own reward according to his own work (1 Corinthians 3); though we have also to remember, that the Lord weighs the quality as well as the quantity of what is rendered to Him (Matt. 20:1-16).

Thus we may surely be instructed in the details of this sweet story. As we pass through chap. iv. we find the builders have become fighters as well as builders. Their work is continued in the face of enemies, and in spite of “cruel mockings,” as ch. 11 of Hebrews speaks. And in this combination of the sword and the trowel, we see the symbols of our own calling. There is that which we have to withstand, and there is that which we have to cultivate. We are to cherish and advance, like builders, what is of the Spirit in us; we are to resist and mortify what is of the flesh. We are builders and fighters.

As to the enemies, they are the same Samaritans as at the first. The Zerubbabel generation of them was represented in Rehum and Shimshai, or in Tatnai, and Shethar-boznai; and now, the generation of them in this day of Nehemiah is represented in Sanballat and Tobiah. They were not heathen men, but a seed of corruption, who might appear to be the circumcision in the eyes of flesh and blood. And by this time they seem to have become more corrupt; for Edomites, Arabians, Philistines, and Ammonites appear to be joined with them, or to have become one with them.

And still more serious, and more for our personal, immediate warning, we see a company of Jews dwelling near these Samaritans. And they were in the secrets of the Samaritans (ver. 12)—a bad symptom. They were borderers. They may remind us of Lot in Sodom, and of Obadiah in the house of Ahab. Surely they were not Samaritans; they were Jews, and had some love and care for their serving toiling brethren in Jerusalem. But they dwelt near the Samaritans, and were in their secrets: again, I say, a bad moral symptom. They were, I presume, some of the old stock, left behind in the land, in the day when Judah was taken captive. They had never shared in the revival virtues of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Their scent was in them—they had not been emptied from vessel to vessel, as Jeremiah speaks of Moab (Jer. 48).

Different from such, widely different, was the trumpeter, whom Nehemiah here sets close to his own person; for if these Jews were in the secret of the Samaritans, this trumpeter was in the secret of God. That is what the holders and blowers of trumpets always represent: whether we see them as priests, doing their occasional and varied work in Num. 10; or their annual work on the first day of the seventh month, as in Lev. 23; or as gifted ministers in God's assembly, teaching and exhorting, according to 1 Cor. 12:8, 9.

Humbling to some of us to trace these beauties in the servants of Christ, in the Nehemiahs, and in the trumpeters on the walls of the city!

There are combinations in Nehemiah which distinguish themselves very strikingly. In chap. v. we see him in his private virtues; as in preceding chapters we have seen him in public energies. He surrenders his personal rights as governor, that he may be simply and fully the servant of God and His people. This may remind us of the Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 9, for there the apostle will not act upon his rights and privileges as an apostle, as here Nehemiah is doing the same as the

Tirshatha, or governor of Judaea, under the Persian throne.

This is beautiful. How it shows the kindred operations of the Spirit of God in the elect, though separated so far from each other as Nehemiah and Paul!

We have, however, a warning, as well as an example, in this chapter.

The Jews, who had now been long in Jerusalem, were oppressing one another. Nehemiah tells them, that their brethren, still away among the Gentiles, were doing far better than this. They were redeeming one another, while here, in the very heart of the land, their own land, they were selling one another.

This is solemn; and we may listen to this, and be warned. It tells us, that those who had taken a right position were behaving worse than those who were still in a wrong one. The Jews at Jerusalem were in a, better ecclesiastical condition, while their brethren, still in Babylon, were in a purer moral condition.

Is not this a warning? It is another illustration of what we often see ourselves; but it is a solemn and humbling warning.

Not that we are to go back to Babylon, leaving Jerusalem; but we are surely to learn, that the mere occupation of a right position will not be a security. We may be beguiled into moral relaxation through satisfaction in our ecclesiastical accuracies. This is a very natural deceit. “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these,” may be the language of a people on the very eve of God's judgment. There may be the tithing of mint, and rue, and anise, and withal the forgetting of the weightier matters of righteousness, goodness, and truth.

But this chapter also gives us another of those combinations which shine in the character of Nehemiah. It enables us to say, that, while there was beautiful simplicity in him, there was likewise decided independency. His simplicity was such that, like a child, he turns back and home to God, while treading one path of service after another; and yet there was that independency and absoluteness about him, that led him to begin always as from himself in the fear and presence of God. As here, he tells us that upon hearing of those oppressions of brethren by brethren, he took counsel with himself, ere he acted (ver. 7). And, indeed, all his previous actions bespeak the like independency. He was Christ's freedman, and not the servant of man; simple in God's presence; independent before his fellow-creatures.

These are fine combinations, greatly setting off the character of this dear, honored, man of God.

In chap. 6., we see him again in conflict, but it is in personal single-handed fight; not, as in chap.-4., marshalling others, patting the sword in one of their hands, and the trowel in the other, but fighting himself, single-handed, and alone face to face with the wiles of his enemies. In the progress of this chapter be is put through different temptations. Generally we see him a single-hearted man, whose body, therefore, is “full of light.” He detects the enemy, and is safe. But, besides this, there are certain special securities, which it is very profitable to consider for a moment.

1. He pleads the importance of the work he was about (ver. 3).

2. He pleads the dignity of his own person (ver. 11).

These are fine arguments for any saint of God to use in the face of the tempter. I think I see the Lord Himself using them, and teaching us to use them also.

In Mark 3 His mother and His brethren came to Him, and they seem to have a design to withdraw Him from what He is doing to themselves; just as Nehemiah's enemies are seeking to do with him in this chapter. But the Lord, pleads the importance of what He was then about, in the face of this attempt, or in answer to the claims which flesh and blood had upon Him. He was teaching His disciples and the multitude, getting the light and word and truth of God into them. And the fruit of such a work as this He solemnly lets us know was far beyond the value of all connections with Him in the flesh; and the claims of God's word, which He was then ministering, far more weighty than those of nature.

And, in like manner, He teaches His servants to know the dignity of their work. He tells them, while at it, “not to salute any man by the way,” nor to stop to bid farewell to them that are at home; nor to tarry even for the burial of a father (Luke 9, 10).

But again, in Luke 13, the Pharisees try to bring Him into the fear of man, as Shemaiah seeks to do with Nehemiah in this same chapter (were 10). But the Lord at once rises into the sense of His dignity, the dignity of His person, and lets the Pharisees know that He was at His own disposal, could walk as long as He pleased, and end His journey when He pleased; that the purposes of Herod were vain, save as He allowed them to take their way. And so, in John 11, when His disciples would have kept Him from going into Judaea, where so lately His life had been in danger, He again rises, in like manner, in the sense of the One that He was, in the consciousness of personal dignity, and answers them as from this elevation (see verses 9-11).

And the Holy Ghost, by the apostle in 1 Cor. 6, would impart courage and strength to the saints, from a like sense of the elevation and honors that belonged to them. “Know ye not,” says Paul to the Corinthians, “that we shall judge angels?” and again, “Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.” “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?”

There is something very fine in all this. These are weapons of war indeed, weapons of divine heavenly metal. To gain victories with such, is Christian conquest indeed; when temptations can be met and withstood by the soul carrying the sense of the importance of the work to which God has set us, and the dignity of the person which God has made us. Would that we could take down and use those weapons, as well as admire them as they thus bang up before us in the armory of God. It is easy, however, to inspect and justify the fitness of an instrument to do its appointed work, and all the time be feeble and unskillful in using it, and in doing such appointed work by it.

Chapter 66

The Captives Returned to Jerusalem: Part 4

Nehemiah 7-10

Here we read, “Now the city was large and great, but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded” (ver. 4). Having therefore built the walls, Nehemiah takes in hand to people the city. For the walls would be nothing, save as the defense of a peopled place within them.

This purpose, therefore, we find in his heart, at the opening of chap. 7 and accordingly he acquaints himself with the returned captives, and reads the catalog and the account of them, as they had been in the days of Zerubbabel, which would be a guide to his present object.

8-10

However, ere he pursue this purpose, and take on him to people the city, he turns aside for awhile to consider the people themselves. And this gives us his action in chap. 8-10, which may be called a parenthetic action—for in chap. 11 he resumes the purpose which he had conceived in chap. 7 that is, the purpose of peopling the city.

This gives a peculiar character and a special interest to these three chapters, where we find the people put through a moral process of a very striking kind indeed. Nehemiah looks at them personally, looks at their souls, at their moral condition, and would fain quicken or sanctify them, ere he settles them in their places.

This action begins on the first day of the seventh month—a distinguished day in the calendar of Israel, the feast of trumpets, a day of revival after a long season of interruption when all was barren or dead in the land. And this action, thus begun, is continued in successive stages, down to the close of chap. 10: thus, as I observed already, giving chap. 8-10 a distinct place in the book of Nehemiah, and the character of a parenthesis.

We must, therefore, look at these chapters a little particularly.

This distinguished day, the first day of the seventh month, demanded, according to the ordinance touching it, a holy convocation and a blowing of trumpets—for it was the symbol, as I have said, of a time of revival after a long season of death and barrenness (see Lev. 23:23-25). This ordinance was observed here in Neh. 8 There was a convocation of the people. But there was something additional. The Book of the Law was read in the audience of the people, and explained to them. And at this the people wept—properly so, for this is the business of the application of the law to a sinner, to convict him, and make him cry out, “O wretched man that I am!” But their teachers, on this occasion, at once restrain their tears, because that day was “holy to the Lord.” It was a time of joy, such as the blowing of trumpets, and the new moon then beginning again to walk in the light of the sun, would signify. The people were, therefore, told to let the joy of the Lord be their strength, to be merry themselves and to send portions to others.

All this was beautifully in concert with the day, in the ordinances touching it. The thing that was additional, or unprescribed by Lev. 23, that is, the reading of the law, was by all this made to give a richer fuller tone to the day itself in its proper prescribed character. The added thing was in no collision whatever with the ordained thing—that which was voluntary was no violation of that which was prescribed.

And here I would say, this is just what we might expect in a day of revival. At such a time, the word of God must be thoroughly honored. It must be the standard. But there will be, necessarily I would say, such new or added things as the character of the time, under the Spirit of God, would suggest. But these new things, whatever they be, will not offend against the word of God. And such is the scene here.

But the word of God, being opened, is kept open. It was a day, as we speak, of “an open Bible.” Precious mercy! And this open Book, having yielded one piece of instruction, telling them of the rights of the first day of the seventh month, now yields them further instruction, telling them about eight other days of that same month, or about the “feast of tabernacles.” And the people, already in the spirit of obedient listeners to the word of God, are still kept in it. They learn about that eight-day feast, and they keep it; in such sort, too, as had not been witnessed for centuries.

This was, in like manner, beautiful. But again, we notice something additional.

In chap. 9 we see the congregation of the children of Israel in humiliation, going through a solemn service of confession; and then, in chap. x., entering into a covenant of obedience to God, and of the observance of His ordinances. But nothing of all this had been prescribed. We find no mention of such a thing in the law of Moses. Lev. 23 had not required this to wait upon or follow the feast of tabernacles.

Here, however, again we have to notice something. This solemnity did not take place till the twenty-fourth day of this month; and then the time of the feast of tabernacles had ended—for that ended on the twenty-third. And this, again I say, was very beautiful. The congregation would not, by their act of humiliation and confession, soil the feast, or prevent its purpose. That feast was the most joyous time in the Jewish year. It celebrated the ingathering, or “harvest-home,” as we speak. It was the foreshadowing of the days of glory or of the kingdom. It shall have all its demands answered in full tale and measure. The twenty-third day, the last day, that great day of the feast, shall pass, ere the language of humiliation and the voice of penitential sorrow be heard. But then, the ordinance of God admitting it, the people may hold, as we again speak, “a prayer-meeting.”

This was likewise voluntary or additional, as I have said—not appointed by scripture, but suggested under the Spirit of God, by the time and the circumstances which marked this present revival under Nehemiah. Confession was the due language of a people who stood, at that moment, the representative of a long-revolted, disobedient, and guilty nation.

“Ceasing to do evil,” however, is to be followed by “learning to do well.” It is very right, if we have been doing wrong, to begin with confession of the wrong, ere we set ourselves to do the right. But to do the right thing is a due attendant on the confession of the wrong thing. And all this moral comeliness we see here, as we pass from the ninth to the tenth chapter.

The nobles, and all the people together, meet as “brethren,” in separation from the people of the lands (see x. 28), and seal a covenant to keep the laws of God. It is pleasant to see here, as also when they were building the wall in chap. iii., how rank and station lost itself in common brotherhood. “Let the rich rejoice in that he is made low, and the poor in that he is exalted, for the fashion of this world passeth away.” And what they now covenant and seek to do has still something additional or unprescribed in it. They pledge themselves to observe all the commandments of the Lord, His statutes and His judgments; not to make marriages with other people; not to profane the sabbath; to bring in their first-fruits, their first-born, and their firstlings, and the tithes of their ground; and all this is according to the word of the Lord. But they also make ordinances for themselves, to be chargeable yearly in the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of God; and they cast lots to bring wood for the altar of God at appointed seasons.

All this is still in sweet and wondrous harmony with the whole of their actions in this day of happy revival. The word of God is, again and again and throughout, honored in all its demands; but added things are seen in their services and activities; such as the fresh energy and grace of the revival-season would suggest, and the Spirit would warrant.

Here this prophetic action, as I have called it, ends. It is beautiful from first to last. The people are conducted through a gracious process. They are exercised according to truth by the Spirit. They are convicted and then relieved. Then they have a lesson about coming joys in days of glory. And thus instructed as to their rich interest in the grace of God, they can look at themselves, not as in fear and in a spirit of bondage, but for due brokenness of heart and with a purpose to serve God for the future. And all this may call to mind that utterance or experience provided by the Holy Ghost for repentant Israel in the last days: “Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth” (Jer. 31)

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 67

The Captives Returned to Jerusalem: Part 5

These chapters witness the people still earnest and obedient. The day of revival continues. The freshness of its morning has, in no measure, faded, though we here reach a later hour of the day.

The eleventh chapter opens with a grievous mark of Jerusalem's degradation. She is a witness against herself, that she is not as the Lord will have her in the days of coming glory. She is not “desired,” rather indeed “forsaken.” People are not flocking to her. She cannot look round her, as she will in the days of the kingdom, and wonder at the multitude of her children. It is not, as yet, the boast of others, that they have been born in her; nor are they owning that all their fresh springs are in her. She has not as yet to say, that the place is too strait for her, for the multitude of those who fill her. These surely are not her condition here in this chapter. She is debtor to any one who will consent or condescend to dwell in her.

What a witness of degradation! What a sign indeed, that restoration was not glory! Jerusalem is still trodden down; the times of the Gentiles are still unfulfilled. Surely the daughter of Zion has not arisen, and shaken herself from the dust, and put on her strength and her beautiful garments.

Still, she must be inhabited; she must have her citizens within her. The land must have its people, for Messiah is soon to walk among them; the city must have its inhabitants, for her King is soon to be offered to her. Therefore is the return from Babylon, and therefore is the peopling of Jerusalem.

And again, as we see in chap. xii., she has her wall. Right, that, having a wall, the wall should be dedicated. Public festivity had been often celebrated on such like occasions: at the carriage of the ark in the days of David; at the dedication of the temple in the days of Solomon; at the foundation of the second house in the time of Zerubbabel; and again, when that second house was finished, this was so. And now, in this day, this day of Nehemiah, the people again rejoice at the dedication of the wall which was now finished, and was encompassing the city.

But while this is so, and all is right so far and after this manner, yet what, I ask, is this wall? What, I further ask, but another witness of Jerusalem's degradation? In her coming days of strength and beauty, when she is the city of the Kingdom, the metropolis of the world, the sanctuary and the palace of the great divine King of Israel and of the earth, “salvation” shall be her wall. God will then appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. The Lord Himself, like her mountains, shall stand round about her. Her walls shall be called Salvation, and her gates Praise. The voice of the Spirit in Zechariah, the echo of which could scarcely at this time have died away, had uttered this fine oracle: “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her” (Zech. 2:4, 5).

How infinite the difference! Jerusalem under the eye of Nehemiah bearing the marks of her shame; Jerusalem, as we read of her in the prophets, the witness of the highest destiny in honor and excellency in the earth! How must such a man have felt, because of all this! And yet he serves earnestly, undauntedly, patiently. Great moral dignity shines in this—a fine spirit of

self-devotement expresses itself. He works, and works nobly, though beset with foreign enmities, and encompassed with domestic degradation. Such a servant of Christ, the Apostle Paul appears to be in 2 Timothy; and such Nehemiah in this book of his.

And this we ought to be ourselves. The Christendom that we see around us is as far from the church that we read of in the Epistles, as the Jerusalem which Nehemiah looked on was unlike the Jerusalem which we read of in the prophets. But he served in the midst of her; and so should we in the face and in the heart of Christendom. For the spirit of service measures not the scene of the service, but the will of the Master.

All this, however, tells the character of the moment. Israel is restored, her land peopled, her city inhabited again; but this is not the kingdom. The children of Israel are to be put to the proving and the clearing of themselves still; and the day of grace, of salvation, and of glory, the promised day of the kingdom, is still distant. But faith has to be exercised, and obedience has to learn and practice its lesson.

Accordingly, on entering chap. 13, we find the Book of God still open among the people. For surely a day of revival is the day of “an open Bible,” as we speak. But it is a new lesson they have now to learn. They are growing in knowledge, in acquaintance with divine principles. It is quite another page of the book which they have now turned over. Scripture, as yet, had its “comfort” for them; now it is to have its “patience.” As yet it had “piped” to them; now it is about to “mourn” to them. The joy of the feast of trumpets, and the still richer joy of the feast of tabernacles, had been made known to them, and they had obediently responded. They had “danced” to that piping. But now they were to be exercised painfully by the book. They read “that the Moabite and the Ammonite were not to come into the congregation of the Lord forever.”

This was terrible. All, as yet, had been eminently social. Not only in their joy as on the feast-days but in their act of confession, they had been together. “Strangers” had been removed, but “the mixed multitude” do not seem to have been looked after and detected. But now, at the bidding of the word found in Deut. 23, this severe cutting off must be performed; as at the bidding of Lev. 23, the joy of the tabernacles had been already celebrated.

But this was the more fitted to test the spirit of obedience in this good day of revival. And the congregation do stand it, and answer the demand of the word of God very blessedly. For we read, “it came to pass, when they heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.” This was obedience indeed, doing what scripture prescribed—doing the lessons of the word, teach they what service or duty they may, or call to what sacrifices they may. Iniquity, however, is now found to be in high places, higher, it would seem, than the people could reach. But it must be reached even there; for a day of awakening, and of fresh power from God, must be a day of obedience. All this time an Ammonite had been in the house of the Lord. This exceeded. Not merely was he, like the mixed multitude, in the congregation, but in the house: and that, too, by the practices of the high priest himself.

Nehemiah was not at Jerusalem just at this time. But on his return, he acts on this abomination thus found in the high places, as the people themselves had already acted, in their measure, upon the mixed multitude. For Deut. 23 shall be heard, though the highest functionary in the church will have to be rebuked. Eliashib is nobody to Nehemiah, when Moses speaks; for the one has God's

authority with him, the other is to have it over him. A word of admonition to Christendom, if Christendom had ears to hear—that Christendom which has set its own Eliashib above Moses, its own officers above the scripture. But such an one was not this faithful man. With him “Moses' seat” was supreme. Scripture judges every man, while it itself is to be judged of no man. Neither high priest in Israel, nor assumption of antiquity and succession, nor of any other kind in Christendom, however attractive, is to set aside one jot or tittle of it. The Book, speaking from God, as it does, at all times, and addressing itself to all conditions, must be supreme. “The scripture cannot be broken” —therefore it is not to be gainsayed. God will fulfill it; we are to observe it.

All this which we thus find in Nehemiah and the congregation, in this closing day of the Old Testament, may well arrest the thoughts of the saints in this day of ours.

In chapters 11 and 12 we have seen marks of degradation in Jerusalem—we see them still in ch. xiii. The sabbath was profaned there, and alliances with the daughters of the uncircumcised were still found there. This is more than degradation in circumstances; it is moral degradation, if not abomination. The restoration from captivity, and the re-peopling of the city, have not entitled it to be saluted, as it is to be in coming kingdom days, with that voice which the Spirit has prepared from the lips of an admiring gazing world, “The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness” (Jer. 31:23).

But in spite of all this, again I say, we see Nehemiah serving. And this is a very fine sight. I need not say how, to perfection, the divine Master of all servants was a pattern of this in His day of service. But there is a great moral dignity in this, let us find samples of it in whom we may.

The congregation, too, keeping the Book still open, is an edifying sight, a sight for us very specially to look at. They were not “partial in the law.” They exhibit a people who would fain have no “neglected texts,” nor “unturned pages,” in the Book of God. Not a sound of it was to be lost upon the ear, as though it was heard in the distance. But who of us, I ask, is up to them in this? How prone we are to choose our lessons, rather than “to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!” Is it not so? I may love the page which reads me a word on the feast of tabernacles in its joy, and delight myself in the sound of the trumpets in the day of the new moon of the seventh month. But the word that would wash me for purification, and separate me from unwarranted alliances, has another relationship to me, and addresses me in other accents. I do not choose that lesson. It is a page of the Book I am not disposed to open. I am tempted to say with the Roman governor, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” The house may be too social, the heart may be too much at ease, to discipline itself by such ordinances as Deut. 23:3.

Indeed, indeed, we may say, all this scripture, these books of the returned captives, this Ezra and this Nehemiah, are worthy of the deep attention and full admiration of our souls. How did the Spirit of God work in the elect in those days, how does He by what He has recorded of them, instruct us in these days!

And beside, as we have also seen, those times of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, were times of revival. Such times had been known before in Israel, as with Samuel, David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Isaiah. And such have been known, again and again, in the progress of Christendom. And a re-quickening season may take a shape but little expected by us, and perhaps

without a perfect precedent. It is the property of life to put on, at times, some exuberant features, to work outside and beyond its ordinary rules and measures. It is more like itself when it acts thus. For life is a thing of freedom, and has inbred force in it. But, at the same time, we are to judge every expression of it, by the word of God. “To the law and to the testimony:” if a thing stand not that test, it is not the overflowing of life, however ecstatic or exuberant it may be; it is to be disclaimed with all its fascinations.

“To him that hath shall more be given.” Obedience to one lesson is the sure and safe road to the discovery of another. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” There is a temptation to hold back, lest the lessons we have yet to learn shall prove distasteful. “He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” There is, therefore, in some of us, a great disposedness or temptation to stop short. But this is disobedience, as well as the breaking of a word read and understood. To shut the book, through fear of what it might teach us, is plainly and surely disobedience. J. G. B.

Chapter 68

Characteristics of the Faithful in the Last Days

There is such a thing as the truth. This has to be held at all cost. The Lord tells us, “the truth shall make you free;” “sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” So here silly women cannot come to the knowledge of the truth; deceivers resist the truth; men would soon turn their ears from the truth. Timothy was to teach meekly in hope that God would give repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. Thus direct apostolic authority (which no tradition can give, for I cannot say from whom I learned it, so that it should have the apostle's authority), truth in the form of “words given by the apostle, the Scriptures as known truth, and the holding them fast, characterize the approved disciple, when decline and unfaithfulness had come in.

Again, enduring, faithfulness, persecution, as contrasted with ease and profession, practically mark the divine path; not uncertainty as to salvation, and a laborious procuring of it: we are saved and called with a holy calling, according to God's purpose before the world began. Death is abolished, so that we are not under its fear life and incorruptibility are brought to light. We are in the bright and blessed liberty of saved ones, for whom the whole power of death is destroyed. On the other hand, the gospel brought afflictions: Timothy was to be partaker of them according to the power of God; Paul was suffering for it. Timothy was to endure hardness as a good soldier, and to be disentangled from the world. Paul was enduring all things for the elect's sakes.

But it was not merely those ministerially active who would suffer: there was another source of persecution, not Christianity now in itself, but seeking to live godly in Christ Jesus. The form of piety with abounding evil would prevail; but piety, the seeking to live godly, not joining the current of religious profession, would be persecuted. The professing church being in this state, the assembly in general would be a great house, and vessels to dishonor allowed in it.

This leads to ecclesiastical direction, so to speak. Carelessness as to doctrine, departure from the truth, and a worldly carnal state of the professing church prevailing, in which was lost the sense that we, risen already in Christ, are looking for resurrection to take us out of this whole state, and what called itself Christian settled into a recognition of man on this side death; what was the Christian to do? To purge himself from these so as to be a vessel meet for the Master's use. He could not leave the profession of Christianity, corrupted as it had become—that is clear; nor was he to sanction the corruption; nor could he correct it as regards the public profession. Nay, evil remained; seducers would wax worse and worse. He was to “purge himself from” them. But his practice was to be equally exact. Avoiding lusts, he was to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace.

Was he then to isolate himself in his walk because of the evil, in thus pursuing godliness and grace? He was not. He was to recognize and distinguish those who called on the Lord out of a pure heart. If it be asked, How is he to do this? my answer is, The apostle tells us to do it; he does not suppose we cannot. I may not be able to distinguish a person to be such: that is possible; I am not his judge. But he is not one of those who are pointed out as those with whom I should walk. The distinction is very simple. The professing church is characterized as a great house containing vessels to dishonor. In that state of things I am not to rest satisfied with the dishonor; nor to think

of mending the house; nor of leaving it. I am to purge myself from those who are such vessels, and to recognize those who call on the name of the Lord—own and worship Him—out of a pure heart: with them I am to walk. J. N. D.

Chapter 69

Christ Pleased Not Himself

It has just struck me, that we may continually observe all absence in the Lord to merely please His disciples. He never did this. Nay, I am sure that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, as we speak, or of introducing Himself to their favor. He did not seek to please, and yet He bound them deeply and intimately to Himself.

This was very blessed; and the same thing in any one is always a symptom of moral power.

“If we seek to please, we shall scarcely fail to please” This is true, I doubt not; but nothing can be morally lower. It makes a fellow-creature supreme; and we deal with him as though his favor was life to us, which God's is, but His only.

But to bind one in full confidence to us—to draw the heart—to have ourselves in the esteem and affection of others, without ever in one single instance having that as our object—this is morally great. For nothing can account for this, but that constant course of love which, by necessity of its own virtue, tells others that their real interests, and prosperity, and blessing are in deed and in truth the purpose and desire of our hearts.

And this was the Lord. Nothing that He did told them that He sought to please them; but everything that He did told them that He sought to bless them.

And again I say—I believe that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, or of introducing Himself to their favor. And yet He met them graciously and tenderly on many occasions which we might have resented. And both of these, the one as well as the other, came from those springs and sources of moral perfection which took they rise in Him. For if vanity had no part in Him to put Him to an effort to please, malice had no part in Him to make Him quick to resent. He could not be flattered into graciousness, nor provoked into unkindness. Look at Luke 22:24-30. They had just betrayed nature, striving through pride about the highest place. He corrects this; but He does not hold that object long before Him, but allows another to command His heart and His thoughts respecting them— “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.”

Was that exactly the moment for remembering this fact? Was it just the time for looking at them so steadily in so favorable a light? No, not for nature to do so; but for Jesus it was just the time. And He is our example, that we should follow His steps, and partake of His mind. And after the pattern of this little occasion, we have to remember that it is not the present act that has to decide our thoughts and hearts respecting each other. It may have much of the vileness or working of nature in it, as this strife had; but it may be, as this strife was, the act of those in whom much of the preciousness of the Spirit dwells; and “the precious” should be remembered for the commanding of our thoughts often, even in the very presence of “the vile.”

Strange this may appear. Yes, and the ways of divine unselfish love are strange. Here is our pilgrim part, and the part of a stranger in a scene of multiform selfishness like this. It may not be

well to be always understood. Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren in a moment of their sorrow. But Joseph was not to be the servant of the present moment, but of their good. He was seeking to bless them, not to please them. Jesus told Thomas in a moment of repentance, that there was a character of still higher blessing to which he did not belong. But Jesus was true to the truth, true to us all, true to Thomas himself, when he might have been flattered into softness. Like Joseph, He was serving Thomas, and not the moment or occasion.

O the perfectness of it all! O the unspottedness of the path of His spirit within, as of His feet abroad! O the beauty of all which love does or says! We shall understand it all bye-and-bye, and have pages open to us which now we have no eyes to read. Through selfishness, we mistake the doings of love, and expect gratifications, when we find ourselves passed by; and are sent away with the material of some solid lasting benefit, when we hoped for a mere present pleasurable excitement.

O, for more of that love that is “in deed and in truth,” which eyes the solid good of others, and can sacrifice their favor towards ourselves to their own blessing. J. G. B.

Chapter 70

Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life: Part 1

John 14

I think, if you study the Gospel by John, you will find it is taken for granted in chap. 11. that the Jews would not have Him He, the Son of God, brings in the doctrine of resurrection; in chap. 12 there is a flitting across the earth of His various glories—Son of Man and Son of David. then chaps. 13 and 14 form a little compartment by themselves. Chap. 13 gives a most amazing display of the Man Christ Jesus, when the time was come for the Paschal Lamb. He takes the ground of knowing all about the saints up to the present time. So you and I have a standing in chap. 13, seeing the Lord prepares us for all the evil that has taken place on the earth. Chap. 14 is in strong contrast to chap. 13. There He knew everything about the men down here; now He takes the ground of One who knew everything about the Father up there. This extends from ver. 1-20, and from ver. 21 to the end. He speaks and acts as the One who knew everything about His saints, and what would alone make them happy down here. He is bringing out all the amazing truth about “Abba,” and how it is to be learned; and that it is the word for us.

In the first chapter of the Gospel by John we find a remarkable testimony of the Spirit of God to the higher glory of the Son, as the only-begotten Son of the Father, ver. 14; and then in ver. 18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” There is this contrast between the two verses—in ver. 14 it is Himself presented as the Word made flesh; but what shines out, because it is seen to be in Him, is this glory of the Father. “We beheld His glory;” not merely Messiah presented with all the promises, but in the adorable Person of the Lord there was a glory that surpassed altogether the glory for the earth, whether as promised to Abraham or to David, “The glory as of the only-begotten Son of the Father.” Then in ver. 16 He speaks of our receiving out of His fullness grace for grace. In ver. 18 we see what the great object of the Lord was in coming into the world. It was not merely that He had the light in Him, but He “declared Him.” He told God out. The word translated “declared” has a particular force and meaning. He was the perfect presentation of the Father. In the Lord Jesus I get all about the Father. Any one whose eyes were opened saw nothing but the Father, and saw nothing superadded to it.

In chap. xiv. He takes the place of teaching them something more in detail about Him; and the way He approaches the subject is remarkable, and shows His grace. When He got to talk about the Father, neither Thomas, nor Philip, nor Jude could make out what it was all about; but He approaches the subject in a very beautiful way, by bringing the place belonging to the Father before them. He says, “If I go away, I am going to a place where My presence is needed to make it ready for you “; so He brings in this thought of the Father in that way to them, in connection with the place.

But oh! what was in the heart of Christ at that time, with all the sorrows pressing upon Him connected with the place He was going into as sin-bearer, as being the one forsaken of God—to bring before the cavilings of His disciples that He knew all about the Father? He displays His

knowledge about the Father; He was going to the Father, and He was going to prepare a place for them there. Do you know the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is up there in glory, connects you individually (if you are believers in Him) with Abba, Father? Where was the first thought of Sonship found? If I say, “The Father,” you say, “Well, I understand that, because I am one of His children.” It is very blessed to. say this, but more blessed to say, “That Father had one only Son, and He deputed Him to bring many sons to glory. The only-begotten Son is the One to whom He committed it to bring many sons to glory.”

I suppose I may be bold to say, beloved, that never does a single child of God occupy the mind of the Lord Jesus, but His mind approaches him, as taking him up in connection with His Father, who “gave them to Him. The Lord Jesus, if He looks upon me as a son of God, says, “Well, poor thing, My Father gave you to Me; and in you I see the estimate of My Father's thought of the worth of My blood, in your blessing and acceptance in, Me.” Is this your thought when you say, Abba, Father? The Father thinks of the blessedness of having such a Son as that Son was; and of that Son to enlarge the circle, bringing us in. He knew me as one the Father had given to Him I was a child of wrath once, as others, and am now brought home to enjoy and live to God. I had nothing to bring to God and Christ in their holiness but my sins; and He has taken them all away, and given a stab to my selfishness; and yet something far better than that—Christ looks upon me as one in whom He sees His Father's estimate of His work. He thinks, “There is a man that I have plucked out of the world that belongs to Satan—there is a man that is to be led by Me into the Father's house.”

So He introduces the subject here. “I am going away, and where am I going? Well, My Father has got a house in heaven, and you could not be there; but I am the beginning of the creation of God Myself; I shall get there; and once there, the place will be ready for you.” If you think of all God's glory, the light and the brilliancy—if I think of the house which the Lord has made ready for me, I say, “What a blessed place, for my Lord will be there! not to do a work, but as the One in His Father's house.” The Lord will be up there at home, and you and I will find out what makes it a home; and this is, His own Self in the place.

Then He goes on to show what His own personal love is to the people He will come to fetch. He says, “I shall not do a work in the house, and send some one else to fetch you there—no, I shall do it.” “I shall come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” “I shall want you to be with Me.”

When He got to this point, He had made the first step in His subject. Then He enters on what is His subject. He says, “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” He knew right well what the effect of His saying so would be. He was right in what He said; and what was He looking at? He was looking at the Spirit which was inseparably connected with them. There was a great deal more knowledge than they had any idea of. Thomas thought he had caught the Lord saying something inconsistent. “We cannot know where You are going until You tell us; how can we know the way? We cannot, until You tell us where You are going; for who can tell the way to any place whose name has not been mentioned?”

Just one word in connection with that as a practical point. You and I ought to receive things because Christ says them, not because we understand them. Take an instance of this. Suppose I had been with the Lord Jesus in chap. v., and heard Him say, “He that heareth My word, and believeth [on] Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.” I might have done one of two things on

hearing that word. I might have, said, “I know nothing about that word, eternal life, and therefore can form no judgment at all as to what its introduction depends on; “or else,” Here is a Person who knows all about it, and He says, if any man believes God, he has the blessing.” Which of the two is the wise man? He is talking about what He understands; and I receive it. What is the consequence? He says, “Hath everlasting life,” and He also takes the other side, “Shall not come into condemnation.” What Thomas ought to have done was not to have judged the words of His Master. He was only bandying words with the Lord. Surely, instead of saying what he did, he ought to have asked, “Well, Lord, and what next?” and thus taken the place of a learner. It makes a wonderful difference whether we take the place of being receivers from Him, or the place of being able to judge of what He says.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 71

Christ the Way, the Truth, the Life: Part 2

John 14

The Lord then takes another step, and He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The Lord Jesus Christ is presented down here on earth as the One who could say of Himself, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Philip had said, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Jesus says, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?”

Before I go on to follow that out, I would remark that there are three things presented here. First, Himself “as the way” to the Father (not to God, this is in Hebrews), which you will find extends to the end—of ver. 15. Secondly, having spoken of Himself as “the truth,” He opens it out in vers. 16, 17, 18. Then as “the life,” He shows this out in vers. 19, 20. These verses are a kind of divine commentary by the Lord about Himself as the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus said to Philip, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?” etc. The human mind often makes great difficulties for itself on this subject—difficulties that do not exist. People have often said to me, “I do not like that word Trinity; I do not see how there can be three in one, and one in three.” My answer is very simple: “I have no particular love for the word, yet I have a particular love for the truth which men have coined that word to represent, though I cannot say I understand it.” Very often learned men have gone entirely wrong upon it, and simple men too. There are certain landmarks laid down in Scripture. I remember an essay by a man who was thought most highly of, which speaks of the Trinity as being three different forms in which the one person is spoken of. My simple answer is, that I find at the baptism of Christ all three together. The Father was saying, “This is my beloved Son;” The Son was in the water; and the Spirit descends on Him. That meets the question entirely.

A person says he wants to understand the how and why of it! Let me take a point nearer myself. I am spirit, soul, and body. If I were only a spirit, I should not be a man, but rather an angel. Do I doubt the fact? No. Do I know the why or the how? Not a bit. I believe, if my body were killed to-night, my spirit would go to Jesus; but my body may stay in the grave as Stephen's has. Can I understand the how of it? Certainly not. I see a doctor often has a resource: he can arouse the body by appealing to the mind; through the mind he arouses the body. I do not understand it; but am I going to sit in inquest over it? Here are three persons in one—can I understand God? Certainly not. As you read the pages of Scripture, they show that He is God, and you are man: if I cannot understand it, is it any wonder? Do I understand myself? Certainly not. Abraham's body will rise, and Abraham's soul and spirit will dwell in that body: is it then for me to ask how? Certainly not.

If you take the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it was new. Israel had known something of the Spirit and the name of Messiah, but never as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If I think of the blessed Lord as a babe laid in the manger, or a man standing in the water, can I say there was not a direct line of connection between Him and the Father? A man is a fool that argues upon this

question! Every work of Christ was fully done in cooperation with His Father: there was a real connection, between them that none but God could understand.

When the Lord was speaking in this way to Thomas, first of all saying, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also,” I suppose He was referring to that hidden union which but one eye could trace. Yet Philip says, “Now do show us the Father: then it will be all plain!” Smart words from a fool! He was talking about things he did not understand. It is my wisdom—to take the place of being a learner: it would have been wisdom for Philip to have said, “We wait to hear a little more about this;” but his mind brought forth, as ours do, very foolish things. “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Christ knew better than Philip about it. He knew that, if Philip could have been present in glory, it would not have been pleasant to him.

God put all His glory in the Son of Man, as being a vessel or lamp fit to show it forth; He put it into the Lord Jesus; what an exquisite dealing on the part of the Father! The Lord does not tell us about Himself He says, “Do you know, have you heard, about a man dwelling upon earth who is called Jesus? have you seen His works, marked His words? Well, in all these you see Me; I am in the Father.” Man could not meet God without a mediator. I am not afraid to draw near and study Abba's character in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” It was a hidden union between Him and God the Father. We could not trace the union between the Persons in the Godhead, but the Lord Jesus put it out to be received in simplicity.

I have the grace of the Lord in this chap. xiv. He must get down upon a lower testimony, verse 10. There Were certain words and works; He drops the other question for the present, and descends to words and works. “Who wrought these words and works in me? What do you think of them?” If they would not receive them, they were denying His place as servant. He would not say His own words and works: “The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.” “All my works I work in fellow with my Father. Those works that you saw, did they bring you to Abba or to Myself?” There were certain works: whom did they bring you to? “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake.” A person says, “How can it be?” You are simply to receive “that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.” Nothing could be plainer than ver. 11.

What do I understand by “abiding in the Son"? Never a thought or an action ought to flow from me, save as one actually hidden in the Lord Jesus Christ. I never think of God the Father having anything to say to me, apart from my being in Christ. My place is to be hidden in the Son, and to abide in Him I am to be seen as a person inside Christ, never a bit of me to appear outside; to be seen by God according to His thoughts of the person of Christ, who had to come here to show out the ways of the Father. He says, “That is what my words and works have been.;” “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” “See the sort of love I have towards you for the Father's sake. While the Father has given Me words and works, I mean to work in you down here; and there will be greater works done by you than by Me, because I go unto My Father.” I suppose, in all simplicity, that this refers to the beginning of Acts. There we see 120 left as the result of His work, gathered in an upper room; but on the day of Pentecost, when Peter was speaking, there were 3000 brought in at once. It was from Jesus glorified at God's right hand, “He hath shed forth this, which

ye now see and hear." Most remarkable that anybody should be converted through a man like Peter, and most marvelous that there should be at most some hundreds (1 Cor. 15:6) through Christ's ministry! It was through the gift of the Holy Ghost; the Spirit had come to testify through them.

The next step He takes here is a most remarkable token of His identity with His Father in practical affection. Ver. 13, He says to them, "When you get into any difficulty, just come in My name, and pour it out, and see if I do not answer." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." What does this say to our hearts, beloved friends? Whatever you fear, take it in. I have certain things on my heart; I go in and ask God for them, and the petitions are granted me, because they were asked in Christ's name. Another time I draw near burdened, and do not know what I want; but there is Christ up there, who looks down and sees the thing that I need, and He says, "I will give it for My Father's sake." He sits there until there are no more children to be gathered, and then He rises up—the expression of His Father's mind still.

My thoughts have been led a good deal into this subject in this verse. "If I say to a child, What do you know about your father?" he would answer very sharply, as the child of a friend did to me as to what his name was, and so on. "But what do you know about him!" The child thinks he knows all about his father, and yet, when you come to the point, what he puts forth is very little indeed. You will find he has got what appears to me a very defective answer. I am a son in the same family in which the Lord Jesus Christ is the First-born among many brethren. I say this presents the Father's thoughts and mind; I want to have an answer that will bear the test of that presence. If a person says, "What do you know about Abba?" I say, "Well I do know a little about the Lord Jesus Christ, and in everything that I do know, I find the Father presented. Everything that He does presents the Father's thoughts and mind." This throws the whole question upon my knowledge of a certain person, in whom the Father was revealed—who came into the world to declare Him.

In Eph. 3 we read, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Suppose I address myself to a poor illiterate person, and say, "What do you know about Christ?" If that person is walking near to Christ, He is always dwelling in his heart by faith. There is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily presented in Christ there. I can quite understand that if you said to many simple souls, "Are you filled into all the fullness of God?" they would say, "Oh no!" If you say, "Have you much to do with the Lord Jesus Christ?" They would say, "Blessed be His name, I have nothing else!" If Christ dwells in your heart by faith, you are filled into all the fullness of God.

Just take up one instance out of many, as an illustration of the truth before us, the Person of the Lord and His words and works as presenting God, John 4 He comes into the world thirsting for poor sinners, and He goes off down to Samaria, because He knows a certain poor woman is there whom He is to bless. First of all, He spreads oat the various beauties in Himself, and the water He had to give her; but she cannot understand Him. Then He steps off the divine side of the question, and gets on the ground of her conscience, saying, "Go, call thy husband." She says, "I have got no husband." "No, quite true," He says, "you have no husband."

"Oh, dear me," she says, "there is that question about worship; where is the place for it?" "Poor thing," He says, "my Father is seeking worshippers who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth; He has sent His own Son into the world to look out for such." —Christ speaking the thoughts of God and doing His works. She answers Him again. "Well," she says, "if you bring your knowledge

forward in this way, I know something; when Messias cometh, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said, “I that speak to thee am He.” She goes off just in the line of His thoughts. She says, “I have found You out; you have no heart to condemn me: I will serve your turn.” So she fetched out the poor Samaritan sinners. “Ah,” they say, “your tidings brought us out; and we have found, not merely Messiah, but the Savior of the world.” The Lord takes up that; when the disciples come back, He says, “Do you not see that the fields are white already to harvest?” His work was to accomplish what was in the mind of the Father—to gather out those who should worship Him, not at Jerusalem or Samaria, but in spirit and in truth.

If you look through the Gospel of John, you will find in every scene something that gives you knowledge of Abba.

There is a wonderful difference in the feelings of the human mind. I might say, “I know the Lord Jesus, and I would go anywhere to meet Him; I would go into the light, though it is very strong.” A very different thing to say, “I know the Lord Jesus, and in whatever form He has presented the Father to me, there is nothing to terrify me in the thought of going into His presence.” When I see Christ on the tree, I see Him as God's sin-offering—God's Lamb. Am I afraid to meet God, who sent His Son to bear my sins on the tree? If that is God, I am prepared to meet Him. I do not want to send forward a messenger: He has sent a messenger to me. “I have sent My Son to bear your sins on the cross.” I shall not think about the light, however bright that light may be; I shall only think about the God who receives any one who comes through Christ, though they may have dipped their hands in His blood.

Whoever thought of such a thing as the Father seeking those who could worship Him in spirit and in truth? He wanted people to share in the admiration that ever dwells in the heart of the Son about Himself. The Son is perfectly delighted with the Father. All presented in the Son showed the Father's desire to have those who could enjoy Him in their measure. If you have received eternal life, has it never struck you what a blessed person is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ? He has a Father whose heart is wholly set upon Him. I have “fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ,” —fellowship with them, not merely with things belonging to them. I can say, “The throne cannot be shaken.” I bless God that there is that throne; but having all things in heaven is not like having the Person. I can think of the Father's thoughts about Christ: when I think of Christ standing before the throne, I can rejoice in everything in heaven.

It is an important thing to read the Father in the Son, to read Him in all the ways common to both; in His subjection as a Servant, in the words He spoke and the works He wrought, so that Abba will be no stranger to you. “The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.” There is the truth and the life; just see how He makes it good to the believer. If you believe, you have got Abba's love perfectly declared in Christ's words, works, and sufferings.

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth.” Who is the truth? Christ. What is my connection with Him? The Spirit of truth dwells in me. He is a Guardian. Christ is our Paraclete up there; the Holy Ghost is our Paraclete down here. When Christ went away, He sent another Paraclete. I have One up there, and One down here. He says, “I have charged myself with all the people of God: if any man sin, he shall not lose the blessing; I am yet there to renew his communion with the Father.” Here

He sends the Paraclete, who charges Himself with the care of the people down here. It is not a Comforter merely; but like a man who takes charge of an orphan family, He takes the whole management of them. When the Holy Ghost charged Himself with these souls, He took the whole responsibility of them. He rebukes and corrects, as well as comforts. He does everything for them that Christ would do for them down here. We have a Guardian up there who advocates our cause, and we have a Guardian who charges Himself with all our concerns down here. Mark the sort of knowledge you and I ought to have about the truth, if the Spirit of truth is dwelling in us. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” We ought to know all about Him, as far as Scripture reveals Him up there, and all about His to-morrow, when He comes forth in glory. Let me ask you if you know all about Him? I am afraid, in that respect we are very much behindhand.

Then at last when the Lord speaks about the life: how beautiful! how unsearchable! how it makes one feel that the things of the Lord must be received by faith! “Because I live, ye shall live also.” I say to myself, “Does Christ live?” “Yes, without question.” “Do I live?” “Yes, because Christ lives.” He does not leave me there only. Is He in the Father? He is; there is that unity between Him and the Father that comes from unity of being. Scripture tells me He is in the Father, and I am by grace in Him. The wise men of the world say I am a fool if I believe it.

I remember speaking, thirty years ago, of the truth in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Some one came up to me afterward and said, “You must excuse me; but what you have been saying is contrary to common sense. I cannot be in two places at once.” I replied, “You must settle that with the Lord. If He says so, I would rather deny my being down here than up there.” Where is He? In the Father. Where am I? In Him. This is connected with the life. “And ye in me.”

Then there is another thing. “And I am in you.” There are two Scriptures I might refer to in connection with it—Christ dwelling in my heart by faith, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in me to the end of time. If I am filled with the Spirit, I know Christ is in me, dwelling in my heart by faith. Look at it quietly; ask yourself whether there ever was a person who knew all about the Father—who was so happy to stoop down and talk to such stupid things as you and me; so that, if you knew Christ, you knew the Father, for He is the very image—He declared Him. Abba will be familiar to you as the Lord Jesus Christ when down here. He says, “You have seen Abba's love passing through Me down to where you were. Now I am going up there; you will see His love coming down to you, where your feet are walking here, if you only simply understand what I am as declaring the Father. You want to know what connection you have with the truth? I shall be up there, and the Spirit of truth will be in you, and directly He comes into you, He will cry, ‘Abba, Father.' Then about the life, take Me as an expression of it. I shall be in the Father up there, and you in Me, and I in you.” What could He say more?

As to my life, it is not the privilege I am thinking about, but the reality of you and me possessing life come down from the Father. This life which is Christ to us, is it governing our lives down here? Are we walking down here as He walked? To me it is unspeakable blessing. G. V. W.

Chapter 72

The Christian and How He Becomes One

2 Corinthians 3

In this chapter the apostle describes what the Christian is, and reasons, in contrast with man's condition under the law of Moses, how he becomes such. It is a very simple statement of what the Christian is.

The evil in the Corinthian church had harassed Paul much, as we see in chapter 2:17: some were disputing as to his apostleship, and he was forced to speak of himself. He says, “for we are not as many which corrupt [or, deal deceitfully with] the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ;” and also in the first verse of this chapter 3, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we as some others epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?” And this leads him to use an expression which shows well the character of the Christian, “Ye are our epistle;” he says—as it were— “if I want an epistle or letter of commendation, I have just to say, look at the Corinthians.” Ye are my epistle, “known and read of all men, forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.”

The Christian is an epistle “known and read of all men” —verse third describes him as an epistle explanatory of Christ to the world— “manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ;” and this the Christian is—not what he ought to be, but what he ought to walk up to. And this is as true of and as applicable to individuals, as of the collective body of the church of God here spoken of, and ought to be plainly seen. Suppose for example, that a Chinese had heard a missionary preach in his land, had read the Bible, and wanted to see what Christians are, or what the body the church is, and were to come to this city for the purpose—the church ought to be so manifestly declared that he could find it at once. But if he saw men seeking money and pleasure and amusement, or even mere intellectual delight and entertainment, why he would just say, “We can do all this in China without being Christians,” and he would go back with a testimony in his heart against the gospel. He would road in their lives what they were.

In the Christian's life we should be able to read Christ, as well as the Jewish law could be read on the tables of stone; for on the heart of the Christian the Holy Ghost has engraved Christ, just as the finger of God engraved the Ten Commandments. “Ye are the epistle of Christ, written,” Paul says, “not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” From God's point of view, as shown to us in His word; the Christian is he in whom we see Christ represented to the world. As a general thing the character and the tendency of a man's life show themselves; so that we know, speaking from an earthly point of view, a man's character from his life. The world judges pretty fairly whether or not Christ is the aim and object of a man's life, whether we are living Christ or not. Of course we may fail; but if Christ is produced to the view, not only hi the profession but in the main of a man's life, that is. a Christian; and the world generally is not very far wrong in this respect. If I am going eastward, it is clear to all around that I am not going westward. I may be traveling far more slowly than I ought, or may trip in the way; but still it is clear in which direction I am going.

Before ever lust came into the world, the beginning of man's departure from God was mistrust. Man distrusted the goodness of God, and thought that by doing his own will he would be better and happier than in doing God's; and then lust came in. Man saw.” the tree that it was good,” —that which he would like better, in doing his own will, than God's mind; but the beginning was distrust, his listening to Satan, who sought to persuade Eve that the prohibiting them from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was jealousy on God's part. This is what every natural man, every man in his unrenewed state, does. He distrusts God and His goodness, thinks his own will is better, and rushes to do it; and then lust comes in and gives him that to do which, in doing his own will, he will like. “All sinned,” so that we are now in every way far from God. “God drove out the man,” we read; and further on, when in Cain we see the awful effects of lust in his horrible sin, we read, “Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.” He goes out into the land of Nod (i.e. flight or wandering), where God had made him a vagabond and a fugitive, and builds a city. They get instruments of music, and works in brass and iron]. They try in fact to make the world as happy and pleasant as possibly can be without God. Man in the world is still trying to do this. People begin, may be, with asking, What harm is there in this or that? The harm is not in the creatures of God, but in man's use of them to hide himself from God, or God from him, as Adam with the trees of the garden. The harm was not there at all. Thus, like Adam, do they distrust God's goodness, and soon get to a distance from Him; and then, being at a distance from Him, they try to be as happy in the world as they can without God. But this is vain; for man's nature was made for enjoying God. We are the “offspring” of God; but when the breath of an unconverted man goes forth from him, there is a being shut out from God—with a nature to which God is necessary, and yet shut out from Him forever: this is misery, utter endless misery.

In Christ we are brought back to trust God, to a position of nearness to Him. “As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” We are made fit to stand in God's presence by virtue of the blood of Jesus, and to have confidence in God in this position; but the praise is to the Lord (verse 5); “not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath also made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life” (verse 17). “Now the Lord is that spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Verse 17 should be read in connection with the 6th (from the 7th to the 16th inclusive being parenthetical). Verses 7-16 contain a contrast drawn between the law of Moses and the gospel.

The law is stated to “be glorified” and “with glory,” though a “ministration of death,” and a “ministration of condemnation.” In the law we get that which, if done by all, would make this earth a paradise. It shows man what he ought to be, to be perfect as man; in itself it is the perfect rule of what man ought to be as a child of Adam. But coming to a sinner, it shows what he ought to be but is not, and so it condemns him. Christ came “to redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” But “as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly;” for While the “first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is [the Lord] from heaven.” The law came in righteous requirement and gave condemnation; Christ came in grace to give righteousness, the righteousness of God.

“The ministration of condemnation is glory,” but “the ministration of righteousness doth much more exceed in glory.” The glory shone in grace, the second time Moses went up; but Israel was again placed under law, and thus he put a veil over his face.

He had no veil when he came down from the mount the first time; but when the Lord had “passed by” and proclaimed Himself to be gracious and long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,” the reflection of this glory merely mixed with grace was too bright to look upon. It was the expression of God's presence, accompanied by the requirement of the law. “The soul that sinneth will I blot out of my book.” Man may use the law for righteousness in his own mind; but when God's presence accompanies it in the conscience, he cannot stand before it. It becomes a ministration of death and condemnation. Can you, reader, bear its searching power? And note, Moses said, Peradventure I shall make atonement; but he could not.

Turn to Christ's life down here. He came in grace to win back the confidence of our hearts to God. He must do more than merely show that God was willing to receive us back. We could not get into God's presence covered with sins, as the righteous requirement of the law shows us to be. He died to put away the sin, and then, and not till then, are we able to see the extent of our debt; and in fact the deeper we see it to be then, the more it makes us praise the love and grace which paid it all. In earthly business, if I get very far behind, and owe a man a much larger sum than I am able to pay, I am afraid to look into my books. I cannot, I dare not, see the full amount of my obligations; as the full knowledge that I am unable to pay anything makes me wretched enough. But let me know that one has paid to my credit (or the debt) in full, and then the dread witness against me loses its terror. Such grace gives power to me, and with a lightened heart, and a conscience made easy, I can look my debt in the face and see in it the extent of the goodness of him who has paid it. The requiring payment and the paying refer to the same debt, and both own the claim, but are opposite principles. But the one in grace paying the creditor is as thoroughly righteous as the debtor paying the creditor, while displaying wonderful grace besides.

Christ came in the flesh to win our hearts back to God. He was God passing through this wilderness of wickedness, yet so pure in it that no taint of sin could touch Him; for He says, “which of you convinceth me of sin?” And so He could carry the love of God to every one, and win their hearts to Himself, that is to God, before even they knew their forgiveness, but assuring them (by this faith and confidence in Him) of the pardon of sins, in anticipation of His gracious payment of all our debt. The sinner who came into the house where He sat at dinner—strange place to venture into, but that Jesus alone was the object!—had confidence in Him, and so received His gracious assurance, “Thy sins are forgiven the;” while the man who was entertaining Him, and who thought himself in his heart far, far, better than this poor woman, receives but a rebuke. Christ ever unmasks every pretension to righteousness, ever shows that mere character, however good, is nothing in God's presence; but when the vilest is in truth of heart such as he is before Him, He never fails to bring in grace, though it only meets with the world's hatred.

In Matt. 5 we have Christ's own life depicted as all that was good, beautiful, and true; yet, at the conclusion of a virtual description of Himself, He says, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely” (ver. 11). What is this but man's natural hatred—the enmity of man fallen as he is—showing itself against God's grace? The

same thing we see, and even more strongly, in the parable of the vineyard; for when the Son comes, the keepers say, “This is the heir; come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.”

So, as we all know, in the person of Christ, God came in grace to the world; and man, as far as he was concerned and could do it, turned Him out and killed Him. What a solemn thought! Do we believe that we now are living in a world which did this—the same world? Do we believe that naturally we have hearts just the very same? It is so; but, blessed be His name, even man's deepest hatred cannot quench God's love, and the very worst he can do to God only shows His love shining the more fully. In the cross, the very place where man's sin and hatred to God were manifested, God's love was most manifested to the world. The cross was the grand testimony that man would not have God: man saying that he would not have God; and Christ, in the perfection of divine love, giving Himself for man. The very act which completed man's sin completed God's love and salvation. And, seeing this, we have confidence in Him; for He has purged away our sins, though in the very act which showed them to be of deepest dye. This both wins the heart, and sets the conscience at rest.

It is not enough merely to win the heart, to have even confidence perfect in God; but the conscience must be purged too. All was done at the cross—God's love fully manifested, and my sins entirely, absolutely, removed. The greater my sins were, the greater my love to God is now; for I can now see their extent. We are afraid thoroughly to look into sin till we understand it is put away, and not before God any more; for, when I am in the light, I can then only see how great my sin is. The moment I am brought to know the blessed fruit of the death of Christ, to know that Christ died for my sins according to the Scriptures, then I have peace. What is required is, not merely that I know I cannot do without Christ, but to trust in God (1 Peter 1:21). And what has become of my sins? They are clean gone, totally past, forever put away. Supposing I really believe in Christ, if this is not done already for me, it never can be; for if my sins were not put away on the cross, they never can be, because Christ can never die over again. It is done; and therefore we can stand before God with conscience purged. I believe in the death of Christ, and I have then perfect peace, and, as regards the work, my assurance is complete.

The work purges the sins, the gospel purges the conscience, to the believer. Resting on the blood, and looking up to God, I can say, “He sees the blood,” and He has promised, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” To rejects me would be despising the blood of His Son. But He has accepted Christ's payment of the debt as perfectly righteous; and what is the public witness of this? That Christ now sits in glory as the risen and accepted man. The glory of Christ now is proof of God's entire acceptance of His work; and as He got to the glory as a man, after having purged and by purging the sins, so, seeing His glory, I see the glorious witness that He has not left a sin on me. They are all gone; and a sight of that glory by faith gives me perfect rest, peace, and assurance.

And “we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory;” our souls get filled with Christ, and this is just what we need and want. “I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). The glory seen in Moses' face, which was but a little reflection of God's glory when coming in righteous requirement, cannot be looked upon: a veil must be used. But we see Christ's glory with “open face,” without a veil; and every ray witnesses to our complete cleansing and justification; yea, contemplating it, and drinking

it in, produce the image of what Christ is in us; and we become changed into the “same image,” into His image from glory to glory—the image showing forth Christ. And thus we are the epistle of Christ.

And now two earnest questions—Are we manifesting Christ? Are we the epistle of Christ known and read of all men? This will surely humble us by the thought of our shortcomings and feebleness in showing Him forth. But in the main and substance, is Christ manifested, as He is our life?

Are you manifested to God in Christ? If so, all is peace. We are reconciled to God in His Son; but if we have a question about this on either God's side or ours, there is not perfect enjoyment of it. But let this stablish us: we are presented according to what. Christ is to God. J. N. D.

Chapter 73

Christianity Mysterious

To say that revealed truth is not mysterious is absurd. A religion, which depends on the Word being made flesh, and the Son of man at the right hand of God, and sending down the Holy Ghost to make our bodies God's temples; which tells us that we are members of Christ's body; which shows God become a man, obedient as such, and dying as such, with other truths needless to enlarge on, must be mysterious in the true, and indeed in every, sense of the word. What angels desire to look into can well be supposed to be so. Christ made sin, as well as His miraculous birth; our dwelling in God, and His in us; our being in this world as Christ is, so as to have boldness in the day of judgment: all speak with one voice. He who excludes mysteries from this word excludes sense from it instead of making it intelligible. By mysterious is not meant that it cannot be understood. The scriptural meaning of “mystery” is what is known only by revelation, not by human knowledge. The initiated know mysteries, uninitiated do not: such is the meaning of the word; but the true initiated are those taught of God. If God reveals, there must be mysteries; and from the nature of what He reveals, true initiation must exist to understand it. Its expression cannot be at the level of human ideas. All the deepest expressions of good and evil are brought together. God and sin meet on the cross. Christ is God, and yet is forsaken of God there. Christ is the power of Prince (Urheber) of life, and He dies, but through it destroys the power of death. You cannot have such things brought together in the same act without mysterious truth. When all that is pervading truth in God, and all that is evil in man, meets and are centered indeed in one person, or the condition He takes, the human mind must be taught of God to know it; and God alone, Who knows all things perfectly, can reveal it simply, because He does know it perfectly; but in it He reveals all in man, all in Himself, and all in Christ. A person may rest on the surface, and seek to destroy all depth in the truth, and bend it to the standard of the human mind and the scope of human thought. But there is no great sense in this—that the Incarnation should not suppose and reveal immense depths of thought, purpose, and moral truth. If all this is denied, it is simple infidelity, and one knows what there is to deal with. If confessed, we have a Christianity in which the depths of our moral nature, old and new, and in the exercises and conflicts of both, meet God, where He and sin have met, and Christ came in the consummation of ages to put sin away. There perfect love and divine righteousness find their manifestation and ground. The simplest expressions of Scripture awake profound depths in our moral nature. What does putting away sin mean? What, Christ the Son of God appearing to do it? What does the Lamb of God mean? It is easy for philosophers to avoid all these expressions and to make a Christianity of their own. Only it is in no part the Christianity that is revealed or known in the word. But interpreting the Christianity that is revealed in Scripture and has possessed men's minds for ages, by saying that the true Divine in it is not having mysteries, is false in fact and absurd in idea. J. N. D.

Chapter 74

Christ's Headship

The Lord Christ will in His person re-unite two things—the universal headship of man, and the union of nations round Israel as a center. He will be the one man to whom the whole dominion is given; and under Him as the true David, Israel, as well as the various nations with their kings, shall be re-established, each in his own land and his own heritage (as before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), with the exception of Edom, Damascus, Hazor, and Babylon itself—that is, those nations which occupy Israel's territory, and Babylon which had absorbed and taken the place of all the others, and must disappear by the judgment of God to give them His place again.

Chapter 75

Consecration

Exodus 29

Christian consecration is as truly of Christ and founded on His work in the power of the Holy Ghost, as is our redemption and liberty. The will of the flesh and the law wholly fail to accomplish it. Grace alone effects it through the faith of Christ, and for us more blessedly than the types could declare; for the veil is rent in His death, and we are free to enter into the holiest.

Aaron and his sons were washed (ver. 4); for the high priest of Israel was a sinful man like another. Not so Christ, Who is the Sanctifier and in no way needed such sanctification as he. But here it is viewed as one sanctification; and how gracious this is! Only let us jealously remember that His was intrinsic holiness, ours necessary setting apart to God through Him, of whose fullness all we received.

But Aaron was first elected and anointed with the anointing oil, alone and without blood (ver. 5-7): a striking shadow, if not the very image; as we know in fact our Lord was anointed by the Holy Ghost before His death and when about to enter on His living public service. For Himself He needed not blood, and the Holy Spirit bore witness to His holy person, and to His righteous ways as well as His Son-ship. The sons of Aaron could not be anointed with the holy oil till the bullock was slain and burnt for a sin-offering and one ram for a burnt-offering and some of the blood of the other ram was put on his and their persons (ear, thumb, and great toe, the whole man purified), and some of it with the anointing oil sprinkled on both their persons and their garments (ver. 8-21). It is the power of the Spirit in virtue of the blood of Christ. Compare Rom. 8:2-4. There was not the washing of water by the word only; it was unction from the Holy One that God might dwell and work in His own by virtue of Christ's blood. Hence Christ risen and ascended received the Spirit to shed on us (Acts 2:33). Thus only could there be full association when we have redemption in Him, even forgiveness through His blood. By that one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. For we must be absolutely cleansed from our sins in order to be associated with Christ at the right hand of God. To be born of God, however important, does not suffice, till the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice leaves us who believe on Him and His gospel without a spot in God's sight, and the Holy Spirit bears us witness of a remission so complete that there is no longer an offering for sin. To suppose aught else is to deny in effect the eternal redemption and His one sacrifice for sins.

But if it be due to His glory to own that Christ could be and was alone anointed without previous sacrifice, it is to be borne in mind for our joy that, after the fullness of sacrifice, we have seen the high priest and his sons and their garments of office to be anointed together “with him;” “and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons and his son's garments with him,” the basis being the blood, not here of the sin-offering, but of the ram of consecration. And thereon follows the wave offering, not only of the bread, oiled cakes, and wafer, which filled their hands, but of the breast and shoulder of the ram waved and heaved unto the Lord (ver. 22-28).

And then came for Aaron and his sons the eating of the ram of consecration duly seethed in the holy place (ver. 31-34). The same Christ by whom the atonement was made becomes the food of the priests, and of none else; as He said Himself, “My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him” (John 6:55, 56).

We stand in all that Christ was to the Father, when He said, “Therefore doth my Father love me.” We stand in divine acceptance in Him. Whatever there is of sweetness and excellency in Christ is upon us. Every act of Christ's was in the power of consecration—His obedience, His service, His walk; and ours should be the same. His devotedness is the standard and measure of our walk with God.

There is no sin-offering before Aaron is anointed, because he typifies Christ; but there is before his sons are anointed, which shows its application to us. We are never to forget that we could not be consecrated to God, if Christ had not died to blot out our sins. Still it is not the blood of the sin-offering that is put on the ear, the hand, and the foot, as it was when the leper was cleansed, and when putting away defilement was the point sought. Here consecration is the question; the value of Christ's blood in consecrating us to God, not the aspect of putting away what defiled. His death is as necessary for the one as for the other; but consecration to God is here the aspect of it. There must be nothing in our thoughts, acts, or ways, inconsistent with that blood.

The blood and the oil were to be sprinkled on the garments. The death of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost should mark that which appears before the world. Those outside should be able to recognize that we are devoted to the Lord, though they cannot understand it in its principle and spring. Still its effect should be visible to men, as it is obligatory before God. For properly Christian practice is the fruit of what we are with God, and flows from it. It is what we are that shows itself in our walk.

All our privileges are the result of association with Christ. The sons of Aaron and their garments are sprinkled with Him. Observe, they were not sprinkled when they were washed, but when the blood had been applied. The Holy Ghost is the seal, not of being born again, but of the work of Christ.

Aaron's being washed with his sons is like Christ associating Himself with His people in John's baptism. Aaron was anointed without blood. The Holy Ghost could seal Christ as perfectly accepted in His own person; but to us He is the seal of Christ's work being accepted for us.

In being consecrated for worship, their hands were filled—but with what? Christ in His life and in His death; the one figured in the oiled bread and the other in the burnt-offering— “the fat.” Every part of the value of Christ is thus put into our hands and offered up before God. It is not only that Christ is ever before God in all His sweet savor, and there for us; but we are to come and present Him afresh in worship—our hands are to be filled with Christ. We cannot go to God without finding Him already in the full delight of grace; still we may bring it afresh before Him. Noah's offering was a sweet savor; and thus the very reason, why God brought judgment on the world, is given why He would not any more curse them, now that the offering was accepted: “For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.”

The daily sacrifice was the provision, on God's part, for the sweet savor being always before Him (ver. 38), whether we fail or not in our priestly action. This shows the meaning of the taking away

of “the daily” sacrifice in Daniel. When this is taken away, there is no link with God left.

Unless we are willing to be consecrated to God, we shall never know the full value of the blood, at least not this aspect of its value. Self-will, however, is not consecration; but the reverse. There will be failure constantly in carrying it out: but there must be the purpose of heart to live wholly to Him, and not at all to self. Verse 43 shows that meeting God is the object; and this marks our title to perfect peace. For, if there were one spot of sin left, God could not be so met. If we are brought to God, sin must have been entirely put away; and that according to His estimate of it. For it is God's estimate, and not ours, both of the sin and of the blood, which gives us our place before Him. “It is God that justifieth,” certainly not I myself by my sense of the value of Christ's blood.

Chapter 76

Courier Bible Aid and Reading Marker

by Rev. C. Neil, M.A., Incumbent of St. Matthias', Poplar.

[Obtainable from Unwins, Ludgate. Price 6d.]

This remarkably condensed card is commended to students of the O. T. who have here before them in a clear, compact, form, that which is often a confused mass of facts. They may thus save the need of recourse to Bible Dictionaries and other helps, alas! frequently tinctured by rationalism if not worse. The chronology is that which is ordinarily received, and forms a central column, followed by the kings of Judah and the length of their reigns on the left, and on the right by a corresponding one of the kings of Israel, each having (as its wing) outlying columns, which give respectively their periods and lines of policy with marg. Scr. references and names of contemporary Prophets. On the obverse are an Index of accentuated names, Tables, and an abstract of the lives of Elijah and Elisha, very useful, among other classes, for Sunday scholars, public or private, and their teachers.

The author might in a new edition print Ezekiel in small capitals, as well as give emphasis to the revival in Josiah's time, which was notable, though it was as little durable as its predecessors. In the kings of Babylon, he ought also to indent Belshazzar, who was only adjunct to his father Nabonadius, or second ruler, in the kingdom. Cf. Dan. vi. 7,16,29. Smerdis M. (=Artaxerxes, Ezra 4:7, 23) ought to have followed Cambyses (=Ahasuerus, Ezra 4:6). Is it to the author or the printer we owe z for the usual x in the final syllable of Xerxes and Artaxerxes?

Daniel 7:1, 6, 17, 24

The book of yours which I have by me is, “Lectures on the Book of Daniel,” second edition.

Q. 1. I cannot reconcile some passages in it with Scripture. On page 103 I read “‘The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings.' There, beyond question, we have the empire of Babylon” and on page 33, “Babylon was first made an empire of in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, who here includes, as it were, those that were to follow.” Surely the description in Dan. 7:2, 3, “.....behold the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from the other” in no way applies to Nebuchadnezzar's accession to the throne of Babylon. Was not his father Nabopolassar king of Babylon in before him?

Q. 2. In pages 106 and 107 Alexander's (the Grecian) kingdom is represented (you say) in the vision by the “Leopard which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also Four heads.” You add “There you have not so much what was found in Alexander himself, but rather in his successors.” Why do you say so? The scriptures must be correct. The leopard appeared with four heads, not with one which was replaced by four, like Alexander's one kingdom which was divided into four! The interpretation of this vision in Dan. 7:17 ("These great beasts which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth”) was given within some three years of the fall of the Babylonian empire. And yet you say, “‘The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings.' There beyond question we have the empire of Babylon” (page 103). The interpretation given to Daniel says “shall arise,” while the Babylonian empire began (page 33) in Nebuchadnezzar some (?) sixty-six years before. J. S. C.

A. 1. The book of Daniel is itself the nearest and weightiest help to explain the difficulties of its several parts. Thus chaps. 2 and 7 reflect light one on another. There is a manifest unity in the colossal image seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which has its answer in “the four great beasts.” that “came up from the sea” in Daniel's vision during the first year of Belshazzar's reign. In the visions all were thus seen at once, though in historical fact they were to succeed each other; as the rest of the chapter would plainly enough indicate. It was not a question of what Babylon had been, or of Nebuchadnezzar's succeeding Nabopolassar, but of God's gift of world-empire to these four successive powers. They begin with Nebuchadnezzar, and are terminated by the judgment to be executed on the final form of the fourth or Roman empire by the Stone cut without hands, i.e. God's kingdom wielded by the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. Nabopolassar was doubtless king of Babylon; but in no way head of the image or imperial system which commenced with his son Nebuchadnezzar, to whom God gave this place expressly. He, not his father, could say though arrogantly, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” as he built enormously besides. His foreign conquests were great, yet less momentous than his energetic home policy. But his overthrow of the Jewish kingdom in its last stronghold was the turning point, and in him the Gentile imperial system began. Dan. 2:37, 38 affords light clear enough for beginning with Nebuchadnezzar and excluding his father or any other before him; as no reasonable mind doubts the parallelism of the two chapters. Compare Jer. 27, Ezek. 12, 17.

A. 2. Here the comparison of Dan. 8:21, 22 simply and fully solves the difficulty as to Dan. 7:6. So one must say because scripture so explains. The later vision of Dan. 8 bears on important details of the second and third powers, laying aside all reference to the first and fourth in Dan. vii. “It is written again” is of the greatest moment when “It is written” is misapplied. Scripture is everywhere consistent as well as surely correct. The fourth beast appears with ten horns; yet we know from other scriptures that these mean ten kings at the very close of the last empire, in no way that they were so found when that empire first began. The same remark applies to the four heads of the leopard or Macedonian empire. Each vision gives characteristic differences without in the least implying that they all appeared from the start. Other or subsequent statements correct such an inference as unfounded and contrary to fact.

So, “shall arise” in Dan. 7:17 must in fairness be taken as a whole, connecting the three powers to come with the Babylonian though already in being and tottering to its fall. To construe the words with such rigid technicality as to exclude the Babylonish empire from answering to the lion with eagle's wings is, not a difficulty for my exposition, but really a setting of Dan. 7 in opposition to Dan. 2 and a groundless upturning of the plain fact. From a full consideration of these scriptures I hold that truth calls one to interpret the “four kings” which “shall arise” as comprising the beginning to the end of these earthly bestial systems, but not so as to exclude the first beast from Nebuchadnezzar's day; for this would set scripture against scripture and thus disproves itself as erroneous. “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” One cannot fairly use this to deny retrospect, but must include Babylon from Nebuchadnezzar. For the object is to give the imperial system relative unity; whilst “the first” and “another,"! &c. in ver. 4-7, gave also succession adequately, as indeed had been done yet more plainly in Dan. 2. Verses 11, 12 contrast a prolonging of the three previous beasts after the loss of dominion; whereas the fourth is utterly destroyed when it ceases to be an imperial power at the close. Scripture therefore sustains the statements questioned, without meddling with the ordinary version of the passages; it shows that the difficulty lies rather in divorcing one text from another, instead of receiving all. Scripture cannot be broken. The prophetic manner also must be borne in mind. A priori expectations of what or how God should reveal are sure to be disappointed. Our blessing is to own His wisdom and goodness in what He gives or withholds. The Holy Spirit, as He wrote all in view of Christ's glory, so works in giving us to expound aright just so far as we have His glory in view, the true safeguard of explaining aright.

Even the incredulous Gibbon in his Letter to Bp. Hurd (Hurd's Works, V. pp. 365, 6) says, “The four empires are clearly delineated, the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, the rapid conquest of Persia by Alexander, his untimely death without posterity, the division of his vast monarchy into four kingdoms, one of which is mentioned by name, their various wars and intermarriages, the persecution of Antiochus, the profanation of the temple, and the invincible arms of the Romans are described with as much perspicuity in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the histories of Justin and Diodorus. From such a perfect resemblance the artful infidel would infer that both were alike composed after the event.” He argued that the author of the Book of Daniel was too well informed of the revolutions of the Persian and Macedonian empires, supposed to have happened long after his death; and that he was too ignorant of the transactions in his own times: in a word, that he was too exact for a prophet, and too fabulous for a contemporary historian.

It is enough to reply that the book is no less distinct in ch. 9 about Christ's death and the destruction of Jerusalem; and that the alleged contemporaneous history is declared to be at “the time of the end” when Israel are to be delivered, and therefore, as future, necessarily unfulfilled prophecy. Hence, to say “fabulous” is not only premature but ignorant, as it will be surely proved to be the baseless skepticism of Gibbon, in the wake of Porphyry. But even they took no exception to the Four Empires as laid down in Dan. 2,7, and saw no such force in Dan. 7:2-3, 6, or 17, as to enfeeble that interpretation. Now there was no empire of Rome till long after the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, where it pleases unbelief to imagine the writing of the book of Daniel. Yet the book not only speaks of a fourth or Roman empire, but dwells with peculiar fullness on its last phase, not yet accomplished, when its blasphemy is to draw down the holy vengeance of the Son of man. Then will follow, not the white throne judgment when the wicked dead shall arise from their graves for judgment, but the kingdom which He shall previously exercise over all peoples, nations, and languages. This therefore clearly presupposes the earth, when it shall be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. Indeed even before that kingdom the latter part of Dan. 11 shows us “the time of the end,” in which Antiochus Epiphanes has no place whatever. But three kings figure: “the king” (Ver. 36-40) in the land, who will be so distinct froth the then “king of the north” and the “king of the south,” that they will both attack him at the same time. Ver. 41-45 are occupied exclusively with “the king of the north” in that future day, who becomes an especial object of divine wrath, as “the king,” we know from elsewhere, will have been before him. Thus minutely writes the prophet on the solemn crisis at “the end of the age,” which future, detail is clearly after the gap where Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees are done with.

Chapter 78

Delivering Grace Consistent With the Responsibility of the Believer

It is the blessed privilege of the simplest believer to enjoy present and abiding peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—to know that he is once and forever brought to God by the death of His Son, yea, that he is made the righteousness of God in Him. Nothing, therefore, should ever be allowed to mingle with the absoluteness of God's grace, and the freeness of His love, or to mar or undervalue the perfect work of Christ, the holy and righteous means whereby divine love can freely display itself, and unlimited grace can flow to the vilest and most needy sinner. To weaken the believer's perfect standing in grace by the mixture of his responsibility in rendering an account to God, would be to darken or nullify the true character of the gospel of God unfolded in the Epistle to the Romans.

There is danger, through either ignorance or preconceived ideas of setting up one line of truth or teaching to the damage of another—for instance, confusing the work of Christ done for, with the work of the Spirit in, the soul. Both are important; but the former is the basis of the latter, to which the Spirit ever leads for rest and peace. Again, the believer working out his salvation with fear and trembling, in the consciousness that God works in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure, is often confounded with the will of God as accomplished by Christ alone. Heb. 10 distinctly gives the latter, which is entirely outside the believer, though it is true that he is once and forever set apart to God in the value of it. Moreover, he is forever perfected as to conscience in virtue of Christ's one offering. Christ's work therefore is wholly distinct from the work which the Holy Spirit produces in the believer. What therefore is insisted on in Rom. 14, the believer's giving an account to God, cannot be to set up responsibility to the cost of privilege, nor in any way to deny what has been previously unfolded of the gospel or its previous results. It would be well therefore to go over some leading points.

In chap. 3 man generally (no matter who) is proved “guilty before God.” Here the precious gospel starts by making God known as the Justifier. He declares freely His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and sets forth His Son as a propitiation, or, the ground of mercy righteously acquitting all who have faith in Jesus and His precious blood. If God therefore is the Justifier, it is certain that those who are justified have not at any future day to come into judgment (John 5:24). That Jesus too was delivered for their offenses and raised again for their justification, proves that their sins can never rise up again for judgment. His resurrection witnesses to the fact, that they are forever gone, as God who raised Him is satisfied forever.

Not only so, but from ver. 12 of chap. 5 the question of not our sins only, but Adam's sin, is raised. Thereby we go back to the source of all the mischief, the root or principle of sin in the race, showing both the man who brought sin in, and how all are involved in its solemn consequences; as it is written, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.” Here then is man's sad and undeniable birth-right, with its universal effects, as flowing from the head of a fallen race. Nevertheless, if by Adam's one offense, judgment came upon all to condemnation, it is by the second Man, the last Adam, that the

one righteousness came for the believer unto justification of life. Death and judgment, the common lot of all, had its blessed contrast of life and righteousness in Christ. The reign of sin and death has also its relief in the reign of grace, and this through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

What therefore becomes of the believer's sin which he has by birth? Has Jesus, the Substitute for his sins, gone into and settled that deep question so as to free him from all thoughts. of judgment? This the apostle clearly proves, insisting that the believer, when saved, cannot abuse grace by continuing in sin; for he, having died to that state, can no longer, live in it. The old man having been crucified with Christ, there is for faith an end of it. Hence, the believer, having died with Christ, is freed or justified from sin. Here the truth as to sin finding its end is manifested by Christ in grace going under it judicially when on the cross made sin and dying to it. “For in that he died, he died unto sin” once for all. Sin and sins having been judged, according to the claims of holiness and righteousness, in Him who died as a sacrifice, the believer through grace is forever set free, both from what he is and what he has done. Precious Savior, and glorious Deliverer! Thou art worthy of the present and everlasting worship of our hearts, for having closed in death the sad history of the flesh or “old man” of every believer.

If Rom. 6 has thus shown the believer's deliverance from sin, chap. 7 also declares that by virtue of Christ dead and risen, the law has lost its power for those believers once under it. Its authority only holds good as long as a man lives; but the believer lives no more as a responsible child of Adam under law, having died with Him who exhausted all its claims, in the same death where the flesh was judged. Not only so; but the believer belongs to Him who is raised from the dead. Such an exchange may well lead up to the conclusive and triumphant language, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Surely then such an enfolding of the gospel, with its definite conclusions, could never be weakened by what the apostle says of all being manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ.

What has been stated too, is but the negative side of the truth, as our evil and freedom from it. What then of the positive? Jesus, who died to sin, was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; and as alive from the dead “He liveth unto God.” He who died to sin once now lives for evermore, and this to God. This then is the positive, as to the life in which believers live before God, for it is the privilege of faith to see and own death and life in relation to God, as made good in Christ; as it is written “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through [in] Jesus Christ our Lord” (chap. 6:11). Moreover, the apostle declares, that the life in which believers live is one of holy liberty; for, as chap. 7:2 states, “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Who then or what can attach sin or judgment to the life which believers have in Christ? Moreover, the same Spirit, who is the power of it, begets the cry of “Abba Father,” the witness of the new relationship of children of God. Surely the divine challenge may well be raised as to a people so distinguished by the sovereign grace and electing love of God. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” “Who is he that condemneth?” God the Justifier, and Christ that died &c. are the blessed answers given, which must silence every foe, and every fear of rendering account to God.

When then, and where, does the responsibility of believers come in? Is it not for the believer after the new place and standing in Christ are made good? If alive from the dead, they are to yield

themselves unto God, and having life in Christ, they are to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The body too, which was once the vessel of sin to carry out the will of the flesh, is now to be wholly for God in doing His will. How fitting therefore, after we are shown how fully and perfectly God has been for believers, is the exhortation of chap. 12, “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Upon this follow the varied duties to be carried out in responsibility to the revealed mind of God. If service, it is to be done to God, in the appointed way, consistent with the relationship He has formed, and according to the measure dealt to each, remembering that believers are members one of another. How important to consider this, first knowing the will of God, and then carrying it out in the little service given and due, never losing sight of God, the object, no matter what the service is, or to whom rendered, on earth. Then, as still in the world (but not of it), let us remember that the powers that be are ordained of God. Hence subjection becomes the Christian, and no less to owe no man anything, but to love one another. The circumstances are then given that lead up to the timely assurance of the judgment-seat, when each believer is to give account of himself to God. If there are no degrees of salvation and life, but all believers equally possess them, it is evident there are the “weak” and the “strong” calling for patient grace and consideration for each other. Meats, drinks, and the observing of days were in question between judging Jewish brethren and despising Gentile ones; not, as in the Epistle to the Galatians, where false teachers were imposing such Jewish things on the Gentile saints, destroying the purity, fullness, and freeness, and indeed the truth and being, of the gospel. In this instance there were different degrees of experience and communion as to what they were doing and allowing. This gave rise to dangerous habits, whether of judging or of despising one another, forgetting their “One Lord,” to whom they were severally responsible. The strong are exhorted to consider the weak, as the weak are not to judge the strong, but to judge this rather that no man put anything calculated to stumble in the way of another; each to walk cautiously and graciously, without giving occasion for the good to be evil spoken of. “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (chap. 14:17).

“Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” This then clearly shows, that there is a day, or time, of giving an account, not surely as to the believer's standing or acceptance in Christ (seeing that he is predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son), but as to ways and works. The time of loss or gain, when (so to speak) the walk and ways of the Lots and Abrahams will appear, the former to suffer loss, and the latter to be owned; when the cup of cold water will not be forgotten, in company with those, who in given grace have labored much, and with fuller faithfulness to their Lord. If it is by grace we are saved through faith, it is no less the work of grace in us, that alone can produce in any small measure a walk and service consistent with the mind of Him who bought us, that we might be for Him where He is not, until He comes to take us where He is. Till then, may Jesus our Lord, by His Spirit, be increasingly the motive and object of each believer day by day. G. G.

Chapter 79

Discipleship

Disciple is learner, follower: the Lord Jesus is both Savior and Master, Lord and Master of all men, of those whom He bought with His blood. Only believers are true disciples. To be a disciple of Christ while He was here below involved the loss of all that men value (Luke 14:26 &c). Not by being deprived of all as by force, for then the affections Aught still be engrossed with them; but a deliberate and willing separation from all that would interfere with following Him. Faith is the first step in the path, the only true beginning. A false start, that is, a pretended following, when all else is not forsaken, frequently if not invariably leads to greater hardness of heart, and to infidelity. The sure natural result is hatred of the truth. The Lord warns the multitude of what is needed to be a true disciple, “if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” Had they ears to hear? Anyone attempting to be a disciple in his own strength, by the working of his own will, would be like a man beginning to build a tower without counting the cost, or like a king going to war with ten thousand against another king with twenty thousand. The cost of being a disciple is beyond the resources of man.

Some have given up father and mother for the sake of worldly advantage; others to gain the applause of quasi-religions men, which is but another phase of the same world. There is only one case in which the Lord shows the necessity of forsaking father and mother, and that is when the child is commanded to forsake Christ; in every other it is sin against Him who said of old, “Honor thy father and thy mother,” and also by the apostle, “Children, obey your parents.” When father or mother, yea, or wife or life, comes in competition with Christ, then all must be “hated” the disciple must bear the cross and follow Him. If any of these stand in the way of confessing Christ as Savior, it is better to be driven from home and disowned by parents, than to be Christless.

When Christ was here, the world was against Him. A few were gathered to Him in true-hearted love. Great multitudes were attracted by His gracious words; they would be disciples, but had not counted the cost; they had not reckoned on the opposing forces of nature and the world. It was only natural feeling which moved them: how could they oppose nature? What a proof this necessity of denying nature affords of the havoc sin has made with the affections implanted by the Creator, and therefore excellent as given by God, that when it is a question of following Christ, the affections are all found perverted and become hindrances, insomuch that the Lord says the dearest objects must be hated. “Hate” in this scripture is not to be understood in its common acceptation of intense dislike; the true disciple does not at all dislike his unconverted relatives, but he seeks their blessing. He may be intensely disliked by them, for he cannot join in their worldly pleasures, and his joys are beyond their apprehension. They are outside and opposed to all that he loves and follows. Hence to the world he has the appearance of hating them. This is a trial to the disciple who longs to see them brought to God, but he will not cease to follow Christ. The separation on the disciples' part and the hatred on the world's part had a very acute form when the Lord was here. To break away from everything, to be in open separation from all that had hitherto

been accounted of God and highly esteemed, and as a consequence to be scorned by the religious of that day, was what the disciples of Christ had then to endure.

Nor has the world changed from its hatred of true and faithful disciples. Our Lord and Master, the first who trod the path of utter rejection and world's hatred, is now on the Father's throne; but the path remains the same. The world has tried to take away the offense of the cross, to make a pleasant way for nature. It has made a bye-path, and very easy walking it is to nature; but the real old path of true discipleship is as rough as ever; the truth has not changed. In the world's religious path no need to count any cost; there is nothing to endure, or give up, or hate, for His name's sake. Those who walk therein know not the meaning of “disciple.”

The world will accept any counterfeit, but hates the real. Though it knows not the true, its instincts at once recognize the counterfeit as part of itself, and its antagonism to Christ is not less seen in its welcome to the false, than in its hatred of the true. Therefore to bear the name of “disciple” and not to separate from the world, is like salt that has lost its savor, which is such a useless thing that it is unfit for land, unfit even for the dunghill. The man who bears the name of professor, and follows the world, dishonors Christ, and is despised by men.

Discipleship and salvation do not run in parallel lines. The Lord in Luke does not say, Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be saved; though only the true disciple knows the full joy of salvation. There may be those who are just under the cross but who can hardly be called followers and hearers of the Lord Jesus; on the other hand John 6 shows that there were disciples who were not saved: “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him” (ver. 66). They for a time followed Him and had apparently forsaken all; what was it that tested these pretended disciples, who being unreal turned again to the world which in truth they had never left? They had seen miracles, had eaten the bread miraculously provided, were willing to be fed by the Lord as regards mere bread, but would not receive Him as the true bread from heaven; Christ the life-giving bread in contrast with the manna once given to the fathers. To many of His disciples this was a hard saying. They murmured. But if they doubted Christ as having come down from heaven, what If they should see Him, the Son of man, go up there again where He was before? In this the Lord asserts His God-manhood, but they could not receive it. They had no life, and flesh profits nothing. It is the Spirit that quickens; and so the Lord says, No one can come to me except the Father who has sent Me draw him. The two truths which here test discipleship are Christ's Person and man's profitlessness. A man may seem to give up all for Christ, but the receiving of these fundamental truths is out of the region of the flesh altogether. There must be the quickening power of the Spirit.

Christ as God-man became the source of life to man; hence He is “that bread which came down from heaven.” But in bread simply, there is no idea of blood. Therefore the true bread must be in that form which meets the need of the guilty. Far a creature unstained with sin there is no need of blood, and after a soul is cleansed no need for further application of the blood. The redeemed feed upon the bread as such. So Israel after their redemption from Egypt (type of ours) were fed with manna. God rained down manna upon them to eat. He gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food (Psa. 78:24, 25). But the point in John 6 is not the sustaining of life so much as the giving life to a sinner. “The bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.” Christ by death became the bread of life. The striving of the Jews brings out a more explicit

statement, “except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood ye have no life in you.” —Christ bearing the judgment of sin, and the sinner owning the judgment as due to himself. But there is more than substitution: “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him.” It is identification with the death of Christ in all its moral force (in its atoning character He is necessarily alone)—a truth developed in Rom. 6 and 7. Christ could only be bread for man by dying; and in and by His death He has become the source of life. But His death is proof that man was condemned. Man is naturally offended when he hears that he could only live by Another's death. “Many disciples went back and walked no more with Him.” It was a test which only those who were given to Him could bear. The true disciple who knows his own ruin and death through sin receives with joy life through the Savior's death, and cleaves the more to Him. “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” The pretended disciple turns his back upon the Lord; the true disciple acknowledges these very words which offended others to be the words of eternal life. But more is added, not only the words but the Person of Christ, which is life. “And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Holy One of God (for so it should be).” The truth that offends the false soul brings out praise from the real.

In John 8:31 we have another trait of true discipleship, “if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed:” In the former chapter the disciple is marked as one given to Christ by the Father, and receiving life from Him; in this (8) he is known by continuing in the word. This is the disciples' responsibility, through the pure and unsolicited grace of the Father; the word in which the disciples are to continue is in connection with Christ being “lifted up” —an expression which had no doubtful meaning to the Jew. It meant a shameful death, the cross, the death of a malefactor. They should know who He was when they lifted Him up; but would those who then believed on Him continue in His word, as the One who only spoke and did in obedience to the Father? Would they so continue when He would be condemned and crucified between two thieves? His discipleship involved this. When that hour came even the true-hearted failed, the sheep were scattered but the risen Lord gathered them again. Abiding in the word is more than knowing the truth intellectually: the essential point is obedience to the truth, a life conformed by the truth and marked by the holiness which grace demands. For knowledge of the truth may be separated from obedience to it. A man may be orthodox in doctrine and lax in practice, or outwardly unimpeachable in life but unsound in fundamental truth. In neither case is there a true disciple.

“And He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things which please Him.” This is the truth that by grace wins the heart, it is the Person of the Lord, but Son and Servant in wondrous union. As Son, He is conqueror of sin, as Servant victim for sin. “As He spake these words, many believed on Him” This is the word, the foundation truth, continuance in which marks the disciple indeed.

Chapter 6 equally declared the truth that life to a sinner could only be communicated through the death of Christ; but there is displayed the natural heart which cannot receive this truth—many are offended. Chapter 8 shows the grace of God in connection with the same truth; and more, for here we have the shame of the cross. The Son of man would be lifted up—the shame of a public execution between two thieves. But here grace works and MANY BELIEVE.

Continuance in the word of Christ is a sure sign of true discipleship. The followers of Christ were then assailed, slandered, and evilly spoken of. At this present day disciples have to bear the same.

Perhaps no former time gave greater opportunities for the true disciple to show faithfulness to Christ. The fagot and scaffold do not require more power of faith than constant misrepresentation and untruthful accusation need its sustaining energy. Patient abiding in the word, amid the contentions of party and the breaking up of old and cherished ties, is the mark of a meek and quiet spirit. The truth makes is free from strife and selfwill.

And this leads on to a further mark of true discipleship, John 13:35, “By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Men were unable to appreciate the previous marks given. A disciple giving up all to follow Christ would be esteemed a fool. To confess that flesh is profitless, that it is only by the operation of the Spirit of God that a soul receives life, without whose power all man's strength is vain, seems fanaticism. To part company with the respectable religious world, to be numbered with the despised, seems bigotry, or at least as having strange notions unsuited to this enlightened age! But if we have Christ to fill the eye and the heart, all these things are proofs of being disciples, of discipleship before God. In chap. 13 the Lord gives a mark which the natural man can recognize; it might create wonder, but there would be an evident testimony of a power superior to the selfishness of nature. The Lord gave the pattern of this love, “As I have loved you, that ye love one another.”

The Lord loved the young man who would not forsake his possessions and follow Christ. The youth had an amiable nature; at least it was interesting to see him running to the Lord, and kneeling to ask the very important question, what he must do to inherit eternal life. But this is not the love of the Lord to His disciples. Nor is it the love of God in giving His only begotten Son as in John 3 The Lord's love to His disciples is a love that found in its objects something above nature and lovable in itself. If above nature, it must be something that grace had imparted. And so we have two things; that this love is heavenly both in its source and in its objects; of divine origin but having its seat in a human heart, displayed by human words and in ways suited to grace and the holiness of God. And its object is that which grace had produced. The Lord loved His disciples with such a love as this, but His was a perfect human heart, and perfectly pleasing to the Father in its special manifestations, as when John leaned upon His breast at supper, and in His love for the family at Bethany.

But the Lord loved them all. “As I have loved you.” Their love to each other was to be of the same character, and to grow in intensity; though it can never reach the purity and strength of His love to them. Not even their love to Him is a measure large enough for the love which they are commanded to have for each other. Surely they all did love Him, but not perfectly. When James and John sought the highest pines in the kingdom, they raised the indignation of the others, thereby proving that all had self as an object, not the Lord alone. It was their glory that occupied their minds. Peter loved the Master, came behind none in fervor, but fear made him deny his Master. The Lord's love to them was pure, patient, untiring, persevering; it never flagged. Nothing on their part could turn. it aside. Nothing less than this is the pattern of their mutual love. The Lord does not say, Love me as I have loved you, it is, Love each other as I have loved you. Such power of love in them could only be the result of grace, of the power of the Spirit in their heart, showing its reality in acts of human kindness, as well as in caring for each other's spiritual welfare. It is heavenly love in a human heart and manifested through a human medium! How greatly the Lord desired the mutual happiness of His disciples! What a divine preventive of strife and of the workings of a selfish nature! Had the church given heed to the loving Lord's injunction, disciples

would have been one body in visible manifestation before men. In no mark of discipleship has the church failed more than in this. The varied and numerous names under which true believers range themselves afford sad proof. All the parties and divisions which now deface the church owe their origin for the most part, not to zeal for the truth, but to lack of love. Love does not seek occasion for separation, nor will it separate save upon scriptural ground; and when compelled by obedience to the word, always in sorrow and hoping for reunion. It is such a solemn thing, that the. Lord has not left it to His disciples to decide when a man that is called a brother ought to be put away, or when an assembly is to be left. 1 Cor. 5 is plain for all immoral cases, and the Second Epistle of John decides with equal precision for the doctrinal. The touchstone is the doctrine of Christ, the truth of His Person, His essential Deity and His manhood. Any one not bringing this doctrine was not to be received even into one's own house, much less at the Lord's table. The word being so explicit forbids us by implication to separate from any other cause. Upon any other ground separation is sin. False doctrine may arise in the church from which, according to the word, separation is imperative. But separation upon unscriptural ground is the place where evil doctrine finds a genial soil and a rapid growth. Divisions are not only the effect of false doctrine but the cause and occasion too. So we get a sorrowful sequence. Want of love works divisions, and divisions work departure from the truth, which in its turn opens the door to every kind of evil doctrine. Obedience to the word, “love one another,” would have prevented the shame of such a scene; the Lord would not have been so dishonored as we see.

Even when fidelity to the Lord demands separation from others, zeal for the truth has often degenerated into zeal for victory. Thus while truth has been assailed by the one, grace, love, and meekness have been forgotten by the other, and the tree witness of discipleship seen in neither. A little more patient love might have nipped the bud of evil. Alas! the pride of seeming right when others are wrong is a great hindrance to brotherly love. So sweeping are the consequences of having forgotten the Lord's word that, if loving one another were the only mark of disciples they would be nearly if not altogether undistinguishable from the world. The trees of the world are bound up in many bundles, the saints of God should be manifested as one bundle of life. There are nearly as many divisions among disciples as bundles of trees in the world.

What a sad aspect the whole church at this present time bears to the eye of Him who prayed “that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also might be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” How responsible the whole church is for the unbelief of the world! What a proof of sovereign grace to know that though the visible unity is a lost thing here, yet will the church be manifested in glory to the world as one, and then the world will know what now perhaps they would believe had the church been diligent to present this trait to them. At all events the world would have had this additional testimony: it was the Lord's mind that they should have it. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples. if ye have love one for another.”

If we love Him that begat, we shall also love them that are begotten of Him. Impossible to love the Father and hate the brethren. I do not say impossible to be saved; but he who loves not his brother gives no proof that he believes the Father, no proof to the world that he is a disciple of Christ. Where this true love of the brethren is not found, there is frequently Pharisaic pride, more hateful than the common pride of the world. Indulging the thought of one's own greater spirituality and faithfulness leads to the despising of others, and is of the same spirit that made some of old say,

“Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou” (Isa. 65). It is but one step more to say—the temple of the Lord are we, and heathen all beside. These high-minded ones, miscalling their spiritual pride by the name of faithfulness, disown all but those who follow them, and, like Jehu of old whose heart was not right with God, say, “Come and see my zeal for Jehovah.” Zeal without obedience is Jehu-like (2 Kings 10:31). Insubjection to the word soon takes the form of sneering at those who seek in scripture a reason for what they do; then of denying the all-sufficiency of the word, saying, that scripture does not provide for every case. Nothing can more show where men are fallen. Whatever their pretension, they are off the ground of true testimony, and fail in that test of discipleship which has peculiar reference to the world. They are a false witness as regards what the church of God ought to be.

Scripture does provide for every case of evil demanding separation. To deny this is to deceive God's saints, and what is of far greater moment, it dishonors the Lord in denying the completeness of His truth. It may be said that there are evils so insidious that only the spiritual can discern them. Granted that the more spiritual may be first and best detect them; but I deny that any evil for which the word authorizes separation, when brought before the conscience of the youngest believer in any assembly of God, will not be judged by him in the light and power of the word of God. If the conscience be darkened by human influence, the judgment will so far be false, And what can influence more than threats of cutting off, loss of friends &c.? But does not he who thus influences the conscience of weaker brethren fall under the judgment pronounced against those who offend the little ones of Christ? (Luke 17:2.) To pervert the weak, to turn away the eyes of the little ones from the word of God, is the blind leading the blind; the leader blinded by pride, the led (and by far the less guilty) by looking to man and not to God. But even the “led” are responsible, for they have the capacity for knowing. “Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things” (1 John 2:20). This is said to babes, not merely to fathers. If babes have a capacity for knowing “all things,” remaining in ignorance is to grieve the Spirit of God, who is come to lead us into all truth. As to the leaders, to talk of evil, to fail in proof, and then to separate, is scattering the sheep of Christ it is undoing as far as it can what God in grace is doing, building the church together for His habitation by the Spirit. Loving one another after the divine pattern, “As I have loved you” would have prevented the divisions which grieve the hearts of tree disciples.

Another mark of discipleship is given in John 15:8. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit so shall ye be my disciples.” The emphasis is not the bearing much fruit, but the glorifying of the Father. Much fruit bearing is the means, the Father's glory is the end. It was what we see the Lord Himself always doing, and it is the highest mark of discipleship. It contains in itself every other mark. “Hating” all for Christ's sake without a lingering look of regret towards the Sodom we have been delivered from, or a looking back if only to bid farewell to those at home (Luke 9:62), this is the blossom which in maturity is much fruit, as it ripens, manifesting every other trait of discipleship until in full fruition the Father is glorified. Abiding in the word, obedience, loving one another as Christ has loved us, is the much fruit that glorifies the Father. Mark the place the glory of the Father has in the heart of the Lord Jesus. As it was His meat (He says) to do the Father's will, and thus glorify Him, so any who glorified the Father should be His disciples. It is the latest mark given, the one the Lord most prized.

As branches in the vine—for thus we are looked at, and the good works of faith by the Spirit in us are the fruit—much purging is needed. The Father Himself is the Husbandman; it is His untiring

watchfulness that makes the fruit-bearing branch to produce more fruit. In His care what patient perseverance of love, what wisdom or skill of husbandry is seen! He has grafted us in Christ, the only true Vine, where we as branches could bear fruit. There was no other life but His which could be communicated to us; but abiding in Him and He in us, we bring forth much fruit. His word abiding in us is the evidence of our abiding in Him. Abiding in Him is faith characterized by dependence and confidence, and this is only where love draws out the heart, in communion with Him, and so dependence upon Him becomes the confirmed habit of the soul. His word abiding in us is the obedience of the heart, manifested so that our life becomes a testimony to all. This is to be a living branch in the vine. Such the Husbandman purges and produces more fruit. “Abiding in Him” does not refer to our “standing” as Rom. 8:1. There is no “if” in Romans. Here in John it is “If ye abide in me,” and if not, cast forth as a branch. That is, the Lord speaks of responsibility. It is the glory of the Father that is in question.

God is glorified when a soul is saved; it is His sovereign grace which quickens, forgives, and puts the pardoned soul in a new position, with a new life and the relationship of children. When it is a question of the child's behavior, or as in John 15 of fruit-bearing branches, then it is the Father's glory. It is grace all through meeting the need of the soul, but in conversion it is grace meeting a dead soul and giving life; in our life it is grace meeting a living soul and giving power to meet his responsibilities. It is the glory of the Father. See also Matt. 5:16.

Only those born of God can abide in Christ, but the responsibility of bearing fruit rests upon every one professing to be a branch. “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch,” and is cast into the fire. A solemn word, which makes the real diligent and watchful, as it tests and demonstrates the false. The Father as Husbandman in purging strengthens and confirms the fruit-bearing branch, and He is glorified.

The Lord could say at the end of His life here, “Father, I have glorified Thee.” He had made God known in a way never known before, and He would have His disciples bear testimony to the truth that God was now become Father to all who believe. In this way the Son had glorified the Father. He glorified God when His soul was made an offering for sin. But here in John 15 as in the former scriptures, we are looked at as disciples, not as children. The Lord says, “Herein is my (not, “your") Father glorified.” And He would have His disciples to be very fruitful, that His Father might be glorified. What more than this could show the Lord's supreme desire to glorify the Father? If He delighted in those who “hated” all for His sake, who believed in Him as the true bread from heaven, who loved each other with the same kind of love, if not with the same measure, as He loved them, who abiding in Him and His words in them were bringing forth much fruit, it was because His Father was glorified. And they who did so were His disciples. It is the crowning mark of discipleship, and implies every other, and the Lord puts His seal upon it, “So shall ye be my disciples.” There is an emphasis on these words, not found connected with any previous mark of discipleship. “So” in that manner, and “my,” truly My own disciple. It was His work while here, and He honors every follower in the same path. But that path was impossible to man before the cross. An ignorant man might say, “I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest,” not knowing what was involved. To be worse off than foxes and birds was more than that man could bear. Yet this was not the great test. The disciples followed the Lord in His path up to the moment when death appeared. Then they all fled. It was only after the Lord had gone through that path, that any disciple could follow. I speak not of atonement, but of condemnation and death from man. Now,

many have followed, and the Lord Jesus has gathered to Himself a noble army of martyrs.

Bearing much fruit is glorifying to the Father. But no fruit is borne save as we abide in Christ, as branches in the vine. That is, Christ is the Center around whom we gather, the Source of our life, the One Object to fill the eye of every believer. This is the present purpose of God. No other name is given by which men are saved. No other name is to be the gathering point for all saints. Any other name, however honored, is an offense to God. Nor can a doctrine, still less a discipline, be God's center of unity. The unity of the body, though a truth of capital importance in doctrine and for practical life clearly asserted in the word, is not what God gathers His saints to. It is a blessed fact which we learn when gathered to His name. To make it His object, to say we are gathered to the unity of the body, is making the church—blessed as it is—of equal moment with Christ, the body equal to the Head! It dishonors our divine Master, the Head, even Christ; it is defrauding Him of His due, putting something in His place. And what is this but idolatry? Whether it be the Virgin, or saints (so called), or the church—changed by some for the phrase “unity of the body,” it is the same in superstitious essence as in the mind of a papist. Whatever it be that is put in the place of Christ is idolatry. It was said of old “Thou shalt have no other gods but me.” And now there is no other point of gathering, any more than Savior, save the name of JESUS. It is equally displeasing to God and dishonoring to the Lord to join anything to His name as a center; to say we are gathered to Christ AND to the unity of the body is making the church of co-equal importance, which ere long makes the grace and authority of the Lord a secondary thing. It is making another tabernacle to the “unity of the body” in disobedience to the voice from the cloud of excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son: hear Him.”

Gathered to the unity of the body is the first step to Romanism; gathered to the Table is a great step beyond. The error begins with making the body equal, to Christ, and then puts it above Him. It is what the church of Rome has done dogmatically and practically. No marvel if we see incipient tendencies here, and full blown Romish practices there. Is it not true that this unholy doctrine underlies old and recent papers in a periodical known to many? At first whispered among the initiated, it is now openly taught; and the simple are beguiled. It is in effect the fresh test of membership, the Shibboleth of a new but unscriptural lump, not wanting the Laodicean boast of being rich and increased in goods.

Those who teach this doctrine are not faithful disciples of Christ, but propagandists of a doctrine which in the minds of the poor and simple soon becomes a vague abstraction, or a gross superstition. The Person of Christ being in the background, love grows cold: they do not abide in Him, and His words do not abide in them. Much fruit cannot be borne, nor is the Father glorified by those who teach or receive to Christ's dishonor such clouds of error. The Lord does not say of such “So shall ye be my disciples.”

R. B.

Chapter 80

The Dispersed Among the Gentiles: 1. The Book of Esther

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, on which I have already meditated, we saw the captives brought back to Jerusalem, there to await the coming of the Messiah, that it might be known, whether Israel would accept the Messenger and Savior whom God would send to them. In this book of Esther we are in a very different scene. The Jews are among the Gentiles still.

We will look at it in its succession of ten chapters; and in the action recorded we shall find—

The Lord God working wondrously, but secretly.

The Jews themselves.

The Gentile, or the power.

The great Adversary.

1, 2

The book opens by presenting to us a sight of the Gentile now in power. It is, however, the Persian and not the Chaldean; “the breast of silver,” not “the head of gold,” in the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw. We are here reading rather the 2nd than the 1st chapter in the history of the Gentile's supremacy in the earth. We see him in the progress rather than at the commencement of his career; but morally he is the same. Moab-like, his taste remains in him, his scent is not changed. All the haughtiness that declared itself in Nebuchadnezzar reappears in Ahasuerus. No spirit or fruit of repentance—no learning of himself—or of what becomes him as a creature, is seen in this man of the earth. The lie of the serpent, which formed man at the beginning, is working as earnestly as ever. The old desire to be as God utters itself in the Persian now, as it had before in the Chaldean. The one had built his royal city, and looked at it in pride, and said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” The other now makes a feast, and for one hundred and eighty days shows to the princes and nobles the whole power of his realm, “the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honor of his excellent majesty.”

Nay more; for the Persian exceedeth. There is a bold affecting to be as God in Persia, which we did not see in Babylon. We notice this in three distinguished Persian ordinances.

1. No one was to appear in the royal presence unbidden. In such a case, had this ordinance of the realm been violated, life and death would hang on the pleasure of the king. 2. No one was to be sad before the king; his face or presence was to he accepted of all his people as the spring and power of joy and gladness. 3. No decree of his realm could be canceled; it stood forever.

These are assumptions indeed. This exceeds, in the way of man showing himself to be as God: and know we not, that this spirit will work till the Gentile has perfected his iniquity? But the hand of God begins to work its wonders now, in the midst of all the festivity and pride which opens the book. The joy of the royal banquet was interrupted: a stain defaces the fair form of all this

magnificence. The Gentile queen refuses to serve the occasion, or be a tributary to this day of public rejoicing; and this leads to the manifesting of the Jew, and of ultimately making that people principal in the action, and eminent in the earth, beyond all thought or calculation.

It was a small beginning, poor and mean in its character and material. Vashti's temper, which goaded her to a course of conduct which jeoparded her life, was the “little fire” which kindled this “how great a matter.” It is a miserable, despicable circumstance. What can be meaner? The temper, we may say, of an imperious woman And yet God, by it, works results, then known to Himself in counsel, but the accomplishment of which shall be seen in the coming day of Jewish glory.

“Deep in unfathomable mines

Of never-failing skill,

He treasures up His bright designs,

And works His sovereign will.”

Vashti is deposed. She is disclaimed as the wife of the Persian; and others more worthy are to be sought for, to take her place.

Now, the question may arise, How far can one of the Jews take advantage of such an occasion? Does holiness avail itself of corruption? Can the people of God forget their Nazaritism, their separation to Him? And yet Esther consents to go before the king at this time, as in company with all the daughters of his uncircumcised subjects!

This may amaze us, if we judge of things by any light less pure and intense than that in which God Himself dwells. The moral sense of mere man—the verdict of legal ordinances—the voice of Mount Sinai itself—will not do at times. We must walk in the light as God is in the light. We must know “the times,” like Issachar of old, ere we can rightly say, “what Israel ought to do.”

Did not some of Bethlehem-Judah take wives of the daughters of Moab, and that, too, without rebuke? Did not Joseph, in his marriage, deviate from the holiness of Abraham, and Moses from the ordinances of the law? Was not Rahab, though a daughter of the uncircumcised, adopted of Judah, and so conspicuous in the ancestry, after the flesh, of David's Lord? And did not Samson take to wife a woman of Timnath, that belonged to the Philistines?

The people of God were not in due order on the occasions of those strange events; and this is the moral vindication. The light of divine wisdom in divine dispensation becomes the judge, rather than ordinances. The Jews were now in the dispersion. Joseph, if we please so to express it, is in Egypt again, Moses in Midian, and the sons of Bethlehem-Judah in Moab; and Esther is as much unrebuked for going in unto the king of Persia, as Joseph for marrying Asenath, or Moses for marrying Zipporah, or Mahlon for marrying Ruth; and each and all of them stand without reproach or judgment before God in these things, just as David did when he ate the show-bread. Nay, these things were of God, as Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman seems distinctly to be so recognized (Judg. 14:4).

Divine counsels shall be accomplished; the fruits of grace shall be gathered; and the ordinances of righteousness, and the arrangements which suit us, were we in integrity and in well-ordered condition, shall not interfere.

Chapter 81

The Dispersed Among the Gentiles: 2

The Jew, strange to say it, as we have seen, becomes important to the power, that is, to the Persian. But more so than I have as yet noticed—important to his safety as well as to his enjoyments. For Mordecai becomes his protector, as Esther had become his wife. This we see at the close of chap. 2. The king is debtor to both. In spite of all his greatness, and all the resources for happiness and strength which attached to his greatness, he is debtor to the dispersed of Judah. They are important to him. Both his heart and his head, as I may say, have to own this.

But, if the Jew be thus strangely brought into personal favor and acceptance, with equal strangeness is the Jew's enemy brought into high and honorable elevation, and seated in the very position which capacitated him to gratify all his enmity. An Amalekite sits next in dignity and rule to the king. Above all the princes of the nation, Haman, the Agagite, is preferred; why, we are not told. No public virtue or service is recorded of him. Apparently it is simply the royal pleasure that has done it. A stranger to the nation he was—a distant stranger; one, too, of a race now all but forgotten; we might say, once distinguished in the day of the infancy of nations, but now all but blotted out from the page of history, superseded by others far loftier in their bearing than ever he had been, the Assyrian first, then the Chaldean, and now the Persian. And yet there he now is before us, an Amalekite seated next to Ahasuerus the Persian; in dignity, office, and power, Haman is only second to him.

This is strange indeed, we may say. The great enemy of Israel, when Israel was in the wilderness, re-appears here in the same character in this day of Israel in the dispersion (see Ex. 17). It is strange, an Amalekite found nearest to the throne of Persia! The heart of the great monarch of that day turned towards him, to put him into a condition to act the old Amalekite part of defiance of God, and enmity against His people. We could not have looked for such a thing. This name of Amalek was to be put out from under heaven; and, from the days of David till now, I may say, this people had not been seen. But now they re-appear, we scarcely know how; and that soon in bloom and strength, as in a palmy hour.

This, again, I say, is strange, indeed. It is of one in quasi-resurrection; of one whose deadly wound was healed; of one “who was, and is not, and shall be present.”

The Agagite now stands forth as the representative of the great enemy, the proud apostate that withstands God, and His people, and His purposes. There has been such an one in every age; and he is the foreshadowing of that mighty apostate who is to fall in the day of the Lord. Nimrod, in the days of Genesis, represents him; Pharaoh, in Egypt; Amalek, in the wilderness; Abimelech, in the time of the judges; and Absalom, in the time of the kings; Haman, here in the day of the dispersion; and Herod, in the New Testament. Exaltation of self, infidel pride, and the defiance of the fear of God, with rooted enmity to His people, are, some or all, the marks on each of them; as in a full form of daring awful apostasy, such will be displayed in the person of the Beast who, with his confederates, falls in the presence of the Rider on the white horse, in the day of the Lord, or the judgment of the quick. Prophets have told of such as “the king that is to do according to his

own will:" as "Lucifer, son of the morning;" as "the prince of Tyrus," we may say; as "the fool that saith in his heart, There is no God;" and variously beside. And the Apocalypse of the apostle shows him to us in the figure of a Beast, who had his image set up for the worship and wonder of the whole world, and his mark as a brand in the forehead of every man; whose deadly wound was healed, who was, and is not, and is to be.

And further, we may notice, that the purpose, as well as the person, of the great adversary, stands forth in this great Haman. He must have the blood of all the Jews; his heart will not be satisfied by the life of the one who had refused to do him reverence.

He must have the lives of the whole nation. He breathes the spirit of the enemy of Israel, who by-and-by is to say, "Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psa. 83). The Amalekite and his company cast the lot, the Pur, only to determine the day on which this deed of extermination was to be perpetrated. But, as we know, the lot may be "cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33). And so was it here. Eleven long months, from the thirteenth day of the first month to the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, from the day when the lot was cast, to the day on which the lot decided that the slaughter of the nation should take place—are given, so that God would ripen His purposes towards both His people and their adversaries.

This has a clear loud voice in our ears. There is no speech or language but the voice is heard. God is not even named; but it is the work of His hand, and the counsel of His bosom.

Haman finds no hindrance from the king his master. He tells the king that there is a people scattered through his dominions whom it is not his profit to let live, for their customs are diverse from all people—the secret of the world's enmity then and still (see Acts 16:20, 21). The decree, according to the desire of Haman, goes forth from Shushan the palace; and it spreads its way in all haste to all parts of the world, the domain of the great Persian "breast of silver." The whole nation, as the consequence of this, takes the sentence of death unto themselves. The decree would have reached the returned captives, as well as the dispersion. Judea was but a province of the Persian power in that day. But they are to learn to trust in Him who quickens the dead, Who calls those things that be not, as though they were, Who acts in this world in resurrection-strength. The remnant of Israel must learn to walk in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham. It is faith that must be exercised; for the Lord will not for awhile reveal Himself, though He thinks of them, and shelters them without displaying Himself.

Mordecai now appears, as the representative of this remnant, the possessor of this Abraham-like faith, in this awful hour.

The godliness of this dear and honored man begins to show itself in his refusal to reverence the Amalekite. The common duty of worshipping only the true God, the God of Israel, would have forbidden this. And shall a Jew bow to one of that race with whom the God of the Jews had already said, that He would have war forever and ever?—bow to one who, instead of bowing himself to the Lord of heaven and earth, had even come forth to insult His presence and His majesty, yea, and to cut off His people before His face? Mordecai will jeopardize his life by this refusal. But be it so. He is in the mind of his brethren Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who can say to an earlier Haman, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is

able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

This is fine in its generation truly; but finer still from its connections. For combination constitutes excellency of character. We are "to quit ourselves like men," and yet "let all our things be done in charity." In Him, who was all moral glory, as we have heard from others, there was "nothing salient" —all so perfectly combined. And in Mordecai we see this. We see "goodness," and; with that, "righteousness." He was gracious, and tenderhearted, bringing up his orphan cousin, as though she had been his own daughter. But now he is faithful and unbending. He will quit himself like a man now, if then he did all things in charity. He will not bow and do reverence at the command of the king, though his life may be the penalty.

Chapter 82

The Dispersed Among the Gentiles 3

Esther 4-7

The various exercises of the soul in these chapters, as we see in Esther and Mordecai, are a matter of great interest. The hand and the Spirit of God work together so wondrously in the story of Israel, as we get it in the Psalms and in the Prophets: His Hand forming their circumstances; the Spirit, their mind. And these two things occupy a very large portion of the prophetic word. And we get living personal illustrations of this here, in the exercise of heart through which these two distinguished saints of God are seen to pass, and the marvelous circumstances through which they are brought.

Esther 4-5. On the issue of the fatal decree Mordecai fasts and mourns in sackcloth. But all the while he counts upon deliverance. Such a combination is full of moral glory. Elijah gave a sample of it in his day, for he knew the rain was at hand; but he casts himself down on the earth, and puts his face between his knees, as one in “effectual fervent prayer” (1 Kings 18, James 5:16-18). The Lord Himself gives another sample of this. He knows and testifies that He is about to raise Lazarus from sleep, the sleep of death; but He weeps as He approaches the grave. So here with Mordecai. He will not put off his mourning. He refuses to be comforted, while the decree is out against his people, though he reckons, surely reckons, upon their deliverance one way or another. This is another of those combinations which are necessary to character or moral glory; a sample of which I have already noticed in this true Israelite, this “Israelite indeed.”

And Esther is as beautiful in her generation, as a weaker vessel. She may have to be strengthened by Mordecai, but she is tenderly, deeply, in sympathy with the burdens of her nation. She sees difficulty, and feels dangers; and she speaks, for a time, from her circumstances. Nothing wrong in this. She tells Mordecai of the hazard she would run if she went into the royal presence unbidden. Nothing wrong, again I say, in thus speaking as from her circumstances, though there may be weakness. But Mordecai counsels her, as a stronger vessel; and he appears as one above both circumstances and affections, in the cause of God and His people. He sends a peremptory message to Esther, though he so loved her; and he is calm and of a firm heart in the midst of these dangers. He sits above water-floods in this way, in the dear might of Him who has trod all waves for us. There is neither leaven nor honey, as I may say, in the offering he is making: he confers not with flesh and blood, nor does he look at the waters swelling. His faith is in victory; and the weaker vessel is strengthened through him. Esther decides on going in unto the king. If she perish, she perishes; but she is edified to hazard all for her people. And yet, while she thus does not “faint” under the trial, neither will she “despise” it: for she will have Mordecai and her brethren wait in a humbled dependent spirit, so that she may receive mercy, and her way to the king's presence be prospered.

Accordingly, at the end of the fast, which they agreed on for three days, she takes her life in her hand, and stands in the inner court of the king's house, while the king was sitting on his royal throne. But kings' hearts are in the hand of the Lord; and so it proves to be here. Esther obtains

favor in the sight of Ahasuerus, and he holds out the golden scepter to her.

This was everything. This told of the issue of the whole matter. All hung upon the motion of the golden scepter. It was the Spirit of God, the counsel and good-pleasure, the sovereignty and grace of God, that ordered all this. The nation was already saved. The scepter had decided everything in favor of the Jews and to the confusion of their adversaries, be they as high and mighty, as many and as subtle, as they may. God had taken the matter into His own hand; and if He be for us, who shall be against us? “Thou shalt be far from oppression,” the Lord was now saying to His Israel, “for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come nigh thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me; whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the water to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn” (Isa. 54).

Esther drew near and touched the scepter. She used the grace that had visited her; but used it reverently and the scepter was true to itself. It awakened no hope that it was not now ready to realize. It had already spoken peace to her; and peace, and far more than peace, shall be made good to her. “What wilt thou, queen Esther?” says Ahasuerus to her, “and what is thy request? It shall be given to thee, even to the half of the kingdom.”

Very blessed this is. The scepter, again let us say, was true to itself. What a truth is convoyed in this! The promise of God, the work of the Lord Jesus, is as this scepter. Those have gone before—pledges under the hand and from the mouth of our God, and eternity shall be true to them; and endless ages of glory, witnessing salvation, shall make them good. Nothing is too great for the redeeming of such pledges: as here, the half of the king's dominions are laid at the feet and disposal of Esther.

But her dealing with the opportunity, thus put into her possession, is one of the most excellent and wondrous fruits of the light and energy of the Spirit that we see in the midst of the many wonders of this book in all the workmanship of God's great hand.

Instead of asking for the half of the kingdom, instead of desiring at once the head of the great Amalekite, she requests that the king and Haman may come to a banquet of wine which she had prepared for them. Strange, indeed! Who could have counted on such an acceptance of such an unlimited pledge and promise? It brings to mind the answer of the divine Master, of Him who is “the wisdom of God,” to the Samaritan woman. She asked for the living water, and He told her to go call her husband! Strange, it would appear, beyond all explanation. But, as we know, it was a ray of the purest light breaking forth from the Fountain of light. And so here. This answer of Esther was strange, indeed. But it will be found to have been nothing less than the witness of the perfect wisdom of the Spirit that was now illuminating and leading her. It was the way of conducting the great adversary onward to the full ripening of his apostasy, to his attaining that mighty elevation in pride and self-satisfaction, from the which the hand of God had prepared from the beginning to cast him clown. Esther, under the Spirit, was dealing with Haman, as the hand of God had once dealt with Pharaoh in Egypt. The vessel of wrath had again fitted itself for judgment; and he must fall from a pinnacle up to which his own lusts and the god of this world are urging his stops. Esther is the instrument in God's hands for giving him occasion thus to fill out the full form of his apostasy.

Esther shows herself wonderfully in the secret of all this. She bids Haman and the king, the second day, as well as the first—only these two together; and when this was done, the giddy height was reached from which the apostate is destined to fall.

He cannot stand all this. It is too much for him. His heart is overcharged; gratified pride has satiated it. He cannot contain himself; but corruption drives him in the way of nature—a sad verdict against nature. But so it is. It was natural, that he should expose all his glories to his wife and his friends. Flesh and blood can appreciate it; and pride must have as many courtiers and votaries as it can. And it must have its victims likewise. Mordecai still refuses to bow; and a gallows, fifty cubits high, is raised that he may be hanged thereon.

Esther 6-7

Every secret thing must reach its day of manifestation. The word which Mordecai told the king about Teresh and Bigthana, the chamberlains, though Hitherto forgotten or neglected, must now be remembered. The tears and the kisses, and the spikenard of the loving sinner in Luke vii., and the corresponding slights of the Pharisee, are passed in silence for a moment; but they are all brought to light ere the scene closes. For there is nothing hid that shall not come abroad. God lets nothing pass. Mordecai's act shall not always be forgotten. It shall be recognized, and that too in the very face of his great adversary; as the sinner's loving acts were all rehearsed in the hearing of her accusers (Luke 7:36-50).

The night after Queen Esther's first banquet was a sleepless one to Ahasuerus. For, as God gives His beloved sleep, so does He at times hold the eyes waking to them by thoughts of the head upon the bed. By sending instruction through meditations in the night-season, He deals with the hearts of the children of men. So here with the Persian. The sleepless king calls for the records of the kingdom, the depository of the act of Mordecai; and he there reads about the act which had now happened some years before. And as it is true of man, that all that he has he will give for his life, so now the king, on the sudden unexpected discovery of the act of Mordecai, by which his life had been preserved, deems nothing too high or honorable for him.

Here, however, we may pause for a moment, and consider the wonderful interweaving of circumstances which we get in this history. There is plot and underplot, wheel within wheel, as the expression is, circumstance hanging upon circumstance; and each and all formed together to work out the wonderful works of God.

There is, in this story, the marvelous re-appearance of both the Jew and the Amalekite. Strange phenomena indeed! Who would have thought it, as I have said before? The Jew and the Amalekite reproduced in the distant realms of Persia, and in divers places of favor and authority round the throne there! Then there is Vashti's temper and Esther's beauty meeting at the same moment. There is the fact of Mordecai being the one to overhear the plot against the life of the king. There is the lot deciding on a day for the slaughter of Israel, eleven months distant, so that there may be time for counsels to ripen, and changes to take place. There is the heart of the king moved to hold out the golden scepter to Esther. And then we see the king's sleeplessness, and his thoughts guided to the records of the chronicles. And now, again, we see Haman entering the court of the palace at this peculiar juncture.

What threading together of warp and woof in all this! What intertwining of circumstances, and the production of a curious texture of many colors! And yet, as we have seen and said already, God all the while is unseen and unnamed.

Very blessed! Pleased with the work of His own hand, and in the counsels of His own mind, the Lord can be hid for a time, unpublished, uncelebrated. And we are called, in our way, to that which is like this. We are to prove our own work, to have rejoicing in ourselves alone, and not in another, without uttering our secrets, or gathering the regards of our fellows. And truly great this is, to work unseen, to serve unnoticed. Deep counsels of that wisdom which knows the end from the beginning, and wondrous working of that hand which can turn even the hearts of kings as it pleases.

Haman falls. What a day may bring forth, we commonly say, who can tell? We see it to be so in his history. Zeresh and his friends have to receive, ere the second day's banquet begins, a different Haman from him whom they had greeted after the close of the first. Haman falls, and falls indeed. But over this we must tarry for a little, that we may take knowledge of the character of this great fact, so important is it in setting forth the judgment of God:

1. Haman's greatness was allowed so to flourish and ripen, that he might fall in the hour of highest pride and daring.

This is very instructive, for this has been God's way, and is so still. The builders of the tower of Babel were allowed to go on with their work, till they made it a wonder. Nebuchadnezzar was given time to finish his great city. The beast of the Apocalypse will prosper till the whole world wonder after him. So here, Haman is borne with till he sits on the pinnacle. Then, in the moment of proudest elevation, the judgment of God visits all these. Herod, as another such, was smitten of God, and died, as the people were listening to him, and saying, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man” (see Psa. 37:34-36).

2. He is caught in his own trap. The honor is given to Mordecai which he had prepared for himself; and the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, he hangs thereon himself.

This still instructs us; for this has been God's way, and will be so still. Daniel's accusers are cast themselves into the den which they had prepared for him; and the flame of the fire slew those men who took up the children of the captivity to cast them into the furnace. And so it is foretold of the adversaries and apostates of the last days in this world's history. “Their own iniquity shall be brought upon them” (Psa. 7; 9; 10; 35; 57; 141, etc.) Satan himself, who has the power of death, is destroyed through death.

3. He falls suddenly.

So with the last great enemy. The judgment of God is to be like a thief in the night, like the lightning that cometh out of the east and shineth to the west. “In one hour,” it is said of the Apocalyptic Babylon, “is she made desolate.” The judgments on the world before the flood, and on the cities of the plain, were such also; “like figures,” with this fall of the Agagite, of a judgment still to be executed.

4. He falls completely, utterly destroyed. So with the great enemy, and the course of this present world with him.

The children of Judas cut off (Psa. 109), the little ones of Edom dashed against the stones (Psa. 137), Haman's sons, all hanged after himself—these illustrate for our learning the utter downfall and annihilation of all that now offends; the clearing out of all by the besom of divine judgment. The “millstone” of Rev. 18 tells us this, and prophecy upon prophecy has long ago announced it.

Full of typical significancy, in all the features that signalize it, is the fall of the great Amalekite. We live in such an hour of the world's history, as renders it specially significant and instructive to us. We are, day by day, seeing the Lord allowing the purposes of the world to ripen themselves, gradually to unfold their marvelous and varied attractions, and its whole system to make progress, till it again, like the tower of Babel of old, draw down the penal visitation of heaven; and that, too, in a moment, suddenly, to do its work of judgment completely, when (blessed to tell it!) not a trace of man's world shall remain, his pride and wantonness, with all their fruit, shall be withered and gone, and such a world as is lit for the presence of the Lord of glory shall then shine.

Chapter 83

The Dispersed Among the Gentiles 4

Esther 8-10

We close this Book with the deliverance of the Jews in the very moment when destruction was awaiting them, and with their exaltation in the kingdom, and the celebration of their joy.

Mysterious workmanship of the hand of God! The Amalekite, the great adversary, cast down in the moment of his proudest elevation, and utterly cut off; the Jew, his purposed and expected victim, when there was but a step between him and death, delivered, then favored and honored, and seated next to the throne in rank and authority!

What a history! True in every circumstance of it, typical in every circumstance of it also; significant of those last days in the history of the Jew and of the earth, of which prophets have spoken again and again, the downfall of the man of the earth, and the exaltation of God's people in His own kingdom!

Mordecai, instead of being any longer at the king's gate, now comes before the king and takes his ring, the seal of office and of authority, from his finger. Thus is the Jew translated at the end. All scripture prepares us for this; and here it is illustrated. Here the historic scriptures of the Old Testament end, and here, as in a type, the history of the earth ends.

I may say, that the leading principal characteristics in the story of Israel are these, as we read it in the prophets—

1. The present casting off of that nation, and the hiding of the divine countenance from them; and yet, their providential preservation in the midst of the Gentiles.

2. The present election of a remnant among them, and that repentance at the last, which leads them, nationally, to the kingdom.

3. The judgment of their adversaries and oppressors, with the especial downfall of their great infidel enemy.

4. Their deliverance, exaltation, and blessing in kingdom-days, with their leadership of the nations.

These are among the great things of the prophets; and these things are found in this little book of Esther. So that, again, I may say, this last Old Testament historic notice of the people of Israel pledges and typifies their present preservation all through this age of Gentile supremacy, and their glory in the last days, when the judgment of their enemies shall be accomplished.

Certain detached features of the coming millennial kingdom are likewise exhibited here. The fear of the Jews falls on their enemies, on those that were round about them; and they are restrained from all attempts to do them harm. Such had been seen in the palmy days of the nation, and such is promised by the prophets to be their portion again. Shushan, the capital of the Gentile world in that day, rejoices in the exaltation of the Jew; as all scripture tells us, the whole world will rejoice

under the shadow of the throne of Israel in the time of the coming kingdom. Many of the people of the land became Jews, as we read the like thing in the prophets again and again. Thus, for instance, “Many people shall go, and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of. His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” The throne that had exalted the Jew, and put down his oppressor, exercises universal dominion, laying a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea; as we know that, by and by, the king in Zion “shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.”

And here, let me add, that Ahasuerus represents power, royal authority, in the earth. He then filled the throne that was supreme among the nations. He was “the power,” and represents, mystically or in shadow, the power that will be in a divine head in the day of the kingdom. It is so, I grant, that power in the hand of this Persian is first exorcised in evil; serving, as he did, the wicked designs of Haman, though now he is exalting the righteous. Still, he represents power, royal authority in the earth. Just like Solomon in Jerusalem, he did evil personally; he may have repented; but still his personal ways were evil as well as good. Nevertheless, in a general typical way, he represented power, and was the shadow of Christ on the throne of glory, that throne that is to rule the world in righteousness.

Full of mysterious beauty and meaning all this is. Those days of Ahasuerus and of Mordecai were days of Solomon and of prophecy, coming millennial days, days of the kingdom of God in the earth and among the nations. They were as the days of Joseph in Egypt. Mordecai in Persia was as Joseph in Egypt—the first historic book, and the last, in the Old Testament, giving us these varied but kindred notices that will come in upon the close and judgment of the kingdoms of the Gentiles.

The days of Purim celebrate all this. They constitute triumph after the victory, the joy of the kingdom upon the establishment of the kingdom. The Jews took on them, according to the word of Mordecai and Esther, to make the 14th and 15th days of the twelfth month, the month Adar, days of feasting and joy, because they rested therein from their enemies, and their mourning was turned to gladness, and light, and honor. They were a kind of Passover, celebrating deliverance from the land of Persia, as that feast did from the land of Egypt; or, if we would rather have it so, Purim was another song on the Red Sea, or another song of Deborah and Barak on the fall of the Canaanite. And it rehearses the song yet to be sung on the sea of glass in Rev. 15; or again, I say, if we would rather have it so, the joy of Israel in coming kingdom-days, when they shall draw water out of the wells of salvation (Isa. 12). Indeed the Psa. 124 and 126 prepared as they are for future days of Israel's glory and joy, breathe the very spirit that must have animated Israel in this present day of Mordecai and Esther. It is beautiful to trace all this, to see these rehearsals again and again, as we go on the way, waiting for the full chorus of eternal harmonies in the presence of glory by and by. The infant church in Acts 4, in this spirit, breathes and utters the second Psalm, prepared as that Psalm is for the day when God's king sits upon the hill of Zion, after the enemy has perished, and the kings of the earth have learned to bow before Him. The blessed God is pleased with His own works: “For thy pleasure they were and were created.” He, therefore, preserves, the work of His hands as their Creator. He is pleased with the counsels of His grace and wisdom. He has, therefore, preserved to this day the nation or people of the Jews, and will preserve them till the fruit of His counsels displays itself in His kingdom. And His kingdom thus will rise on the ruins and judgment of the nations; and Christ's world, “the world to come,” shine in brightness, and purity,

and blessing, after the folding up and passing away of “this present evil world.”

This coming kingdom, this millennial world, is spoken of in all forms of speech by the prophets; but it has also been set forth in all forms of samples, and parcels, and specimens of it, in broken pieces of history from the beginning: as here we have seen it showing itself at the end of the Book of Esther. Ordinances, prophecies, and histories, in their several ways, have been doing this service.

Ere the antediluvian saints pass away, the spirit of prophecy speaks through Lamech, and addresses, as to them, a word of promise touching the earth; that therein, in due season, there should be comfort instead of curse (Gen. 5).

In Noah, as in the new world, we see an illustration of this prophecy of Lamech's; for after the judgment of the deluge, the earth rises again as in new or resurrection-form; and a pledge, a foreshadowing, of millennial days is before us.

The land of Egypt, under the government of Joseph, is a “like figure.”

Under the law, we have a shadow of the same millennial rest in the weekly sabbath—in the annual feast of tabernacles—in the jubilee every fiftieth year.

For a moment, in the day of Joshua, when the tribes of Israel had entered the land, kept the Passover as a circumcised people, and then ate unleavened cakes of the corn of the land, we see, in another form the same happy mystery witnessed to us (Josh. 5)

After this, the palmy reign of Solomon in a more extended form, in a full and rich manner, tells us the like secret.

And, indeed, I might have noticed the meeting of Jethro with the ransomed Israel on the mount of God, in wilderness-days, was (though in a different form) the foreshadowing of the same coming day of glory (Ex. 18).

And so now, in dispersion-days, as I may speak, we have the same; as we see at the close of this Book of Esther.

Prophecies upon prophecies accompany these ordinances and these histories; so that, in the mouth not only of many but of various witnesses, the kingdom that is still to be set up, and the glory that is still to be revealed, are verified to us. These are rehearsals of the great, the magnificent, issues of the counsels of God, of that purpose which shall be manifested in “the dispensation of the fullness of times.”

The New Testament gives us like illustrations and promises. The transfiguration tells us of it. The regeneration or Palingenesia tells us of it. The action in the Apocalypse first makes way for it; and then, at the end, it shines in our sight, when the holy city descends from heaven bearing the glory of God with it, and when the millennial nations walk in the light of it.

Thus, the close of Esther finds itself in company with things from the very beginning to the very end, and all through the volume, all through the actings and sayings of God in the progress of this world's history. It is wonderful. What a witness of the writings that were to be found in scripture! What a proof of the breathing of the same Spirit in all the parts of it! How it tells us, that “known

unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"! We fill our own place, and occupy our own moment, in this great plan. J. G. B.

Chapter 84

The Dispersed Among the Gentiles: 5

Having read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah by themselves, as the story of the returned captives, and the book of Esther by itself as the story of the dispersed captives, we would now meditate on them together for a few moments. They give us, as we see, two distinct companies of captives, or two sections of the Jews. They illustrate different parts of the divine counsel and wisdom touching that people; and teach us lessons very important for our souls thoroughly to learn.

In each of these scenes, in the midst of each of these sections of the people of God, we have, so to speak, a separate platform erected for the exhibition of several or separate portions of God's ways and dealings with them.

The returned captives are brought home and left in the land, in order that they may be tested again; for to test His people, though in different ways, had been God's way from the beginning. Israel had already been tested by the gift of power. They had received a fat and good land, and been led on as from strength to strength, till they had flourished into a kingdom; a kingdom which had drawn the eyes of the kings of the earth, and was the admiration of the world.

But they had been untrue to this stewardship. They had abused the power entrusted to them, and were rebellious against the supreme rights of Him who had thus set them up, and ordained them as chief and metropolitan in the earth. And accordingly, or consequently, power, supremacy in the earth or principal authority among the nations, was taken from them and given to the Gentiles.

Now, however, they are at home again. The captivity to which their unfaithfulness had led is over, and there is a section of the people at home in the land of their fathers again. For it is the divine purpose to test them by another test. God is about to send Messiah to them. His mission and ministry is to be in healing mercy, a proposal of the grace that brings salvation, that it may be known, whether they have an answer to the appeals of love, since they have already proved that they had no fidelity to Him who had entrusted them with power.

This is what we read in the fact of Israel's (or Judah's) return from Babylon. They are Jews again in their own land. Accordingly, as soon as they get home again, they behave themselves as Jews. They keep the ordinances—they raise the national altar—they rebuild the temple—they keep themselves apart from the heathens—they read the scriptures—they observe the way of the God of Israel, as far as subjection to power in the hand of the Gentile will admit it. And the God of Israel owns them. He blesses them. He shelters them. He may exercise them in faith and patience; but still He is with them. As of old, He gives them leaders and deliverers and teachers; sends to them His prophets; and grants them days of revival, days of the new moon in the seventh month.

We know all this, indeed. This was, it is true, a kind of reformation in their religions history. No idolatry is practiced by them after this; but other corruptions rapidly set in and worked, as not only the books of Ezra and Nehemiah themselves she w us, but more particularly the prophecy of Malachi. And the opening of the New Testament scriptures confirms this; for the Gospel by Matthew lets us see clearly and fully, that the returned captives were deeply unbelieving; as untrue

to the doctrines and proposals of goodness, as their fathers had been to the stewardship of power. “He came to His own, and His own received Him not."

This is so, indeed. And as, when they had been untrue to power, power was given over to the Gentiles, so now, since they are untrue to grace, grace is given over to the whole world; for the gospel is preached and the salvation of God is held up in the eyes of the ends of the earth.

And strikingly consistent and beautiful this progress in the ways of divine wisdom, or of God's dispensations. All testing ends in failure, and God must act for us and not with us. This fresh trial, by the ministry of Messiah, only proves, as by the mouth of another witness, that man is incorrigible and in curable. Every effort to make something of him, or to do something with him, leads him out to another exposure of himself, till he is left naked to his shame. The kingdom is not entered by a tested creature, even though grace test him. Judgment as of “reprobate silver” is the result of the process. “The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain."

Yes, indeed, he must be saved by grace, and not merely tested by it. The first advent of Messiah, or the proposal of salvation, did not lead Israel into the kingdom; it has left them a judged people scattered and peeled, unsaved and unblest, only condemned upon a fuller conviction than ever.

We turn, however, to another scene. We are to consider another section of the people, the dispersed and not the returned. For in them is erected another platform, as I may still speak, for the illustration of God's way. We shall see them as the pledges and witnesses, not of a tested but of a saved people, saved through sovereign grace, and led into the kingdom.

This people had not availed themselves of the opportunity they had of returning home. This is a standing witness against them. They remained among the uncircumcised. They acted the part of the raven in Noah's ark. They seemed to take up with the unclean world. They are as Gentiles, we may say; we see no feasts or ordinances, or word of God among them. But I grant they are Jews still. And grace abounds towards them. In the midst of the Gentiles they are still kept alive—another unconsumed burning bush. Jehovah is not seen to be acknowledging them, as He was acknowledging their brethren who had returned to Jerusalem. Still He has His eye upon them, and they are kept alive; and that, too, till the due time comes for His rising up to deal with them in a way of which all His prophets have spoken.

All this we see in Esther, that wondrous book which closes the historic volume of the Old Testament.

A remnant is seen there. God deals with them marvelously both by His hand and Spirit; but He is unmanifested. We have seen this, when meditating on Esther. And we further traced God's way with Israel in all those eras of their history, when they were in an informal anomalous state. As instanced in the marriage of Joseph with an Egyptian, of Moses with a daughter of Midian, and the like, and Esther's marriage with Ahasuerus the Persian. For this was as the way of God Himself with them: when they were untrue to Him, He went over to others. Power first, as we have seen, and now grace and salvation, have gone over to others, since Israel was disobedient and unwilling. How consistent all this is! What constancy and perfection and unity in the ways of His holy wisdom! His brethren were untrue to Joseph, and cast him out. He married and became important in Egypt. His brethren wore untrue to Moses, and forced him away; he married and

became happy in Midian. His people were untrue to Jehovah; and He gave power to the Gentiles. His own were untrue to Messiah, rejecting, not receiving Him; and He now dispenses grace and salvation to the whole world.

Surely the Lord knows the end from the beginning. Surely His way is before Him.

“His wisdom ever waketh,

His sight is never dim,

He knows the way He taketh,

And I will walk with Him”

Oh for grace to say this and to do it! And to walk with Him, too, along the path of His wisdom, and the ways of His dispensations, as from glory to glory, to “walk in the light as He is in the light.”

And fresh wonders still shew themselves to us on these two platforms, in the story of the Returned, and in the story of the Dispersed.

As I have already observed, Malachi begins to intimate what will be the end of the returned or tested captives. All will fail, as all has failed. The New Testament Scriptures affirm the intimation of Malachi. The Evangelists make good the hints and notices of the Prophets. But Esther gives us to know what will be the dispersion, or of that portion which remained among the Gentiles. They will finally be taken up in sovereign grace, carried through “the great tribulation,” and by that road into the kingdom. In that story, or on that platform, we see the nation of the Jews brought to the eve and on the brink of utter destruction, rescued by the wonder-working hand of God, and then seated in the high places of honor, of influence, and of authority, by the Power that rules the earth, all their enemies either judged and taken out of the way, or seeking their favor and blessing.

These are the secrets we are instructed in, in these books, or in these two scenes of various action. Man is tested and fails; the sinner is taken up in grace and saved.

And these are the secrets we have been set down to learn from the beginning; and we are destined, blessedly destined to celebrate them forever. Man is exposed, God is displayed. Man is thoroughly made naked to his shame; God is exalted in the highest order of exaltation, and displayed in the brightest light of glory.

It was thus in the story of Adam at the very beginning. He was tested, and under the testing he failed, and destroyed himself; he was then taken up in grace, and saved through the death and resurrection of Christ—by faith in the bruised and bruising Seed of the woman.

It was thus again in Israel. Israel was set under law. But the shadows of good things to come accompanied the law. Under their own covenant, under the law, Israel, like Adam, was ruined. But God acts in the midst of the self-destroyed people, the self-wrought ruin; and by ordinances and prophecies and pledges of many kinds He has ever been telling them of final grace and salvation.

And now, in like manner, the gospel thoroughly exposes us, but fully, presently, perfectly, eternally, saves us. And through the ages of glory, it will be told out that we are a washed people, a ransomed people, who owe everything to grace and redemption, though glorified forever.

So that these two platforms, the scene in the midst of the returned captives, and the scene in the midst of the dispersed captives, are in company with all the divine way from the beginning, and with that which is to be had in remembrance and celebrated forever. Only we marvel afresh at this new witness of the way of God, His necessary perfect way, in a world like this.

How complete all this makes the divine historic volume of the Old Testament! That volume ends here; and we are well satisfied to have it so.

The was of the Lord Himself in this book is specially wonderful. Apparently He is neglectful of His people. He is “silent” towards them. He does not show Himself There is no miracle. His people, even in all the exercises of their hearts under the most pressing circumstances, never mention Him. Surely this is wonderful. But it is admirable as well as wonderful. It is perfect in its place and season. For during this present Gentile age God is apart from Israel, like Joseph in Egypt, or Moses in Midian, apart from their brethren, as I have already noticed; yea, and as many voices of the prophets have anticipated (see Psa. 74; Isa. 8:17; 45:15; 18:4; Hos. 5:15, etc.). And the Lord Jesus, speaking as the God of Israel at the close of His ministry, says to them, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:38, 39)!

But He cares for them. Their names are in the palm of His hand. He revokes not the judgment; but He will, in due time, awake for their deliverance. It is Jesus asleep in the boat, winds and waves tossing it. But in the needed time He awoke, and rose for the quieting of all that, which, swelling in its anguish, was raging against them.

Hail to the Lord's anointed,

Great David's greater Son!

When to the time appointed

The rolling years have run,

He comes to break oppression,

To set the captive free,

To take away transgression,

And rule in equity.

(Conclusion)

Chapter 85

Drummond's Natural Law in the Spiritual World

The object of this paper is not to introduce a book which is understood to have already a circulation of some 30,000 copies in a comparatively brief space, but to point out its character, as accounting for popularity so marked. It is written with force and clearness, with liveliness and geniality, rising to eloquence when the occasion calls for it; and there is a fair presentation of fundamental truth, such as new birth and the atonement, with wholesome and clever exposure of the one-sidedness of revivalism, indeed, one may say of the evangelical system as well as of sacramentalism. Yet it is not, in my judgment, the good points of the book, but the bad and, from a Christian stand, its unworthy and dangerously corrupting peculiarities, which have made it so palatable, at a moment when men crave the exciting food which it supplies, conceiving that they stand well abreast of the science of the age.

Mr. D. is a Christian. But his enthusiasm evidently goes in the direction of natural science; and so blinding is its influence that he seems completely under the spell of the fashionable evolutionist reveries of the day. His ardent effort throughout is to conciliate his argument and illustration as much as possible with the principles and even language of Mr. Herbert Spencer, the acknowledged chief of British Agnosticism! The assumption of modern infidelity, in a small knot of bold materialists who have got the public ear, is so overbearing that those who value their good opinion, or dread their contempt and that of their followers, fail to see that this vaunted theory, if logically carried out, is incompatible with Scripture, denies creation in any genuine and full sense, and threatens to end, like Pyrrhonism of old, in the destruction even of science itself. For evolution is supposed in time to efface those fixed laws by which objects animate and inanimate are governed, the ascertainment of which constitutes science. At best evolution attempts to account for the origin of things; natural science is based on observed and permanent facts.

But let us hear our author's own account (pp. vi.-viii.) of what he fondly regards as his discovery, and what we cannot but mourn over as a delusion, by which no believer ought to have been taken in.

“It has been my privilege for some years to address regularly two very different audiences on two very different themes. On weekdays I have lectured to a class of students on the Natural Sciences, and on Sundays to an audience consisting for the most part of working men on subjects of a moral and religious character. I cannot say that this collocation ever appeared as a difficulty to myself, but to certain of my friends it was more than a problem. It was solved to me, however, at first, by what then seemed the necessities of the cases—I must keep the two departments entirely by themselves. They lay at opposite poles of thought; and for a time I succeeded in keeping the Science and the Religion shut off from one another in two separate compartments of my mind. But gradually the wall of partition showed symptoms of giving way. The two fountains of knowledge also slowly began to overflow, and finally the waters met and mingled. The great change was in the compartment which held the Religion (!). It was not that the well there was dried; still less that the fermenting waters were washed away by the flood of Science. The actual contents remained

the same. But the crystals of former doctrine were dissolved (!); and as they precipitated themselves once more into definite forms, I observed that the Crystalline system was changed. New channels also for outward expression opened, and some of the old closed up; and I found the truth running out to my audience on the Sundays by the weekday outlets. In other words the subject-matter Religion had taken on the method of expression of Science, and I discovered myself enunciating Spiritual Law in the exact terms of Biology and Physics.

“Now this was not exactly a scientific coloring given to Religion, the mere freshening of the theological air with natural facts and illustrations. It was an entire re-casting of truth (!). And when I came seriously to consider what it involved, I saw, or seemed to see, that it meant essentially the introduction of Natural Law into the Spiritual World. It was not, I repeat, that new and detailed analogies of Phenomena rose into view—although material for Parable lies unnoticed and unused on the field of recent science in inexhaustible profusion. But Law has a still grander function to discharge towards Religion than Parable. There is a deeper analogy between the two kingdoms than the analogy of their Phenomena—a unity which the poet's vision, more quick than the theologian's, has already dimly seen.” Mr. D. of course is the Seer; and by his own acknowledgment, when his mind had for some time been paying weekday homage to Science, Sunday homage to Religion, he found the wall that parted them giving way; but “the great change was in the compartment which held” —not the Science, shifting and at best but growing as it is, but— “the Religion!” How came a child of God and minister of His revealed truth to write such a sentence without compunction and to publish it without shame? For what is Religion but the answer in heart and mind and walk to “Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever”? Of course it is admitted that “the actual contents remained the same.” “But,” he affirms, “the crystals of former doctrine were dissolved.” God be thanked, it is not so with any servant of Christ loyal to his Master or the truth. In early days a similar effort was made by the enemy, and not by forms of Science so beneath and remote from the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ as Biology and Physics. Men bearing the Lord's name sought to enunciate Spiritual Law in the exact terms “of ancient metaphysics.” But the apostle resented the insult to God's word and Spirit, which alone and perfectly make Christ known, as making the saint a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, as the science, or knowledge, which is falsely so called. On the other hand he insisted on holding fast the form or pattern of sound words, which [words] Timothy as others had heard from him, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Hence the duty of keeping the good deposit that was entrusted to us through the Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us: for as the pretension to the Spirit without the word breeds fanaticism, so is rationalism the result of using the word without the Spirit working in us to Christ's glory. Natural Science is the idol of Mr. D. Nor is it that he meant to exclude Christ, any more than Aaron when he made the golden calf to please the people. But the fact is the deep dishonor of this book to divine revelation, when the worship of the weekdays dissolved that of Sunday. “The Crystalline system was changed.” “It was an entire re-casting of the truth”! Truly we find ourselves in the difficult times of the last days, when one who yet owns Christ and the written word can dare so to think and write and print, to the grief and shame of every thoughtful Christian, and to the pleasure (not without ridicule) of Messrs. Huxley and Tyndall and their companions, when they see the professing crowd carried away from the truth in their direction by this novel wind of doctrine. None can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Scripture repudiates Science as not only a co-ordinate but even a subordinate authority in spiritual things. The process may seem

slow, but is sure; for the word of the Lord abides forever. They cannot mingle their waters save to the loss of the well undefiled. Science in its own “compartment” is all well; but the truth (and “religion” must be this or a fable) refuses the banns which Mr. D. would proclaim between it and Science. One may not any more than the author respect “the theologian's” insight into God's mind in Scripture. For the effort to make the truth “scientific,” common to the theologian in an intellectual way and to Mr. D. in the lower depth of naturalism, is ruinous to the spiritual intelligence of revelation: which is little and powerless indeed, if it carry not divine authority over the conscience, as it reveals Christ in grace and truth to the heart. But think of a Christian gravely citing “the poet's vision,” even though its comparative dimness be reserved in honor of the great ε■ρηκα!

“The effect of the introduction” [not of Christ, as Revealer of God and Mediator between God and man, into a lost world, but] “of Law among the scattered Phenomena of Nature has simply been to transform knowledge into eternal truth. The same crystallizing touch is needed in Religion (!) Can it be said that the Phenomena of the Spiritual World are other than scattered (!!)?” p. ix. Yes, Mr. D., God has from the beginning perfectly done in and by Christ, for what you call “the Spiritual World,” that which you vainly pretend to do by your book; and He has given the full and unchanging record in His Book. He and He alone has revealed the truth. He that pretends to furnish “eternal truth” in divine things, he that denies that God has united the once scattered “phenomena of the Spiritual World in His Christ made known in Scripture by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is no true prophet. It is not “Reign of Law” we need: for we have already grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

In sober sadness the author has lost himself in this dream of identical Law. The nebula, from which the Evolutionists deduce the universe, in the teeth of the calm majesty of Gen. 1, never fails to envelop the minds of all who confound that mythical hypothesis with true science; but of all these evolutionists (for they have their widely differing sects), none less consistent logically as well as spiritually than such as still profess faith in Christ and Scripture.

That this is no exaggeration of Mr. D.'s thought will be apparent yet more from what he says in p. x. “My Spiritual World before was a chaos of fact; my Theology, a Pythagorean system trying to make the best of Phenomena apart from the idea of Law.” It never seems to occur to the devotee of Science any more than to the theologian of the old schools, that not “the idea of Law,” but the truth of Christ in Scripture, is by the Spirit's teaching the one center of order in what is otherwise uncertain as well as chaotic. But He is this and infinitely more in the spiritual realm to the exclusion of the vain key which Mr. D. commends. “I make no charge against Theology in general, I speak of my own” [as if he had not been trained like other young men in the ordinary curriculum]. “And I say that I saw it to be in many essential respects centuries behind every department of science I knew.” Christian reader, is not this perplexing language from a professed believer? the speech of Egypt, not of Canaan? If by “Theology” he means the revealed faith of a Christian, as it surely ought to be, what means its being centuries behind any department of Science? Is it not a revelation completely out and divinely perfect? And how absurd and worse to add, “It was the one region still unpossessed by Law”! Our measure of appropriating Scripture is our measure of knowing and applying Christ. That region is wholly possessed by, and instinct with—not Law, but—Christ. It is “the great exception,” and distrusted by men of science only as by all others who do not by the Spirit look to Christ and have life in Him. And what will Mr. D.'s book do for such adversaries? It may harden those who make Law their god; it will corrupt every Christian who

admires and yields to its distinctive system; it is a positive wrong to Christ and Scripture; and the more sorrowful, as the author is, I doubt not, at bottom, a believer.

Even his apology in p. xi. is most objectionable and false: “We have Truth in nature as it came from God.” How different the voice of revelation! Rom. 1:19, 20. There is a real testimony to God's everlasting power and divinity (θει■της, but not θε■της which is only known in and by Christ, Col. 2:9). One learns justly that God must be. But Who and what He is is unknown save through His Son, by and in whom it is eternal life to the believer. He is objectively the truth, as the Holy Spirit is the power by whom alone applying God's word He is made known. But Truth in nature even “as it came from God,” which Science ignores (being occupied only with nature fallen as it is), we have not; nor has such language any just sense. For Truth even in its least application means a thing or person made known as it is: hence Nature could not possibly make known truth, unless a poet's vision is preferred to Scripture. Nor is God Himself ever called truth there, but Christ in one way and the Spirit in another, as revealing God and making known man and all else in the spiritual realm. No, “'Truth in Nature” is only another part of the delusion, which Mr. D. shares with remarkably bad company, who begin with claiming “the same reverence” for Nature as for “all other Revelation,” and are in danger of ending with the abandonment of Scripture, the only revelation of God for a sinner or a saint.

There are many excellent and true remarks up and down the volume; but less than what is here said would be unfaithfulness in him who writes this notice, whether or not he may examine it beyond the Preface in which its aim is explained.

Chapter 86

Dwelling in God and God in Us

It is important to remember that John teaches it as a truth that applies to all believers. They might have excused themselves for not appropriating these statements as too high for them. But the fact judges the excuse: communion is neglected. For in every one who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God God dwells, and he in God. What encouragement for a timid believer! What rebuke for a careless one!

Chapter 87

Faith of Old

We cannot meditate upon Old Testament Scriptures without being struck with the faith of the Old Testament saints. It was no doubt that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when upon earth, for He is the only perfect exemplar of faith as of every other perfection. It will also be that of the godly Jewish remnant in the latter day under their last and bitter trials. It counts upon the faithfulness of God and pierces through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, right up to God Himself. We have a very striking example of it in Psa. 46 which may well put many of us to shame as it often does me.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” A refuge is a place to flee to from impending and known danger. A sinner's fleeing for refuge to Christ implies a sense of imminent danger: He is everlasting security from impending judgment; He is the true city of refuge from the avenger of blood (Num. 35:13, &c.). He is also the strength of His people in their conscious weakness. He does not always deliver us out of our troubles, but sustains us in them, and carries us through them, which is far better, and enables us to say in our feeble measure, “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matt. 11:26). Mary and Martha could never have known the present sympathy and resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ if they had not experienced the death of their brother. It was when sickness, death, the grave, and corruption, had each done its worst and seemed to have robbed them forever of their beloved one, that the Lord stepped in, and showed them Himself as they had never before known Him. The sisters had sought the Lord in their trouble, and such is always its effect where there is real faith. Blessings tend, because of what we are, to elate us; and we run off with them to enjoy them, and forget God. Trouble brings us to our knees. It is good when our blessings also have this effect. See the beautiful example of this in Gideon (Judg. 7:15). He did not rush off elated to tell the hosts of Israel the cheering tidings he had heard, but first worshipped, ere returning to the host. God was a very present help to him in his trouble; and such was the effect. But the Psalmist goes on to say “Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” &c.

Only let us reflect for a moment what faith it was for a Jew, whose revealed hopes were connected with the earth to use such language as this! All that was properly a Jewish hope was humanly speaking gone if the earth were removed. What faith it was then that could enable a Jew thus to count upon the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises, in the face of such a catastrophe! But faith always counts upon God. Again, what but implicit faith in the living God could enable the Psalmist to speak of a city and a river to make it glad if the earth were removed? The city here is not the heavenly Jerusalem but the earthly. It is the city which hath foundations (Heb. 11:10) which the patriarchs waited for (see new translation), and is in contrast with the tabernacles which had none. The land was yet theirs only by promise, and they waited till God should give it them and settle them in it. In patience they possessed their souls, and did not forestall God by building a city for themselves. The heavenly country they sought was a heavenly order and condition of things in Canaan with Jehovah in their midst: not a better country than that will then be, but a better than Mesopotamia from whence they came out. They waited for that and confessed in the meantime,

that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth (in the land, as in verse 9).

We must not explain away what is Jewish and earthly because of what is Christian and heavenly. The city spoken of in the psalm before us is surely Jerusalem in Canaan, which is to be the center of blessing and of government for the whole world, as it is written, “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge, i.e., rule among the nations” &c. (Isa. 2:3). If the saints of old were looking for heaven, death would have been a step in the direction of their hope, and there would have been nothing particularly remarkable in their dying in faith. But seeing that they looked for the fulfillment of God's promises concerning Palestine, it was stupendous faith for them to believe that, though they died out of it, God would give it them. But to return— “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her and that right early.” This must be the earthly city. The heavenly one when established will need no help. It will be out of the reach of harm. Not so the earthly: even at the close of her millennial peace and blessing there will be the hosts of Gog and Magog gathered against her. But God shall help her and that right early: no long conflict, no long siege, no protracted slaughter, shall characterize her deliverance. Fire shall come down from heaven and consume them (Rev. 20:9).

How salutary the exhortation— “Be still and know that I am God.” We are very prone to agitate and busy ourselves in times of trouble; but it avails nothing, it only betrays our want of faith and entangles and distracts us still more. The proper effect of trouble is patience, and of patience experience of God, &c. (Rom. 5:3, 4). “I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” This is emphatically an answer to the faith expressed in the Psalm, it is Jewish and earthly; but we can and do share with the faithful Jew and rejoice with him in the prospect and assurance of his blessing, although God has prepared some better thing for us.

Having already alluded to the brilliant faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, who counted upon God to give them the land of promise when dying out of it, I will close these few lines with reference to that of Abraham in Gen. 22.

God had called upon him to offer up his only-begotten son in whom all the promises centered. We are familiar with the scene, but there are one or two features in it well worthy of continual notice.

First. The promptness of the patriarch, the absence of all hesitation. “And Abraham rose up early in the morning.” “He staggered not” at the requirement of God through unbelief, any more than he had done at the promise of God (Rom. 4:20). His promptness was equal to his faith and the fruit of it. Again, he was not more prompt than he was steadfast. He had ample time in his three days' journey to have reasoned himself out of his purpose, and to have persuaded himself that there must have been some mistake, &c. But no, he had the living God before his soul, and could trust him to make good all He had spoken concerning Isaac, though he slew him. “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” What implicit faith in God that raiseth the dead (see Heb. 11:17-19)! And when they had come to the place, and the altar and the wood had been deliberately arranged, he “bound Isaac his son and laid him upon the altar upon the wood” &c.

In Abraham we see in type (as every Christian knows) the Father offering up His Son, and now at this point we have the Son giving Himself. An obedient father had an obedient son; for, whatever others may think, I do not believe that the binding was to prevent resistance. To prevent

involuntary struggling, it might have been and no doubt was, for that would naturally have occurred, when the knife was felt; but now Isaac was here an intelligent and willing victim. But every type is imperfect: for what created thing could set forth the excellency of the person or the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in perfectness? Hence the importance of our not interpreting Christ by the types, but the types by Christ, lest we should attach to Him the imperfections of the types. This has been done and teaching-subversive of atonement and the personal glory of Christ has been based upon it, to the damage of many souls. Isaac, beautiful a type as he was in the scene—before us, was imperfect in three momentous particulars at least.

1st. He did not know till the very last what was coming upon him. The Lord Jesus Christ did. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.....by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once” (Heb. 10:9). Oh what devotedness to His Father! what unspeakable love to us! It was more than a cruel and ignominious death that He suffered—He bore the judgment of God due to us.

A way of escape was found for Isaac. There was none for the Lord! “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39).

If Isaac had died, he would not have made atonement for one sin. There could have been no virtue in his death for he was only a man, and a sinner also. Cursed is the man that trusteth in man (Jer. 17:5); but of the Lord it is said (Psa. 2:12) Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. He was God as well as man.

And now, my reader, does not such faith as we have been reviewing put us to shame? Well it may. Yet, if we have not the faith of Abraham or of David, we have the all-gracious all-faithful and Almighty God, the same yesterday and to-day and forever. Let us look unto Jesus, the only perfect object and pattern of faith. Who could ever be tried as He was? Yet, when persecuted, crucified, and reviled, He patiently bore it all. Such contradiction of sinners He endured against Himself, i.e. to His own disadvantage and reproach. “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40): so He was taunted, but He endured. Everlasting praise to His precious name. G. O.

Chapter 88

Fragment: Jehovah

Jehovah is always His name in Israel, and that of government, save in a few cases where Adonai (Lord is the proper appellative use of it) is employed. But it is to be noticed that Jehovah is used in Proverbs, because it is authoritatively instructive in known relationship; never in Ecclesiastes, where it is God in contrast with man having his own experience as such on earth. “God” abstractedly is only once used in Proverbs (xxxv. 2). We have “her God” in chapter 2:17.

Chapter 89

Fragment: Man

When the Word was made flesh, the unjealous testimony of the angels on His birth is glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men. Man would not have Him; and the special testimony of the assembly—the church—was formed. But His delight was in that race. For the time it was not peace, but division. But even after the millennium “the tabernacle of God is with men,” where we have both the special relationship and the general blessing.

Chapter 90

Fragment: Psalm 133

Psa. 133 is one of the two places where life for evermore, life eternal, is spoken of in the Old Testament; the other is Dan. 12 both as accomplished in the time of blessing to come. In the New Testament it is fully revealed in Christ; and he that believes in Him hath everlasting life.

Chapter 91

Fragment: Samuel

Samuel was a child of promise, which is always the sign of grace. And therefore at his birth his mother celebrates through the Holy Ghost the praises of peace. He becomes at first a mere waiting boy in the tabernacle, whence he is called forth that all Israel might have him to be the prophet of God, and finally see in him the raiser of the stone Ebenezer—the believer of help of the nation.

History of Idolatry: Part 13

Paul also, by the Spirit, speaks of these men. Among the Corinthian saints some said there was no resurrection. This was the effect of the Gnostic notion that matter—and so the body—was the principle of evil. Therefore the body could not be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and it follows also that He has not come; but the Lord Jesus said He would send Him. There is denial of His word, as well as dishonor to His person.

To the Colossians the apostle writes and warns them of the danger of not holding the Head, and to remind them that “He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him,” — “Whom we preach, admonishing every man.” They needed warning; for among them were those who, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, would beguile them with a pretended humility, but doing their own will. Their notions “were only the elements of the world and not according to Christ. “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When writing to Timothy he speaks of the great mystery, “God (or, He who) has been manifested in flesh.” It is Christ, for as all else is distinctive of the Son, so He “has been received up in glory.” But in latter times some would apostatize from the faith, i.e., would deny fundamental truth, giving their minds to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, in hypocrisy, of those speaking lies. The infidelity of the world against the God of creation is not so dreadful as this; for here are men who have in measure looked upon and handled the Word of life, and then denied Him. The impress of these early infidels is still retained by Christendom. Every succeeding generation shows it, slightly magnified it may be, but essentially the same.

There are two other forms of infidelity; but these stand apart by themselves. Delusions both infidel and idolatrous, viz., Mohammedanism and Mormonism. Infidel, for each arose in countries where Christianity had been preached, and where the truth was wholly or partially denied. Idolatrous, for each exalted a man and gave him the homage due only to Christ. But Mahomet and J. Smith stole largely from the Bible, as appears from their respective books, the Koran, and the book of Mormon. Both books pretend to be a further revelation, and completely supplant the Bible, as if it were imperfect. Neither denies it to have come from God; but, owing to its incompleteness and mistakes, a fresh communication from God was needed to develop the truth and clear it from all error, which the founder of Mormonism in his professed creed attributes to the interpolations of scribes. But he does not seek to correct the Koran; this would be very like Satan casting out Satan. Nay, it is God's Book that is set aside, His truth is denied; and this denial, whatever extravagancies and wickedness accompany it, makes these delusions infidel.

Mohammedanism had its birth in Arabia. Paul had been there (Gal. 1:17). Before the close of the sixth century idolatry again prevailed, as the Epistle to the Galatians warned of the danger, and charged its principle on such as after the cross went back to ritualism. Mahomet appears, his wife is his first convert, and she converts her cousin who was a professed Christian apostasy are stamped upon it at the first appearance. At that moment there were only three, and one an apostate! Mahomet professed to extirpate idolatry, but he only changed its character. The rally cry of his followers was “God is great and Mahomet is His prophet.” Their infidelity consists in denying,

not the being of God, but the person and work of the Son, and, we may add, in supplanting the abiding presence of the Spirit by the fabulous mission of the warrior vicar of God. Most of the countries now called Mohammedanism were once Christian. The reveries and wickedness of Gnosticism were received in place of the truth; and in retributive judgment they were given up to believe Mahomet's lie.

Mormonism began in America in the beginning of the present century. The infidelity of Mormonism is peculiar. The Mormons profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in repentance, &c.; but their infidelity spite of their “faith” which scarce exceeds the eastern delusion appears in this article of their creed, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the book of Mormon to be the Word of God.” To add to God's word is no less infidelity than to deny any part of it. The difference as to this, between the ancient and the modern delusion, is one of degree, not of kind. The ancient says that though there may possibly be some part of the Bible true, no belief is to be placed in the copies held by Christians. The later delusion accepts the Bible as Christians have it, “as far as it is translated correctly.” Thus Gnosticism, Mohammedanism, and Mormonism have this in common—the insufficiency of the Word of God. Each more or less sanctioned corruption; for the denial of the Word of God, whether in the form of taking from it, or of adding to it, opens the door for every fleshly wickedness.

In these brief remarks two facts are established: that man without revelation inevitably became an idolater; and that with revelation he became an. infidel. Revelation, not reason, cast its light upon idolatry, and man saw that it was senseless and degrading. He forthwith derided it. The same light manifested himself, that he was a sinner and lost. This he resisted. But as he could not extinguish the light, so his unbelief could not change the fact. And just as idolatry varies in form according to the different manners and habits of men, so infidelity assumes different phases according to the special truth to which it is particularly opposed. In fact unbelief is as natural to man as idolatry: only it was latent and needed revelation to bring it out. The one is the proof of ignorance, the other the expression of enmity both declare the heart of man to be “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”

How was man to be delivered from these two universal evils—idolatry and infidelity? For look where we may, one or other, or both is seen. The root-sin is unbelief and God's remedy is applied to the root. The true and only remedy is faith. And here look at faith for a moment, not in its higher character as that by which the believer is justified, but in its perfect suitability as a means to receive blessing, and indeed the only means for a creature who had become utterly incapable of doing one good work. Impotent as man is, there was worse still; for his will is opposed to God. How does he stand in relation to the testimony of that one immense fact that God sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world but that it might be saved? In natural things man is so constituted that belief in well authenticated facts is involuntary. No question of like or dislike but of evidence. Can any narrative rest upon stronger human evidence than the Gospel? And it that as fact be immovable, then the truth of Christ's. Person, and atonement, of God's grace and man's ruin, is undeniable. It is this that God presents to man Responsibility consists in believing the testimony of God concerning Christ, or in the rejection of it, for upon faith hangs salvation. It is clearly and solemnly given by, our Lord— “He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” But his will is opposed to God and to His truth. Does that destroy the evidence of truth, or remove responsibility? Both remain, and the cause of final

judgment will—unbelief in Christ, which leaves all other sins for punishment.

The faculty of credence is inherent, and adequate testimony commands it. The business of everyday life could not be carried on without it. An event takes place beyond sight and hearing, the evidence is unquestionable, and unhesitating credence is given to the report. This is the mere natural faculty to receive testimony; man was endowed with it when created. The fall did not destroy it. Therefore God in providing His remedy for sin addresses this faculty of the soul, the only one which could morally be appealed to. For the understanding was darkness, the will was enmity, and the affections were hate. A duly attested fact is record, and a Book is written whose genuineness and authenticity rest upon evidence far beyond any other book in the whole world. Thus man is challenged upon the ground of his capacity to receive evidence. Here is the point of human responsibility. It is God's remedy for sinful man brought close to him. “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Rom. 10:8, 9) It is not understanding nor loving the testimony (that follows) but believing it. The responsibility of man as he is lies in this.

How divinely wise and suitable to the mental condition of man is God's salvation by faith. Such is the gospel it meets man where he is, utterly unable to do any good thing for his salvation, but with a capacity to receive testimony. Those who receive the testimony of God concerning His Son are as good ground, and bring forth fruit. Light shines upon the darkness, and grace breaks down the opposing will. It may be said that many believe the testimony and remain indifferent. I doubt the reality of their believing, even with a mere human faith. When the truth of utter and eternal ruin is first realized, man cannot be indifferent. He may become so. But there is more infidelity under the garment of profession than of that bold kind which openly denies the truth. When a soul bows to the judgment of God, he receives the testimony of God, but may be as the man who said “Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” And God gives the faith that brings assurance of salvation.

Idolatry, Infidelity and Faith divide mankind. The natural man as born in the world is an idolater; in the presence of Revelation, an infidel. But where by grace submission to God's word is tree and unfeigned, divine faith is given. And God by it forms a distinct company for Himself. R. B.

Chapter 93

Israel's Entry Into the Land, the Result of Promise: Part 1

We have, in Rom. 11:1, this question put by the apostle as to Israel: “Hath God cast away His people?” As far as chapter 8 he has been detailing the history of us all as men, whether Jews or Gentiles; he has fully stated the gospel of the grace of God, namely, the reconciliation of man by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After having established, this point, he begins in chapter 9 the history of the dispensations; he makes known the manner in which God has acted towards the Jews and the Gentiles; and in this chapter 11 he starts the question, “Hath God cast away His people?”

We have seen, in studying the history of the four beasts, and also that of the church, that the Jews were put aside; and that the gospel has appeared in the world to save sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, in order to reveal the hidden mystery of a heavenly people, and also that “unto the principalities and powers in. heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.” A Jew, who is now converted, enters into the dispensation of grace; but upon this comes the immediate inquiry, “Hath God cast away His people?”

It is not concerning His spiritual people that the question is asked, but concerning His people according to the flesh—His people, the Jews. The apostle says (ver. 28), “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.” In this chapter 11 the gospel is not in view—namely, the calling of the Jews, as a people, into grace by the gospel—although indeed there is an election for the gospel from among this people; but the question treated is that of the Jews, as God's manifested people, of Jews according to the flesh, who are enemies as to the gospel, but beloved in respect of a national election on account of the fathers.

Because, then, the gospel is come in, has God rejected His people? Does He count them enemies? The answer of the apostle is, “God forbid!”

We Christians boast of this, that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;” and well we may, for it is a scriptural principle; but to whom does the apostle apply it? Not to us, but to the Jews. It is always important to consider the context of every passage of the word of God, and not to force it out of the situation where God has placed it.

The present is the dispensation of the calling of a heavenly people, and, in consequence, God puts aside His earthly people, the Jews. The Jewish nation is never to enter into the church; on the contrary, “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in;” —until all the children of God (out of them composing Christ's body, the church, in this dispensation) are called.

Israel, as a nation, will be saved. “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer.” He has not cast away His people. As touching the gospel they are enemies, and they will so remain until the fullness of the Gentiles be come: but the Deliverer will come. This is a summary of the divine purpose as regards the Jews.

From the moment it can be affirmed of the dispensation of the Gentiles, that it has not “continued in the goodness of God,” we can say that, sooner or later, it will be cut off. “Toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

The root of the olive-tree is not alone Israel under the law; far from it. It is Abraham, to whom the call of God was addressed. It was the calling of a single man, separated, elect, the depository of the promises. The choice fell upon Abraham, and upon the family of Abraham according to the flesh. Israel once served for an example, as depository of the promises and of the manifestation of the election of God; now it is the church which so serves.

In order to make you understand the root of the promises, which is Abraham, I will touch upon the series of divine dealings which preceded.

First, at the fall of man we see him left to himself Although not without witnesses, he had neither law nor government; and, as a consequence, evil was carried to the highest pitch, so that the world was full of violence and corruption; and God purified it by the deluge.

Afterward came Noah. A change took place. It was this, that the right of life and death, the right of taking vengeance, was given into the hands of men: “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” To this was added a blessing to the earth, greater or less. “This same,” said Lamech in speaking of Noah, “shall comfort us, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed;” and a covenant was made by God with Noah and with the creation—a covenant in witness of which God gives the rainbow. “The Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground” (Gen. 8:21; 9:6, 12, 13). This was the covenant given to the earth immediately after the sacrifice of Noah, the type of the sacrifice of Christ.

It may be said, in passing, that Noah failed in this covenant, as man always has done. Instead of drawing blessing out of the earth by tillage, he begins to cultivate the vine and gets intoxicated. By this forgetfulness and fault of his, the proper principle of government also lost its power in its first elements. Noah, who held its reins, became the subject of derision for one of his sons.

We see in all dispensations the immediate failure of man; but that which is lost in all of them by human folly will find its recovery at the end in Christ; whether it be blessing to the earth, prosperity to the Jews, or the glory of the church. All that has appeared and has been spoiled, under the keeping of the first Adam, will blossom again under that of the Last Adam, Bridegroom of the church, the King of the Jews and of the whole earth.

Another still more signal failure took place after Noah's. God had made His judgments terribly felt in the deluge, and His providence was thus revealed. What did Satan do? As long as he is unbound, he takes possession of the state of things here below. No sooner did God manifest Himself in His providential judgments than Satan presented himself as God; he made himself, as it were, God. Is it not written, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God?” Satan made himself the god of this earth. Josh. 24:2; “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time.....and they served other gods,” said the Lord to the Israelites. It is the first time that we find God marking the existence of idolatry. When it made its appearance, God calls Abraham; and thus, for the first time, appears the call of God to an outward separation from the state of things here below. Because Satan had introduced himself as influencing the thoughts of man, as the one whom man was to invoke, it was necessary that the true God should have a

people separated from other peoples, where the truth might be preserved. And consequently all the ways of God towards men turn upon this point—that here below God called Abraham and his posterity to be the depository of this great truth: “There are none other gods but one” (see Deut. 4:35). Consequently all the dealings of God upon the earth have reference entirely and directly to the Jews, as the center of His earthly counsels and of His government. This is shown us in Deut. 32:8 It was according to the number of the children of Israel that the bounds of the nations were set. It was with reference to Israel that He gave them their habitations.

You will see also these two principles distinctly presented in the word: on one side, the promises made to Abraham without condition; and, on the other, Israel receiving them under condition, and so losing all. But as Abraham received the promises without condition, God cannot forget them, although Israel may have failed in the conditions which they engaged for. And this is very important; for if God were to fail in His promises towards Abraham, He could fail also in His promises towards us.

It was at Sinai that Israel received the promises under condition, and failed; but this in no wise weakened the validity and the force of the promises made to Abraham four hundred years before. I am not now alluding to the spiritual promise, “All nations shall be blessed in thee,” which has found a partial fulfillment by the gospel in this dispensation; but I refer to the promises made to Israel, which rest on the same faithfulness of God.

Let us begin our citations upon this subject out of Gen. 12. The chapter is the call of Abraham, who was then in the midst of his idolatrous family. The terms of the promises are very general; but they contain earthly blessings as well as purely spiritual ones. The two kinds of blessing are found in the same verse equally without condition. The spiritual part of the promise is only once repeated (chap. xxii.) and that to the seed; not so the temporal ones. In chap. 15 we have a promise founded upon a covenant made with Abraham, also without condition; it is an absolute gift of the country. Here is also found that of a numerous posterity (ver. 5, 18); and even the exact limits of the country given (ver. 18, and following). In chapter 17:7, 8, the promise of the earth is renewed. These are confirmed to Isaac (chap. 26:3, 4), and to Jacob (chap. 35:10-12). Here are “the promises made unto the fathers,” and to Israel, “beloved for the fathers' sakes;” they are made to Abraham, whether spiritual or temporal, without any condition.

If you say that the spiritual promises are without condition, so by parity of reasoning the temporal ones are. There is as much certainty in the promise made to Abraham, “To thee will I give this land,” as in those which have been made in favor of as Gentiles.

There is no need to cite the wrestling of Jacob. It is, in general, thought to be a proof of extraordinary faith in him. This is true; but, at the same time, it is a faith which, exerted after conduct much to be reprehended, was to be accompanied by an evident humiliation. It was God who wrestled with him; but God also sustained his faith. So shall it be with Israel in the end: they shall feel the effect of leaning on the flesh; but God shall take this controversy into His own hands and bless them after all.

Thus God made Himself “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob” —heirs of the promises, and pilgrims upon earth.

We shall see that in this name God, as it were, makes His boast on the earth, and that the faithful in Israel ever find in it the motives of their confidence. “Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Ex. 3:15).

But in another point of view, Israel placed themselves in relationship with God in a way which is opposed to all that; namely, of their own righteousness—the principle of the law, by virtue of which, acknowledging that we owe obedience to God, we undertake the doing of it in our own strength; for the history of the people of Israel, whether in its largeness or in details, is but the history of our hearts.

(To be continued D.V.)

Chapter 94

Israel's Entry Into the Land, the Result of Promise: Part 2

Ex. 19 Here was an immense change taking place in the state of Israel: until then the promise to them had been unconditional. If you cast your eyes over the chapters from 15 to 19, you will find that God had given them all things gratuitously, and even in spite of their murmurings; as the manna, water to drink, the sabbath, &c; and that He had sustained them in their combat with Amalek at Rephidim. He recalls all this to their memory: “Ye have seen,” says He to them, “how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if.....” This is the first time, in the relationship between God and Israel, that the little word if is introduced. “Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.”

But the moment a condition comes in, our ruin is certain, for we fail the first day; and this was the foolishness of Israel. In vain God gives His law, which is “holy, and just, and good.” To a sinner, His law is death, because he is a sinner; and from the moment that God gives His law conditionally—namely, that something is to come to us by keeping it, He gives it, not because we can obey it, but to make us more clearly comprehend that we are lost because we have violated it.

The Israelites should have said, It is true, most gracious God, we ought to obey Thee; but we have failed so often, that we dare not receive the promises under such a condition. Instead of this, what was their language? “All the words that the Lord hath said, will we do.” They bind themselves to fulfill all that Jehovah had spoken; they take the promises under the condition of perfect obedience. What is the consequence of such rashness? The golden calf was made before Moses had come down from the mount. When we sinners engage ourselves to obey God without any failure (although obedience is always a duty), and to forfeit the blessing if we do not, we are sure to fail. Our answer should always be, “We are lost;” for grace supposes our ruin. It is this entire instability of man under any condition, that the apostle wishes to show (Gal. 3:17-21) when he says, “A mediator is not a mediator of one.” That is, from the instant there is a mediator, there are two parties. But God is not two; “God is one.” And what is the other party? It is man. Hence the first covenant depends on the stability of man, as well as of God; and all comes to nothing.

There being nothing stable in man, he has of course sunk under the weight of his engagements; and this is what must always happen. But the law cannot annul the promises made to Abraham; the law, which was 430 years after, cannot abolish the promise. Now the promise was made to Abraham, not only of blessing to the nations, but also of the land and of earthly blessings to Israel. The reasoning of the apostle, as to spiritual promises, applies equally to temporal promises made to the Jews. We see that Israel could not enjoy them under the law. In fact, all was lost as soon as the golden calf was made. Yet the covenant at Sinai was founded on the principle of obedience. Ex. 24:7: “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood” Here is a covenant ratified by blood—and upon this foundation, “We will do all that the Lord hath said.” You

know that the people made the golden calf, and that Moses in consequence destroyed the tables of the law.

In Ex. 32 we see how the promises made before the law were the resource of faith. It was this which sustained the people by the intercession of Moses, even in ruin itself: and by means of a mediator God returned to man after his failure (ver. 9-14). “It is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.” Then Moses besought the Lord: “Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.”

Thus, after the fall of Israel, Moses beseeches God, for His own glory, to remember the promises made to Abraham; and God repents of the evil which He had thought to do.

Turn to Lev. 26 This chapter threatens us with all the chastisements which were to follow the unfaithfulness of Israel. Verse 42: “Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with.... Abraham;.... and I will remember the land."

God returns to His promises made unconditionally long before the law; and this is applicable to the last times, as we shall presently see.

There are two more covenants made with Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness. That under the law having been broken, the intercession of Moses made way for another (Ex. 33:14, 19), of which we have the basis in Ex. 34:27: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words; for after the tenor of these wordy I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.” Observe, with thee; for there is a remarkable change in the language of God. In Egypt, God had always said, “My people, My people.” But when the golden calf was made, He uses the word which they had used— “thy people, which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt;” for Israel had said, “This Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 32:1). God takes them up in their own words. What happened? Moses intercedes, and, so to speak, he would not permit God to say “Thy people,” as of him; but he insisted upon Thy people, as of God's people.

Now, then, it is a covenant made with Moses, as mediator. Here comes in the sovereignty of grace, introduced indeed when all was lost (the condition of the law having been violated). If God had not been sovereign, what would have been the consequence of this infraction The destruction of all the people. That is, though the sovereignty of God is eternal, it is revealed when it becomes the only resource of a people lost by their own ways; and this sovereignty manifests itself through the means of a mediator.

There is still another covenant in Deut. 29:1: “These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in The land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.” And the subject of this third covenant with the Israelites is this—God makes it with them, in order that under it they, being obedient, might be able to continue to enjoy the land.

They did not keep it, and so they were expelled the territory. They were installed in it at the epoch of this third covenant, and by the keeping of it they would have been maintained there (see ver. 9, 12, 19).

Thus we see the principle on which they entered at all into the land of Canaan. But we have seen also that before the law God had promised them the land for a perpetual possession, by covenants and promises made without condition; and it is owing to these promises, by the mediation of Moses, that Israel was spared, and at last enjoyed the land. Yet enjoyed it, on the terms of the third covenant made in the plains of Moab.

After the fall of the Israelites in the promised land, there remain still to be applied to them, for their re-establishment, all the promises made to Abraham. After the people had failed in every possible way towards God, the prophets show us clearly, that God has promised again to restore them and to establish them in their land, under the Lord Jesus Christ as their King, to receive in Him the full accomplishment of every temporal promise.

Let us recollect, dear friends, that all we have been going through is the revelation of the character of Jehovah; and that, though truly these things have happened to Israel, they have happened to them on the part of God; and that they are, as a consequence, the manifestation of the character of God in Israel for us. It is not only of the failure of Israel that we are to think, but of the goodness of God—our God. Israel is the theater upon which God has displayed all His character; but not alone is Israel to be considered: the glory of God and the honor of His perfections are concerned. If God could fail in His gifts towards Israel, He could fail in His gifts towards us.

We shall have yet, on another occasion, to continue our account of this people.

(Concluded from p 351)

Chapter 95

Israel's Failure and Dispersion

That which happens to the dry bones seen by Ezekiel exhibits, very forcibly, the matter to be treated of this evening; namely, what God in His goodness will yet do in favor of Israel. We shall follow our usual method of giving a succession of passages out of the word of God upon it. You remember that, in commencing this subject, we remarked the difference between the covenant made with Abraham, and the covenant of the law given on Mount Sinai; and that whenever God was going to show grace to His people, He called to mind the covenant made with Abraham. We also remarked that Israel took the promises under the covenant made in the wilderness, and not under that made with Abraham; and that, from this time Israel, being pot under the condition of obedience in order to persevere in the enjoyment of the promises, failed altogether; but that, notwithstanding, thanks to the mediation of Moses, God was able to bless the people.

We shall have to see how Israel failed again after this, even when established in the land which the Lord had given to them; and that God raised up prophets, in a way altogether apart from His necessary dealings with them, to convict them of the sin into which they had fallen, and to show the faithful ones that the counsels of God towards Israel would not be put aside; for that, by means of the Messiah, He would accomplish all that which He had spoken. We shall see also, that it was just when Israel will have failed, that these promises of their re-establishment are to become precious to the faithful remnant of the people.

Let us remember that, in the history of the sin of Israel under the law, we have the history of every heart among us. For if we place ourselves before God, we shall recognize that it is only the grace which is known to us by the work of God, which can not only sustain us in, but relieve us from, the situation in which we find ourselves as the consequence of sin.

I am going to look through the decline and ruin of Israel under every form of its government, from the time of their entry into the land of Canaan. It was Joshua who led them. The book of this name is the history of the victories of Israel over the Canaanites, the history of the faithfulness of God in the accomplishment of all that He had promised to His people. The Judges and Samuel are the history of the failure of Israel in the land of Canaan until David; but, at the same time, of the patience of God. First, then, how does Joshua describe the Israelites—their condition and character?

In chap. 24 he recites all that God had done on their behalf—all His favors, and all His goodness; upon which (ver. 16) the people answer, “God forbid that we should forsake the Lord.” In verse 19 Joshua says to the people, “Ye cannot serve the Lord;” and the people say, “Nay, but we will serve the Lord;” “The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey.” “So (ver. 25) Joshua made a covenant with the people that day.” The captain of their salvation led them into the land of promise; they enjoy the fruits of grace, and they anew undertake to obey the Lord.

In Judges 2 they are found in complete failure; and in consequence God says, “I will not drive out your enemies from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides.” Verses 11, 14: “And the

children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim;" "and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel." It is always the same picture-kindness on the part of God, ingratitude on the part of man.

Let us now turn to some passages which detail the transgressions of Israel under every form of government.

1 Sam. 4:11. Eli was the high priest, the judge and head of Israel; yet was the glory of Israel cast down to the ground: "the ark of God was taken, and the two suns of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." Verses 18-21: Eli himself died, and his daughter-in-law named the child which was born of her, Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel" (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband).

After this, God, who raised up Samuel, the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24; 13:20), governs Israel by him; but Israel soon rejected him (1 Sam. 8:6, 7). "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them, according to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day." It was then that God "gave them a king in His anger;" and we know what befell the king of their choice (1 Sam. 15:26). The judgment is pronounced; Samuel says to Saul, "I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."

These extracts are sufficient for our purpose. Israel has failed under priest, prophet, and king. They are ruined under the king whom they had chosen.

David is raised up in the place of Saul: God made this choice in His dealings in grace. David—type of Christ, as he is the father of Christ according to the flesh—was His gift to Israel.

Thus it is solely by the goodness of God, that Israel becomes rich and glorious under David and Solomon. But still the people transgressed afresh under these two princes (1 Kings 11:9, 11); "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel."

It is an unhappy subject to dwell on—this constant distaste of man's heart for God, under every condition in which he is placed; and this is the instruction which we ought to draw from the history of the children of Israel. They subsequently divided themselves into two distinct parts, and the ten tribes became altogether unfaithful. It was in the person of Ahaz that the family of David, the last human stay of the hopes of Israel (for after its fall nothing but God's promises remained), began to become idolaters (2 Kings 16:10, 14). The sin of Manasseh put the finishing stroke to all their misconduct (2 Kings 21:1-16).

Such, in a few words, was the behavior of Israel, and even of Judah, until the captivity of Babylon. The spirit of God sums up the history of their crimes, and of His patience, in this impressive language (2 Chron. 36:15, 16): "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy."

This was the end of their existence in the land of Canaan, into which they had been introduced by Joshua. The name of Lo-ammi (not My people) is at last written upon them.

Having thus rapidly run through the history of their fall until their deportation to Babylon, let us consider the promises which sustained a faithful remnant among them during this prevalence of iniquity, and during the captivity of the nation.

There is a prominent one to be noted, which served as a kind of pedestal, on which the faithful Jews might build their expectations. It is to be found in 2 Sam. 7 and 1 Chron. 17. Between the two there is a difference: in 1 Chron. 17 the application is made directly to Christ, which is not quite so plainly seen in 2 Sam. 7; and this distinction holds good as to the matter of the books themselves, of which the one (Samuel) is historical, and the other (the Chronicles) a synopsis or resume, which connects all the history genealogically from Adam with Christ, and with the hopes of Israel; and from which book, consequently, the transgressions and the falls of the kings of Israel are excluded (compare 2 Sam. 7:14 with 1 Chron. 17:13). This is the promise (2 Sam. 7:10), “Moreover, I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as beforetime.” —1 Chron. 17:11-13: “And it shall come to pass, when thy days he expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” In Heb. 1:5 application is made of these words to Christ; that is, all the promises made to Abraham and to his seed—all the promises made to Israel—are placed in the safe keeping, and gathered together in the person, of the Son of God.

We have now, dear friends, seen the promise made to David, which is the foundation of all those which concern the family of that name.

We have seen the failure of the people, and also the promise made to the Son of David—to the Messiah. Let us pursue the study from the direct testimony of the prophets.

Isa. 1:25-28 describes the full restoration of the Jews, but by judgments which cut off the wicked.

Isa. 4:2-4. “In that day [a time of great trouble] shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escapes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.”

Isa. 6 (so often cited in the N. T.) of the same book gives us full entrance into the Spirit of prophecy. It was the moment when Ahaz came to the throne—the same Ahaz who sent the heathen altar from Damascus to Jerusalem—that Isaiah is sent to meet this king, the son of David, who introduced apostasy. The first thing we have presented to us is the manifested glory of Christ, the Lord thrice holy (we have the interpretation of John as to this, in chapter 12 of his Gospel)—that glory which condemns the entire nation, but which produces, by grace, the spirit of intercession, to which the mercy which reestablishes the nation is the answer. Notwithstanding, this mercy finds no accomplishment, until the wicked are got rid of from the people and the land, after a state of prolonged hardening on their part carried to its utmost height, in the rejection of Jesus Christ and of His testimony given to Him by the Spirit in the apostles (read Isa. 6:9-13).

Isa. 11:10: “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse. . . to it shall the Gentiles seek.” Here we learn how and when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord: it is after He has slain the wicked “by the breath of His lips.” Then “the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people” (read ver. 9-12).

Isa. 33:20-24; 49 It has been asserted, that in these chapters Zion means the church; but when all the joy is come, Zion said, “The Lord hath forsaken me.” Impossible, if Zion be the church. What! the church forsaken in the midst of its joy? Read Isa. 49:14-23; also chapter 62, which likewise applies to Israel; also chapter 65:10-25, where there can be no question, but of earthly blessings, such as are hitherto unknown on earth. In that day God Himself will rejoice over Jerusalem.

These are some of the promises which plainly announce the forthcoming glory of the Jewish people and of Jerusalem. But there are others still more direct. Jer. 3:16-18: “It shall come to pass when ye be multiplied,” &c. Certain foreshadowings have happened, which have looked like the accomplishment of many of the prophecies relating to their restoration; as, for example, the return of the people from Babylon. But God has given His own marks; He has linked circumstances together which have never yet had their fulfillment, as in this passage, “All the nations shall be gathered unto it.” It is certain that this did not take place at the return from Babylon. But you will reply, It is the church. No; for “in those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall dome together.....to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.” We see, in a word, three things happening together, which most surely have not had as yet a simultaneous accomplishment: namely, Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; Judah and Israel united; and the nations assembled to the throne of God. When the church was founded, Israel was dispersed; when Israel returned from Babylon, there was neither church nor assemblage of nations.

Jer. 30:7-11. “It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him; but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.” These happy times for Israel have assuredly not yet been realized.

Chapter 31:23, 27, 28, 31, unto the end. Remark verse 28. Who is it that Jehovah has broken up, thrown down, and destroyed? The same that He will build and plant. It is a little unreasonable to apply all the judgments to Israel, and all the blessings which concern the same persons to the church. And if the church be indeed here spoken of, what is the meaning of “from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner,” “the hill Gareb,” &c.? Observe, also, the last words of the chapter: “It shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more forever.”

Chapter 32:37-42. Touching passage as to the thoughts of Jehovah concerning His people! After having given them promises of blessings in grace, and assured them that He would be their God, Jehovah says, “And I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole, soul. For like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.”

Chapter 33:6-11, 15, 25, 26. This is again the blessing of Israel—of Jerusalem: and that by the presence of the Branch, which shall grow up unto David, who shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. Let us remember, dear friends, that the word of God in no way presents

to us the Holy Spirit as the Branch of David, nor His office as that of executing judgment upon the earth. On the other hand, if you insist upon this chapter applying to the restoration from Babylon, I would quote Neh. 9:36, 37: “Behold, we are servants this day... and we are in great distress,” as showing how little the return from Babylon was the fulfillment of all these promises we have been reading. Was that restoration the whole heart and the whole soul of God in favor of His people? We have seen the estimation in which the Spirit of God held that event. No: these promises of God were not at that time accomplished (Ezek. 2:16-20). Until this day, Israel, or rather the Jews, are under the judgment which the first part of this passage imports. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.” (Matt. 12:43). The closing verses speak of their last state, in which they are subjected to judgment; and at that time (ver. 19) God gives a new heart to the remnant, the nucleus of the future nation.

In Ezek. 34:22 to the end of the chapter we have David their king in the midst of them, and their blessings immovable.

Ezek. 36:22-32. If you make the objection, These are spiritual things in which we participate, I answer, Yes, we participate in the blessings of the good olive-tree; but our joy has not dispossessed the Jew (the natural branch) of that which belongs to him. Why are we made partakers? Because we are grafted into Christ. If we are Christ's, we are Abraham's children, and partake of all that is spiritual.

“Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers” (ver. 28). The church has only one Father, who is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I would now remark for a moment in passing, on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus (John 3 particularly ver. 12), where there is an allusion to “earthly things.” Previously (ver. 10) He had said, “Art thou a master [teacher] in Israel, and knowest not these things?” —namely, the need of being born of water and of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God. This knowledge was to be got out of the Old Testament, the source whence the teachers drew their instruction. The passage just quoted out of Ezekiel contains almost the very same words used by our Lord. How! says He; you a master [teacher] in Israel! You ought to understand that Israel must have a new and purified heart in order to enjoy the promises. How is it that you know not these things? If you enter not into My saying that you must be born of water and of the Spirit, and do not understand these earthly things, how can it be expected that you should believe about heavenly things? As if He had said, “If I have spoken to you of the things which apply to Israel, if I have told you that Israel must be born again to enjoy those terrestrial promises which belong to her, and you have not understood Me, how will you comprehend about heavenly things—about the glory of Christ exalted in heaven, and the church, His companion in this heavenly glory? You have not even understood the doctrines of your prophets. You a teacher in Israel! You should at least have made yourself acquainted with the earthly things, of which Ezekiel and others take account.”

In this chapter of Ezekiel, as in many others, expressions are found, such as “fruit of trees ““ increase of the field” —details of earthly things which are the earthly blessings promised to Israel; whilst, at the same time, the necessity of a new heart is connected with them in order that those to whom these promises belong may be able to enjoy them. Israel must be renewed in heart to receive the promises of Canaan. God must cause them to walk in His statutes by giving them a new heart, and then, but only then, they will enjoy the blessings foretold for them.

Ezek. 37 gives a detailed history of the reestablishment of Israel—the joining together of the two parts of the nation, their return into the land, their state of unity, and their fidelity to God in this same land; God being their God, and David their king being present—present forever, in such a way as that the nations shall know that their God is Jehovah, when His sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Chapter 39:22-25. It is evident that the time here mentioned is not yet come; since, when it does, God “will not hide his face any more from them,” as He is doing at the present time, and that He will gather them “unto their own land,” and will leave none of them among the heathen.

In conclusion, let as call to mind the great principles upon which these prophecies rest. The restoration of the Jews is founded upon the promises made to Abraham without condition; their fall is the result of their having undertaken to act in their own strength. After having exercised the patience of God in every possible way “until there was no remedy,” judgment is come upon them; but God reverts to His promises. Let us make a proper application of this to our own hearts. The same history is ours—always that of the fall. No sooner has God placed us in such or such a position than we immediately fail in it. But there is beyond our failure a principle of strength, that is to say, the revelation of the counsels of God, and, by consequence, unconditional promises; and we have seen (in Moses as the type) that it is the mediation and the presence of Jesus which is the accomplishment of these promises. We have also seen that God executes judgment only after extraordinary patience, after having used every possible means (however long that judgment may have been pronounced), to recall man to a sense of his duty, if there had been a spark of life in his heart: but there was none. Individuals, quickened by grace, hold to the promises which will have their fulfillment in the manifestation of Him who can realize them, and merit the realization for others. And nothing puts these principles in clearer relief than the history of Israel: “All these things happened unto them for types (see margin), and they are written for our admonition.” It is like a mirror, in which we can see, on the one hand, the heart of man, which fails always, and, on the other, the faithfulness of God who never fails, who will fulfill all His promises, and who will put forth a strength thus to surmount all the wickedness of man and the power of Satan. It is when the enmity has arrived at its height, that He says, “Make the heart of this people fat” (Isa. 6:10); but it is not until nearly eight hundred years after (Acts 28:27), that we find the accomplishment of this judgment pronounced so long by the prophet. It was when the people had rejected everything, that God hardened them, to make them a monument of His ways. What patience on the part of God!

And so, in that which concerns us Gentiles, the execution of the judgment has been suspended for eighteen centuries, and God is still exhausting all the everlasting resources of His grace, if there be any who will listen to His testimony of salvation. As the Lord said (John 15:22, 24), If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done among them 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.” Admirable patience! Infinite grace of Him who interests Himself in us, even after our rebellion and iniquity!

To Him be all the glory!

Chapter 96

Jesus and the Resurrection: Part 1

“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18).

There is nothing, besides making known God's peace and truth, that proves the value of the word of God more than this—the simple and telling naturalness, the fresh power with which it applies to the greatest variety of circumstances. What Paul said to the Athenians is most true of men now. I do not mean that all the particular shades of thought found then at Athens—that those schools of philosophy which divided men—are exactly the same as those of our own day; and I am far from meaning that superstition, that addiction to divine worship of a certain low, earthly, sensuous type can be said to be the most marked characteristic of this moment. For all that the truth is a living thing, and it is the only thing that is living—the only thing expressed in words that abides as it is. Theories and ideas change, and, with their authors, pass away. The truth remains. I know that men ask what the truth is, and that they are uncertain—and no wonder.

The truth is inseparable from the word of God; and, further, the truth is never found even in the word apart from Christ. Hence it is that, as the word is called the truth, so Christ declares that He is the truth. And, further, the Holy Ghost is said to be the truth, not God. As such He is never called the truth except by rationalists, and, I am sorry to say, sometimes by legalists. Extremes meet. Again, the Father is never called the truth; nor could He be, because the truth is the full bringing out of what a person or thing is. It is the expression of objects in their reality. It is the full declaration of anything, no matter what—it may be God or man, it may be heaven or hell: but, wherever the thing is set out as it really is, there you have the truth. Christ is the only one who has ever done it objectively. As power the Holy Ghost acts by the word, and there is the link between the word and Spirit of grace. Thus, as you never have Christ really known except by the word of God, so the Holy Ghost is needed to apply that word, and to make it to be an occasion of showing grace to the soul. When you have Christ, you have the truth, and not otherwise.

Now, there may be all measures of difference outside Christ in those who have got the truth. You may have persons who really agree in very little else—they have prejudices, they have prepossessions, they have all kinds of different theories in which they have been brought up. Religious education has an important effect in modifying men's thoughts; yet for all that, if they have Christ, they have got the truth; and what gives a believer confidence, and what we ought to confide in, is that all those who have Christ are saved, and none else. Therefore it is, we see, that, where Christ is really possessed, other things are changed—not all at once, but the Spirit of God can act in living power where Christ is possessed. He may be hindered—and all wrong thoughts of Christ (the truth of God), everything that is not according to Christ, is a hindrance to the Spirit; but still, where Christ is really possessed, the Holy Ghost follows as the seal of redemption. Not only does the Holy Ghost precede, but He follows; and I shall take occasion to open this a little tonight, because it brings out a most important side of the truth, and is little seen.

Christ is never received except where the Spirit of God makes the want of Him felt. There never is, therefore, a reception of Christ simply by the mind. The mind of man always judges. The sinner believing is judged in conscience before God. Now, this is a true test whether you have got the truth. Hence where the word enters by the Holy Ghost, it invariably enters the conscience, and the effect of the word dealing with the conscience is, that the man stands at the bar of God in his spirit at once. From the time that the word of God really deals with him, he stands before God, and how? As a sinner. A solemn meeting, to be sure! God and the sinner; not yet the Judge seen of all, but the judgment-seat of God in the conscience. The word of God has this effect, it judges. That word only is judge yet in the conscience. The rationalist judges it. The natural man slights it. Even the religions man at some time or another may get into difficulties; he does not understand, he does not like to own his ignorance, and then he judges. It is in this way that souls, presuming to judge, are lost. There is no vital faith where the word of God does not judge, the Spirit using it to bring in a man as guilty before God, and to lead him to repentance.

You observe, in the verses that I have read tonight, we have God commanding men everywhere to repent. It is not merely to believe but to repent; and this is an invariable test of genuine faith that the Holy Ghost produces. An intellectual reception of the truth never brings a soul into the presence of God. It always puts man in the wrong place and

God of course also. There is many a sinner who is rather pleased with himself for accepting the truth. He sees, and other people do not see. He receives the truth, whilst others are ignorant of it. He is a little vain thereon. He is proud of his knowledge; but as to self-judgment, he has none. The man who gets in the presence of God follows that way no longer. Ah no! he has certainty now. Do not tell me there is no such thing attainable. Are you a heathen? Heathen men, of course, cannot know with certainty, because they have not even the word of God, and may not believe that such a thing exists. Alas! we find that men in Christendom are practically in this day of ours coming to the state in which the heathen were. They, too, are not sure that scripture is the word of God; they have their opinions about it. They think that Moses made mistakes in the Pentateuch. They think that Paul wrote mistakes. They think that Peter and John were only good men who did their best. They judge. They have never been in the presence of God to be self-judged; and the consequence is that all is wrong, and God is an unknown God.

Now, wherever there is a real action by the Holy Ghost, the truth comes into the soul morally. No matter how the process may be carried on, or what the occasion that began to act, the invariable criterion of a work of God is, that there is not merely a reception of the word, but, along with this, a humbling moral effect produced in the soul; there is personal sense of sin in the conscience before God, in short, repentance And repentance is not merely a change of mind. Do not allow such a definition to possess your minds. I know, of course, what those mean who say so, and perhaps why it is; but mere change of mind is far short of repentance. No doubt always, a mighty change of mind accompanies faith in Christ; there is a complete revolution in the soul; but the change is not intellectual merely, it is moral. The soul is brought to sit in judgment on itself, and to pronounce God's judgment on its ways, taking the place of a sinner, yea of a lost one, before God. Till this is done, there is no divine root. Without it the seed wants life, and will come to nothing.

There is this danger sometimes in revivalistic preaching, if I may say a word on preaching that has been not a little blessed of God: persons are attracted and moved by the good news of pardon,

without being truly convinced of their sins. Is this danger met by the common method of being brought in as guilty sinners, and left there? Most preachers were afraid to tell out the fullness of the grace of God, even where they set forth the evil of sin. We should never be afraid to trust the grace of God, provided along with that we insist on the reality of ruin, moral ruin, before God. Granted that the grace of God taken up as an intellectual thought or a feeling is a most dangerous thing, and always leads to licentiousness, for it really tends in principle to antinomianism. But it is never the case where the soul is judged by the truth—where divine revelation puts the man down and gives God His true place. And who is it that brings all this to pass? Jesus, who is the truth, and works by the Spirit.

Just look at Him with the woman of Samaria, where you may see this very thing wrought. What did He do first? He gave her the deepest impression of grace beyond a Jew and beyond man. Did He not gradually make known the truth of God? Who but a divine person could give the Spirit? or empower His servants to act so in His name? And let me tell any person who doubts this truth, that if Jesus was not God, He was not good. If God, He was assuredly good, specially in deigning to be man on earth. There is nothing that is so morally degrading to a man, and so practically a denial of God, as falsehood; and there is no falsehood worse than to say you are what you are not. Now, Jesus, though the lowliest of men, always gave the impression, when it was a question of His own person, that He was divine. It might not be always the time to say it; but whenever the occasion occurred, not only did the apostles say so—not only did John, for instance, begin his Gospel with, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” —not only did Paul bring it into the very heart of the Epistle to the Romans—but hear what Jesus says Himself: “Before Abraham was, I am.” He is the “I AM.” There was and is the truth.

There were occasions when He wrought miracles: but miracles are the lowest instead of the highest way of dealing with men. They have their own importance, no doubt; but miracles might be wrought, and the light perceived on the ground of them, and still the man remain far from God. So it was at the first Passover which is mentioned in the Gospel of John. Jesus was there at Jerusalem on the feast-day—the first of all the festivals, the foundation of all that followed in the Jewish year. But though He did many miracles, and many people believed on Him because of the miracles, Jesus did not commit Himself unto them; for, as the Spirit says so solemnly, “He knew what was in man.” What was the effect of this? He did not trust them. It was merely what was in man.

The only thing that Jesus trusts is what is in and of God. This is what appears in the next chapter; this is what He brings out to Nicodemus. Nicodemus came in the confidence of a man, in the desire of a sincere soul, to be instructed by One so capable. He had seen the miracles, but he was rather ashamed to come and be taught by Jesus. He did not wish to be seen. Conscience was at work though in a feeble way. When men have no conscience, they act boldly. When they have a conscience about things, they dread the difficulties, they have a certain fear of the opinion of others; but, if in earnest, they come, though by night. So it was with Nicodemus. And what did the Lord say? He told him on the very threshold, what He declares for every soul of man, that he must be born again. The sinner needs to be born of God. This is precisely what I am now insisting on, the necessity (not merely of a new walk, but) of a new life from God; and the truth of it I wish to put plainly before you to-night.

I presume that you are all satisfied there must be faith; but without the truth there cannot be faith. Faith cometh, by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Through faith comes eternal life; but eternal life, you must all acknowledge, is not the gift of man nor within the reach of man until the conscience is exercised by the word of God. But the moment the soul bows to Jesus in self-judgment, not merely as a worker of miracles but as the Son of God, come into this world to do these two great things—first of all, to give me a life that I have not, and, secondly, to take away the sins that I have (to remove all the evil that weighs me down, and to give me the very best that God has for me—eternal life in His own Son), then all is clear. The man is a believer. He has repentance towards God. He hates himself, judges himself, condemns himself out-and-out before God; yet none the less but the more does he look out of himself to the Son of man suffering for man's sins, the Son of God given of God's grace. He has faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and he is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

No doubt after all there may be much infirmity: and he may feel it. Here indeed, I may say, the special privilege of Christianity comes in. I do not mean only the deep characteristic of known eternal life in the Son of God; but over and above it is power imparted. And this is what saints need to know better. It is not merely the Spirit of God producing a sense of want of life, conviction of sins and of sinfulness before God; this is what precedes the soul's having confidence in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But when the sinner believes the gospel, in his soul bowing to the Son of God, and to the incomparable work of redemption He has wrought, what is the effect? The Holy Ghost seals that soul. As He quickens the sinner, so He seals the saint. This is what is done by the Spirit following faith: He seals. No man is sealed the moment he believes in Jesus: it is always (be it a brief interval, or longer) after believing, as it is said, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son,” —this is not to make them sons— “into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4). “Also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5). And so again in Eph. 1:13, “In whom, after ye believed,” —or if you take it literally, “having believed,” it comes to the self-same effect” ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” Sealing is always after the soul rests upon the work of Christ as a finished thing. Hence it was unknown under the Old Testament; and now no man is sealed by the Holy Ghost so long as he has doubts of any kind existing in his soul. It is invariably after a man has submitted himself to the righteousness of God, when he gives himself up as completely lost to find himself saved in virtue of Christ's work, it is then that the Holy Ghost seals him.

Hence we find when the apostle Paul went to Ephesus, his inquiry was— “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” (Acts 19) We must not suppose that this is a question of miracles, or powers, or tongues, or anything of that kind, though these very signs might follow too. There were miracles wrought by the early Christians, and they had also the gift of tongues; but these were only the external vouchers of the Holy Ghost, who had always wrought whatever was for God's glory in man, but never was communicated in person to the believers till after redemption. When Jesus was on the earth, the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him; we can all understand this easily. Jesus was absolutely sinless; He was the Holy One of God. But can the Holy Ghost come and dwell in us? Only by redemption, our sins and iniquities being put away righteously from before the eye of God. When God looks and sees in us, not our sins—this was our part—but the precious blood of Christ, accepted in faith as God's gracious provision for the just pardon of sinners, then the Holy Ghost says (as it were), I can come and dwell in such men as

these. Thus does the Spirit of God show His estimate of the work of Christ and acknowledge the man who rests on the blood that cleanses from every sin.

It may be observed here, that the apostle Paul, when he was at Athens, only brought in one side of the word. He did not always preach in the same way the truth of God. When among the Thessalonians, the truth he brought prominently forward was that concerning the kingdom; and this gave a particular character to his work among them. There was, in fact, no company in early times so remarkable for waiting for the Son of God from heaven as the Thessalonian assembly. That was what Paul preached to them, and bright was the effect produced. There were however others at work to mar the good: and the second epistle was written not to correct the first, but to counteract the false notion that certain had foisted in, telling them (and pretending the apostle's authority for it) that the day of the Lord was already come. It was not merely that that day was “at hand,” which is a mistake in most versions. Although I have not lived very long, I have lived long enough to see that error almost exploded. I hardly know a single person of learning or ability who does not acknowledge that this is not the true meaning of the word (■ν■στηκεν); and the power of the Spirit of God has been at work, no doubt, to bring this about. You know there are many who seem to be morbidly sensitive when told of a mistake in the common translation of the Bible; and I sympathize a little with the dislike of hasty or needless change. Nor is it well to hear men talking about “Greek” to people who do not know Greek. Far better to talk about it to those familiar with the language. There they might meet their match; but to be ever talking of Greek to persons who do not know the language is for them a bad habit, which is no less dangerous for those who are talked to. So you will understand I do not mean to say much on such matters in a general audience; but still it seemed not amiss to refer to the generally owned error in our version of 2 Thess. 2:2.

(To be continued.)

Jesus and the Resurrection: Part 2

To a reflecting Christian that fact is very instructive. Never trust a mere man of intellect or learning in the things of God. There are none that make more profound mistakes; and if I were asked where at this present moment the truth of God is least acceptable, I should not point to a village or small town. Rather should I say, Go to a University, visit some great seat of learning, where classical letters and human science predominate: and there you will find God's word comparatively little known or esteemed. Nor is it so much youths in all the fervor of inexperience, but you meet with men heart and soul devoted to profane literature, and in all likelihood the truth of God proportionately slighted and least understood. Certainly it was the case at Athens.

We thus prove the value of the word of God as a living witness. Do you know what it is in conscience to stand before God? The word of God is sent for the express purpose of testing every soul. If the heart be in earnest, I believe it. If I am not in earnest, I presume to judge it, and so my soul will be lost. The word of man flatters our nature and entertains our mind. The word of God tries the reins and the heart, it awakens and searches the conscience, it proves what and where I am, and, what is yet more important, it presents the remedy for my soul's disease. That remedy is Jesus and the resurrection.

For He is not now merely the Messiah. This was what the Jews were looking for. They fondly hoped for a wondrous personage to deliver them from their enemies, to set up Jehovah's name in the world, and make His people the greatest on the face of the earth. Need I say that this is not His present object? Not that it will not be done in due season. I quite admit that the Jews will yet be restored and blessed in their land, and that they are to be the heralds of the kingdom of God to every land. I gladly acknowledge that the day is coming when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea; and Scripture is quite plain that the work will be brought about, as far as human instrumentality is concerned, not by the Gentiles but by the Jews. But it is really reserved for the glory of Jesus, who will put down Satan, judge the world, and pour out the Spirit once more on all flesh. When the greatest unbelievers on earth—and the Jews are such—when they are brought in, and brought in as a nation, the moral effect will be immense on the world; and the Spirit of God will send them out on their great mission and use them to spread the truth.

Read Psa. 67: “God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.” Who are the “us?” We are very apt, whenever we read the word “us” in the Bible, to think that it means ourselves. But it is not always so. It is well to examine the context and see who are the “us” on solid grounds. The “us” may sometimes mean the Christian. If I read “For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” I say surely the “we” are not the Jews but Christians, for the reference is to heaven. If I hear the Lord say, “I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also,” again I say the “you” are Christians, because it is not the Jews' hope but ours of being taken

to heaven. This is not the proper yearning of the Jew, which beyond controversy is that God's unfailing mercy will plant them in their own land and make them a blessing according to the promise to Abraham—and every promise must be fulfilled—that “in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” You may tell me that the seed is Christ. Of course I grant it fully; but I maintain that there will be a real application of this very promise, in the connection of the Messiah with the Jew, and through the Jew, to all the families in this world. We knew this is not the case now, but contrariwise that the Jew is still a Christ-rejecting generation, and that the vast mass of Gentiles has gone into a variety of superstitions. This all confess, being sufficiently sensible of the faults of others. Are we equally sensible of our own? I am sure at the present time we ought to be deeply humbled. I do not say there is no encouragement, nor mean that God is not working mightily at the present moment. But whilst there is going on a gracious work of God in blessing souls, a deadly energy of Satan is also at work, leading men into the darkness of skepticism beyond example, and into superstition of every kind. It is in vain to deny either.

Here, in addressing the Athenians, the apostle took up another point. It was not, as a short time before at Thessalonica, the kingdom—that is, the power of God which is to govern the world by the Lord when He comes from heaven—for it is in that sense scripture often uses the word. Hence when the heathen rulers heard of this new kingdom, they were afraid, as Paul was said by the Jews to be a revolutionist, and that what he advocated was something dangerous to the then powers. The Roman Emperors, we know, were very susceptible on that score. They did not like to hear of a kingdom that might upset their own; and so, naturally, the magistrates were too ready at all times to take up a quarrel of that kind against Paul.

Among the Athenians the apostle preached another thing—Jesus and the resurrection. Thereon we have a remarkable enough effect produced. Although the Athenians were generally reckoned, and certainly were, the most intellectual people on the face of the earth at that time, yet they were so ignorant of divine things—even their educated men were so far from the truth of God—that, when they heard about Jesus and the resurrection, it would appear that they really thought the Resurrection might be another divinity—Jesus one god, and the Resurrection another. They were accustomed, you know, to gods and. goddesses; and so they seem to have thought that Jesus was a god, and that the Resurrection was a goddess. They therefore charged the apostle with being a setter forth of strange demons.

Here, then, we see it is not the Messiah coming to reign, but Jesus and the resurrection. For the vision of glory, of manifested glory in the world, the time has not yet come. No; it is the same person, but He was refused. He is despised and rejected, and most of all by the Jews. It was they who led the Gentiles on to put Him to death. The resurrection and the resurrection alone, is that which ushers in the blessed and wondrous development of divine truth we commonly call Christianity. It is based on the death of Christ, and it is displayed in His resurrection. And then the person! Think of Him that was God, not the man that is become God, but God who became man that He might die for men. What is the effect on us? Uncertainty? Think of WHO He is. Would God send His only-begotten Son into this world to become a man and die as a substitute for sinners, leaving the blessed effect uncertain after such a cost? Even on the ground of reason is there anything so absurd, if you believe there is a God at all? He that is the true God and eternal life came into this world and died; and the object of that death was not a mere exhibition of love, but, on the contrary, that He might for us bear the judgment of God—the judgment of God due to us as

hell-deserving sinners—the judgment of God on Him as the sacrifice for sin. Is it not clear that this, and this alone, explains the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? Could anything in fact be less trustworthy, if you leave out the atonement and make it merely to be love? Why, now and then a mere man has died for a friend; and many a believer has died the most cruel death for the truth, full of joy, full of confidence. Did such an one cry, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Certainly not. Christ did, and they in no case.

Can you answer, why He and not they? Assuredly there is in Christ's death revealed an element of the deepest kind—and indeed what alone gives the key to His death—God's judgment, that made Him, even in the anticipation of it, sweat great drops of blood. Never was there such a scene as Gethsemane, except the cross. I repeat that the element was God Himself judging—in Christ atoningly judging the sins of sinners.

As a consequence of His expiation, there is for the believer a complete deliverance—an absolute bearing away of all that was against him. And now, it is not merely that I am entitled to come and rest on the Son of God, but I am sinning against Him if I do not; I am dishonoring Him if I delay. I am forgetful alike of Him and of myself; I am making light both of my sins and of the precious blood of Christ, if I do not own what that blessed One has perfectly removed as far as east is from the west—yea, so that my sins are thrown into the depths of the sea, and God Himself remembers them no more. Why does God use such strong expressions of grace, and how is it that believers can think it an uncertain thing whether or not their sins are blotted out? You know very well whether you have bowed to God as a sinner—whether, no longer ashamed of Christ, you have mourned over your sins in the presence of God; and whether, in the face of every sin, and because of it all, you are resting only on Christ. If it be so, are you to go on hanging your head as a bulrush?

Nay, look not merely at Christ's death. If I have no more than the death of Christ, uncertainty is but natural. I am, as it were, encompassed in the gloom that hung over the cross. And what a scene of desolation was that! All had left Him now. The very devil had gone away. Christ had been forsaken by every one—even by God, as He tells us Himself. And this was just because sin was there; so that, if sin had always been laid upon Jesus, He must have been forsaken of God always. Does not the life of Jesus tell me the contrary? Even of One that walked in the perfect sunshine of God's favor? It was not that God did not delight in His Son at the very moment that He forsook Him. Never was perfection so complete in Christ as when He was forsaken of God. But it was for the first time submission to His judgment of sin, no longer the enjoyment of His communion in love. He was always perfect, but then was the depth of perfection in His suffering when made sin for us.

Made sin! Yes! He was forsaken of God then; but behold the very same God that smote Him on the cross raising Him again. In this was there a make-believe that He felt so much about sin? Ah no! Never was there such a reality as the cross. The sins of men that were laid upon Him were real: it was real suffering on His part to bear them; and it was real judgment of God that fell upon Him. And as real as was our guilt, God's judgment, and Christ's suffering, so real is the resurrection. Hence all is clear now; and the same God who bruised Him for our sins took care that none should be laid in that grave save the Lord Jesus, the Savior of sinners; and what then? God has raised Him up, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. So that a Man now is at the head of the universe of God, and sovereign grace flows out to sinners.

People talk, as we all know, about advance, and the progress of man. But what is it all worth? It is a false start and avails nothing. Why, they tell you that man grew out of the monkey, and that the monkey grew out of a seaweed; but how the protoplasm came into being they cannot say. Can anything surpass the absurdity of the theories and speculations of so-called men of science? I scarcely know anything more degrading than the thought that man grew out of aught else. As if man even in his fallen condition, had not the image of God in him! They know nothing at all, these scientific men, of the Christ of God; nay, what do they know about any one thing? They have no divine truth. They can give you an account of many phenomena, they can observe and register facts; but what a miserable condition is theirs, if they know nothing about the reality of their own moral condition and of Him who is above them! They know aright neither their own beginning nor their end. If so, is it not an awful picture of the state of men?

What more lamentable a fact than this, that in the 19th century of redemption, people should admire those will-o-the-wisp speculations, not merely irrational but degrading; not, merely degrading, but, denying all that is blessed in God and man! Such is their pride that they gainsay not only the faith but even the creation, though only the Bible indeed taught it. In this they deny all that is most, blessed and glorious, and, above all, the blessed Person who went down into the midst of the consequences of evil and of sin, and who, in our nature, is now risen and exalted to the right hand of God—placing man above the angels, yea, the Son of man who is the object of worship for the angels of God. I admit that, if He had not been God, He could not have been there; but still He is man. He that has the scepter of the universe is a man. He is God of course; but while He is God, and was God, and through eternity will be God, yet will He never cease to be man.

The resurrection of Christ proves two things. The apostle here uses it to show that Christ is soon going to judge the earth: this world is going to be judged; for God has given a proof of it in that He raised up that Man from the dead, whom the world of Gentiles and Jews crucified. Now, the reason why people slighted of old and still deny the Lord is because He became a man. Had He manifested Himself in His divine glory alone, do you think they would have despised Him? Certainly not. He had only to show Himself for a moment, and where was the creature that would insult Him? Look at Him even when He became a man: they asked once for Jesus, and what ensued? He had only to say it was Himself, when they all fell back upon the ground. It was a mere sample of what He could do. He was there proved a willing captive, later a willing victim. They could not have taken Him against His will. One of His followers, too fond of hasty measures, smote the ear of the High Priest's servant with his sword. Jesus checked him, and putting forth His hand healed the wound. No, beloved friends, He came to die—He came to suffer for sinners. He could have commanded twelve legions of angels, as He could have done without any aid; but He came to die. He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

I ask you, then, who believe in Christ, do you stand clear before God? If not, why not? If you are a believer in Jesus and the resurrection, have you a single sin left behind? What did He die for? If He left one sin, what was the good of His dying for sins? If He removed sins, did He leave any? If He has taken your sins, who can charge you with sin? I pray you then, think as believers, feel as believers, act as believers. Yield not to the thoughts of man. You will never get a true direction from your own heart. All the truth comes from the word of God. Leave to Christ all your sins, confessing them, but believing by the Holy Ghost in the efficacy of His work. What we have to do is to judge our own thoughts, and refuse the words of other men; then by grace we are kept stable in

the truth of God; we are put in our true place according to Christ and the value of His death; we suspect ourselves, we distrust men, we confide in God. And so it is said that He raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. Such faith is the effect of the resurrection.

Naturally God is one to dread, because we have a bad conscience; we know that we have grieved Him habitually and deeply dishonored Him. Yes, but what did He give Jesus for, and for what has He given me His truth? It was not merely an infinite work of grace done for people in heaven. No, it was to send a message of grace to men in the world, to every creature. When law was given, it was to one nation; but when the gospel was sent, it was to “every creature.” As long as law was the rule of man—the law of condemnation and death, it was God tested in one people. But the moment He was giving eternal life and the forgiveness of sins through His own Son, it was preached to the whole creation, to every nation, kindred, and tongue.

Is not all this just like God? The law was addressed to the nation of the Jews as a test of their obedience, as our first parents were tried in the garden of Eden. There was a single tree in the midst of the garden, and this tree was made the test of their obeying God. It was not at all a matter of moral good or evil, so far as the mere fruit of the tree was concerned. It was a question of owning God's authority, of respecting His prohibition; and what Satan put into the heart of Eve was the thought, “God keeps back something good there: I would rather have that tree than anything else in the garden:” And everywhere it is so: man distrusts God thoroughly. But the gift of Christ is God giving His best to die for our sins, and to rise for our justifying. Thus the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ushers in the gospel. If the gospel is true, God, instead of being my enemy, is my truest friend. There is no love to be compared with His. Can man have such a friend as He is who gave His own Son to die for sinners? This is mercy—infinite and forever.

Man is incapable of this Man must have a motive, and a motive of love, in order to do anything that is good; and no one loves till he knows God and is born of Him, as we learn from 1 John 4:7, 8. But look at God. He is the only One capable of giving in love His Son to die for His enemies. This is the gospel. The consequence is that the truth here announced sets aside the lie of Satan and gives God His true character. No one loves me like God, in spite of all my sins; but what dishonor of His love, if I doubt it? It is remarkable the effect its assurance produces. You have, perhaps, never weighed it well. Do you remember the lines of the hymn?—

Since the bright earnest of His love,

So brightens all this dreary plain.

We used to sing these lines once, but now we cannot do so; and I am rather glad to find it, because it is a proof, in its way, of making progress. For the human recollection of old hymns or of anything human acts as a sort of indicator whether you are going on in the right path or not—whether the truth of God is causing you to judge the words of men. You know, of course, that these hymns, excellent though many of them are, beyond doubt, are after all only human. I have no doubt the Spirit of God had to do with the composition of many; just as His grace helps us now with every prayer we offer, and every discourse we deliver. Still they were not inspired and should be corrected as we receive light.

Here then we have the wonderful way of God, by the redeeming work of His Son, that enables the soul, through receiving the truth that is presented, to take the place of being thoroughly clean, and forever freed from guilt before God, and this on the testimony of God Himself. Through the blessed work wrought in Christ's death the whole weight and burden of sin is removed. And this is proclaimed by the resurrection.

Herein is the proof that the world is going to be judged, because He is risen from the dead. It was because the blessed One became a man, that He was rejected and despised; and it is because He is man that many pretend He is only man. But this unbelief is the same spirit as animated those who put Jesus to death upon the cross. The feeling that takes advantage of His being man to deny His being God is the same as that which led the Jews to crucify Him—the same enmity from the same fatal unbelief. It is man opposed to God. But if the world slew, God raised Him up again from the dead; and therein gives the proof not only that the believer is justified, but that Jesus will judge the world.

Supposing, then, you have as a Christian been enabled to receive the person of Christ, I ask you what about His death? What about His resurrection? Do you believe that God has raised Him from the dead? and if you believe, where are your sins? Do not tell me that your sins are still resting on your conscience—that your sins are still bound up with you. Believer, what did Christ die for? and what has God declared in the gospel?

Forgive me if I come back upon the gospel. I am “deeply anxious that you should have the truth strongly and plainly before you. I do not expect, souls to be able to run the race that God calls them to—I do not call on them to worship God in spirit and in truth—till they are consciously and perfectly clear in His sight.

Take, for instance, that verse I have already referred to about the earnest of His love. Could one sing it now? No; because the fullness of His love is what He has shown us already. Men say “the earnest of the love” of God. But we have the Holy Ghost given to us now as “the earnest of the inheritance” that is to be. As for the inheritance, we are going to be put, along with Christ at His coming, over the universe, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—the bride of the Bridegroom, the Eve of the heavenly Adam. Every member belonging to His body, and consequently all Christians, will be exalted manifestly over all things; the church will share that authority with Christ. Now the Holy Ghost is given to us as an earnest of the inheritance, but He is never said to be the earnest of God's love. The earnest of His love would imply that I only get a little of His love now, and am to have a great deal more when in heaven. The love of God fully rests on the believer already. “The love wherewith Thou. lovedst Me:” is this an “earnest?” Is it not the fullness of His love? It is what the Christian possesses; and consequently, says the Apostle Paul, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” He does not say the earnest of His love. Therefore we ought not to sing the hymn as it used to stand.

In this way you may see it is a great thing to bring everything to the test of His word, and to judge accordingly, though the poet may murmur.

Again, the law dealt with men as they were living in the world; but the truth of Christianity is that I died with Christ, already baptized to His death. Not that I am dying or that I am to die—but that I died with Christ. Do you believe this? Do you know yourself dead with Him? This is what Christ

brings the saint to from the first; less than this is not the meaning of baptism. Theology says that baptism is a sign, if not means, of giving life to people who have it not. It really is the very opposite. When a man came out from the world to take his stand on the truth of a Christ who died, he in his baptism says, Christ the Lord, who was rejected by the world, is my portion. It is not a living Christ reigning here below, but a dead and risen Christ. And this is the very point of the apostle Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans, when he says— “So many of us as were baptized were baptized” —unto what? His life? Not at all— “unto His death.” And this is very important, as He insists that we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. What a blessing that it is no longer a mere struggle against sin or flesh! As believers we died with Christ; even if Jews before, we are made dead by His cross, because God identifies us with Christ who died and rose again. So that a Christian starts with the death of Christ.

That is the reason why, in the two so-called Christian sacraments, the grand point of them both is the death of Christ. This is what we ought always to remember. It is not a vow or vaunt of man, though infinite things flow from it; but God's weapon is Christ's death. There I am nothing and can do nothing; let me rest by faith in the infinite worth and efficacy of Jesus who died and rose for me.

Besides being dead, we are risen with Christ. I do not enter upon this now; but I just say this little word further, that the resurrection of Christ is the witness that Christ is above the world; and that He who is ordained Judge of quick and dead, and who assuredly will judge the world, is a risen man. It is not God, as God, who will undertake judgment, but a man, who is to judge mankind. It is the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is a risen man.

But there is more. For He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. The same resurrection of Jesus, which is proof to the world of coming judgment, proves to the Christian that he is already justified and blessed. The Christian is already justified; the world will be judged. The resurrection of Christ proclaims both. It tells the world, You cast Jesus out, but could not hinder His resurrection. Submit you must to this blessed Son of God and of man. He is now exalted, and every knee shall bow to Him.

I remember being horrified some years ago in reading a book by one who has lately passed away from his sins, wherein he criticized one of your philosophers—the critic himself, I am sorry to say, a native of this part of the country. That man dared to say, “If the being that is called God should sentence me to that place which they call hell, there is one thing I will never do—I will never worship Him.” I think I never read anything so frantically blasphemous. Alas! beloved friends, that is exactly what he must do. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess; and that, too, not merely of things in heaven (though it is not “things,” things having neither knees nor tongues, but beings)— “beings” in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Think of that. “Under the earth” means the lost; but whether they are lost men or lost spirits, they shall all confess Him Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But no salvation then. Now is the day of salvation—now only. Oh! lose not a moment. Now is your time, and God's time. Now is the time to make the choice, or rather bow to grace and be saved. There is nobody saved when judgment comes; and, beloved friends, there is nobody judged in the day of grace. It is now rather self-judgment; it is really God bringing one by repentance to judge himself; so that one anticipates, if I may say so, the day of judgment. One takes the place of a guilty criminal when one confesses his sins before God. There is nothing does a person more

good than to feel his sins—except, after that, to know that they are all gone through the death of Christ in the grace of God.

I believe in immediate conversion; but no one can have a genuine work in his soul who has not felt his sins in the presence of God; and, therefore, do not be in too great a hurry when converted. Do not be too anxious to get the soul into peace. It would be a good thing to get people into sense of misery, it appears to me, that they may duly feel their sins. Many of those who during revivals seem to get peace suddenly have had, long before that, a deep sense of sin in their souls; perhaps half of the people who are said to be converted at revival times were converted before. They date their conversion from the time they found peace; but it ought to be dated from the time they became miserable. Christ is the way into peace, but it is through faith and repentance. Believe me, that peace is more valued where there has been the sense of previous war—where the soul has felt and judged its enmity against God.

I do not wish to accumulate words as to this, nor to enter into many inviting topics that crowd upon one now. But if it be a solemn thing, I say again, to think that every knee must bow to Jesus in the day of His coming, is it not a joy that, when people bow now to Christ and accept His gospel, they are saved? When forced to bow in the day of God by power, they will not be saved. When it is power that compels them, divine power, before the judgment-seat of Christ, there will be no salvation. There is judgment then. If you have bowed now to Jesus, may it be simply and thoroughly! Thus only can there be settled peace with God, and that, not because you deserve heaven, but, on the contrary, because Christ wrought such a peace for you that deserved hell thoroughly.

God set forth these things in the very beginning, when He said to Moses— “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” It was not when the Israelites saw the blood, but when they rested on the blood because it was God who saw the blood. This is true faith-rest on Christ and His blood before God. If the look to your own feelings you will never have rest. God will give you plenty to draw out your feelings and put you to the proof; but all is founded on this—on your having the favor of God as a believer in Christ His Son. How would you like one of your children to come and ask you, Father, am I really your child? You would say, An enemy has done this. And so it is with those who say that people cannot know they are saved—cannot know that God is their Father. It is heathenism under the profession of Christ. They who say so know not what they do. They are certainly far from intelligence in the things of God. They do not know what His feelings are toward His children, be they ever so ignorant and lowly.

No, beloved friends, rest with unfeigned confidence in the salvation that the Spirit of God attests in the word. Certainly if hopes should be founded upon myself, I ought to have none at all. If I am founding it on the church or on men, I deserve not to have any blessing. But the question is, Did Christ work out salvation for me? does Christ deserve it? And I tell you, before God, He did accomplish redemption, and He loves to send away in peace every soul that trusts in Him and His cross. The man who has not the Son of God is not a child of God, because there is no life, no salvation, apart from Christ; and as reconciliation to God is by His death, so salvation is declared in His resurrection life. May He be your portion now and ever. Amen!

Chapter 98

Judgment of the Nations: Part 1

The last verse of this psalm contains the subject that is to occupy us this evening: “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for Thou shalt inherit all nations.” It is God who is to judge the earth, and, as the consequence of this judgment, to become possessor of all the nations.

We have spoken of Christ, Heir of all things with the church His co-heir; then of the coming of Christ, or of the moment when He takes the inheritance. The appearing of the church is to be with Him in glory: it is the time when the risen church shares its inheritance with Him. Even departed souls, blessed as they are with Him, wait for the resurrection of their bodies to enjoy the fullness of blessing and glory. Therefore a Christian may desire death, because he is thereby delivered from all affliction and suffering; but he awaits the resurrection for the consummation of his glory. We have spoken of the progress of evil, and proved that, so far from the world being converted by the preaching of the gospel, the tares are to increase and ripen until the harvest. And, in our last lecture, we have pointed out the evil come to its closing fullness in the beast that goes into perdition (or the apostasy of the civil power of the fourth empire), and, in the false prophet, who exercises his energy in its presence and who is destroyed along with it.

We have seen that there are two beasts, and that the second is transformed into the false prophet. Compare Rev. 13 with the end of ch. 19.

Now the scene extends a little; and we shall see not only the fourth empire destroyed but all the nations judged. All the races of men existing upon the earth, and formed into peoples as the result of the division of Noah's sons, will be found at the end gathered together and judged of God. All that is high and proud will be abased by the power and glory of God, in order that He in full blessing may enjoy the kingdom and enter upon the inheritance of all the nations.

At our last meeting I dealt with the most difficult part, the point where the two dispensations meet, and where the evil caused by the ruin of the present dispensation requires the intervention of God, and consequently the judgment which terminates it. I have spoken of the apostasy and of the Antichrist specially, because it is in fact the consummation of the apostasy. But when this event takes place, there is also the judgment of all the nations. Not only does God judge the last revolt of the Antichrist and of the beast; but, having made His power felt, and the moment of His wrath being come, He judges all the nations.

This is what we read in Rev. 11:15-18, “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come; and He shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders who sit before God on the thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, Which art, and wast [and art to come]; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and unto them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the

earth.”

Let us follow up the passages which speak on the same subject.

We before remarked, that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the true King over the whole earth, was presented to the fourth beast and to the Jews, that is, to the Gentiles and Jews (to the Gentiles in the person of Pontius Pilate, and to the Jews in the person of the high priest). He was presented to the world and to His own, and was rejected. But in a much more extended sense it is said, “The nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come.” It is the wrath of God breaking forth against them in judgment by His Son.

Psa. 2 Two things are set forth here. First, the Son is anointed (margin) King upon Zion, God's holy hill, and then He has the heathen for His inheritance: Zion is His throne; the nations, His inheritance. Secondly, His way of dealing with the nations is a way entirely opposed to the gospel— “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.” The scepter (rod) of Christ, in the gospel, is a rod of goodness and love; it is everything that is most sweet and most powerful in His love; it is not a scepter of iron. The psalmist is speaking of the kings of the earth: “Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings;.....kiss the Son.” The decree of God is, that His Son shill be anointed, that is, declared King over all the earth; and He invites the kings of the earth to submit themselves to Him He says to them, “I am about to speak in My wrath; I give the heritage of the nations to Christ: He will bruise you with a rod of iron; He will break you in pieces. Now then submit yourselves to Him, to My Son, King in Zion.” These kings follow their own ways: their policy is settled according to the wisdom of man. Alas! it is not of Christ, King in Zion, that they think. Go and speak to the kings of the earth of Christ, King in Zion: you would be taken for one out of his senses. Nevertheless God has decreed His reign surely, irrevocably; and He will bring it to pass in spite of the kings of the earth. He will establish Him King in Zion, and will give Him the nations as His heritage, and the ends of the earth for His possession. “Now,” says He by the prophet Micah, “shall He be great unto the ends of the earth” (Micah 5:4).

At the birth of Christ, hatred burst forth upon the least appearance of His royalty. When the cry was heard that a king had appeared, immediate efforts were made to get rid of Him. Will the nations then, at last, listen to the invitation made to them to submit themselves? The answer is to be found in Psa. 82

These judges of the earth will have to give an account of their conduct. “They know not, neither do they understand.” “I have said, Ye are gods,” for God Himself had set them as having authority over the earth ("the powers that be are ordained of God”); but God shall judge them. It is not Christians who hold this threatening language; it is He who has the right of judging those whom He has named judges—of setting aside those subaltern powers, in order to take to Himself His great power and reign.

We find in Psa. 9:1-11, that the place where this judgment will be exercised is the land of Israel, and that the Lord will manifest Himself in this act of power. Verse 5 runs, “Thou hast rebuked the heathen; thou hast destroyed the wicked (Antichrist); thou hast put out their name forever and ever.” In verses 15-20 it is not the language of the gospel; it is the prophetic anticipation—the righteous demand—of judgment. This it is which explains those difficulties which Christians often find in the Psalms, owing to not having understood the difference of the dispensations. To convert

the wicked, by the announcement of the grace of God, is the gospel; what we have been reading is something quite different. Once the gospel has run its course, Christ will demand righteous judgment against the world. It is no longer Christ, at the right hand of the Father, sending down the Holy Ghost to gather together His co-heirs; but Christ calling for righteousness and asking for it (generally by His Spirit in the humble and lowly ones of the Jewish nation) against the proud and violent men. If God were not to execute judgment, the evil would only grow worse and worse without any consolation for the faithful. God does not execute it until the evil has arrived at its height. Antichrist and the nations rise up against God and His Christ, and the earth must be cleared of His enemies to give place to the reign of God Himself. It is not David asking to rule over his enemies; but Christ who demands judgment, because the time is come.

We may observe the same truth in Psa. 10:15-16: “The Lord is King for over and ever; the heathen are perished out of His land.” There is a general principle running through this class of psalms, of a terrible judgment upon the wickedness of the nations—God acting as judge in the midst of the judges.

A passage in Isa. 2:12-22 also presents to us the great day of Jehovah on the earth: “For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon the high and lofty when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” It is not for the judgment of the dead, but of the earth.

To make you understand that this judgment applies to all nations, and that it is after this, and by this means, that God will fill the earth with the knowledge of His name, we beg you to turn to Zeph. 3:8: “Therefore wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them My indignation, even all My fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.” The intention of God is to assemble the nations to pour upon them His indignation—a terrible judgment. For our expectation then, when and how the knowledge of Jehovah shall fill the earth, we refer to verse 9. This blessing will come to pass after He shall have executed the judgment, and put away the evildoers. The passage is a very explicit revelation.

The same truth, namely, that the knowledge of Jehovah will spread as the effect of His judgment, is presented to us in Isa. 26:9-11, “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness;” for it is added, “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.” Grace does not produce the effect, but judgment.

Again, we say, that the determination of Jehovah is to assemble the kingdoms, to pour out on them His indignation, and all the fierceness of His wrath. It will be a terrible day, and one which the world ought to be expecting.

Another passage in support of the truth we are urging is found in Psa. 110: “The LORD (Jehovah) said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” Jesus is set down at the right hand of God the Father, until His enemies are made His footstool. Until that time He acts by His Spirit to gather together Christians; He sends down the Holy Ghost to convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. But the day will come when God will make His enemies His footstool, and it is on this account, perhaps, that Jesus says, “Of that day knoweth no man neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). It is written, that He will inherit all things. This has been prophesied of Me; Jehovah said to Me, “Sit thou at My right hand, until I

make Thine enemies Thy footstool." It is not such a year, such a day; but He goes to sit at the right hand of God until—until the moment when the Father will have accomplished this decree: for the Lord Jesus, God blessed forever, receives the kingdom as Man, as mediator. Now, as to the accomplishment of the decree, it is when "Jehovah shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion." We discern the boundary of this dispensation clearly marked, that is, Christ set down at the right hand of Jehovah, until Jehovah put His enemies under His feet. After that come the words, "Rule thou in the midst of Thine enemies." This is what Jehovah will accomplish, when the Lord, at the commencement of the exercise of His power, shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath, shall judge among the heathen, shall fill the places with the dead bodies, and shall wound the heads over many countries.

In Jer. 25:28, the same subject is presented; and it is the end of all that we see around us: "And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink" (see also ver. 31).

There are yet two facts to remark. First, it is at Jerusalem principally that all this disaster will take place; secondly, God has named in His word all the nations which will participate in it. We shall see all the descendants of Noah, of whom we have the catalog in Gen. 10 reappear on the scene at the moment of this judgment of God. We shall find nearly all of them under the beast or under Gog.

(To be continued)

Chapter 99

Judgment of the Nations: Part 2

As to the passages which concern Jerusalem, we may cite Joel 3:1, 9-17; Mic. 4:11 to the end of the chapter; and Zech. 12:3-11: “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the peoples of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah; and will smite every horse of the peoples with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the peoples round about, on the right hand and on the left; and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.” Chap. 14:3, 4: “Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

It is said (Acts 1), Jesus “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven,” that is, upon the Mount of Olives (compare Ezek. 11:23). “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives,” says the Holy Ghost in Zech. 14:4— “His feet,” the feet of Jehovah. Though indeed He was the man of sorrows, Jesus is Jehovah, and has been so from eternity.

As to the second point, this is what we have to remark, namely, that the nations, the descendants of Noah, will be ranged either under the Beast or under Gog, the two principal powers. If you consult Gen. 10, you will read (ver. 5), “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands.” In the generations of the sons of Japheth are named Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, under the same names in Ezek. 38 as followers of Gog; you will also find there Persia which was united to Media (Madai), and from whose hands it received the crown (as we are told in Dan. 8 and other places), so that there only remain Javan and Tiras to be accounted for. Those mentioned above are the nations which comprise Russia, Asia Minor, Tartary, and Persia (all the people, in short, of which the empire of Russia is composed, or which are under its influence). They are described as under the dominion of Gog, prince of Rosh (the Russians), Meshech

(Moscow), and Tubal (Tobolsk).

The children of Ham are pointed out in Gen. 10:6. Of these, Canaan has been destroyed, and his country turned over to Israel; Cush (Ethiopia) and Phut are also found (Ezek. 38:5; see margin) under Gog; those of Cush only in part, and for the reason that one part of the family of Cush established itself on the Euphrates, the other on the Nile, that is, north and south of Israel. Those of the north are then, by their position, in direct relation with the partisans of Gog. Mizraim, or Egypt (for Mizraim is none other than the Hebrew name for Egypt), and the remainder of Cash and the Libyans, you will find in the scenes of the last day (Dan. 11:43).

As to the children of Shem (Gen. 10:22), Elam is the same as Persia, of which we have already spoken. Asshur is named in the judgment which will take place in the last times (Mic. 5:6; Isa. 14:25; 30:31); also in the conspiracy of Psa. 83, and in other places. Arphaxad is one of the ancestors of the Israelites. We know nothing of the family of Joktan. It is supposed to be a people of Arabia or the East. Aram, or Syria, was displaced by Asshur, and is found under the title of the king of the North. The same remarks, it appears, may be made of Lud. Javan (Greece) is to be in the last combat (Zech. 9:13). Of all the nations, Tiras is the only one besides Joktan, which is not named as to be in these great judgments. We speak only of the word of God. Profane authors unite Tiras (Thrace) and Javan in Greece; but with this we have not to do.

In the present day we may observe Russia extending her power exactly over the nations which will be found under Gog.

Dan. 11 introduces us to two other powers, to which we must direct our attention; they are the king of the South, and the king of the North. The chapter contains a long account of already accomplished events, as to their wars, ex.; but after this come the ships of Chittim (ver. 30), and then there is an interruption in their history (ver. 35). These kings were the successors of the great king of Javan (Greece): the one, possessor of Assyria; the other, of Egypt. The object of their fightings was Syria and the Holy Land. From verses 31-35 the Jews are introduced as set aside during a long period of time (see ver. 35). It is said, “And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed.” Then follows ver. 36, “And the king shall do according to his own will:” this is Antichrist. In ver. 41 we have him in “the land” of Israel, in that territory which is the cause of the difference which exists between the king of the North and the king of the South. “And at the time of the end shall the king of the South push at him.” That is, after a long interval, behold again the king of the South brought, in this chapter, upon the scene. And this has historically occurred only a few years ago, after an interval of nearly two thousand years.

The greater part of the nations who, as we are told, are to be at the feet of Gog, are now coming under the dominion of Russia; “and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind.” Antichrist will be the object of attack, at one and the same time, to the king of the South, or Egypt; and to the king of the North, the possessor of Asiatic Turkey, or Assyria. I do not say who the king of the North will be at the end; but we see that the circumstances and the personages described in the prophecies, which have reference to this time appointed— “the time of the end,” begin to appear. It is nearly two thousand years since there has been a king of the South; and it is but a few years since he has appeared anew. In the same way a great people has come forward, of which the world a century or two ago hardly knew the existence, and which now rules over the exact

countries of the Gog in Ezekiel. We do not desire that you should fix your attention too much upon events which are taking place in our time; it is only when we have explained the prophecy, that we advert to the circumstances which pass around us. All nations have their attention occupied about Jerusalem (Zech. 12:3), and know not what to do about it. The king of Egypt wants to call the whole country his own; the king of the North is unwilling to cede it (the Turk being the actual king of the North, or Assyria). The kings of the North and South dispute for the same country, which they fought over two thousand years ago. This is just what the prophecy says is to occur at “a time appointed.” We do not mean that all of it comes out plainly; for example, the ten kings cannot be enumerated, and Antichrist is not yet revealed, still less has the beast, or Roman Empire, re-appeared. But the principles which are found in the word of God are acting in the midst of the kingdoms where the ten horns are to appear. That is, we find all western Europe occupied about Jerusalem, and preparing for war; and Russia, on her side preparing herself, and exercising influence over the countries given to her in the word; and all the thoughts of the politicians of this world concentrating themselves on the scene where their final gathering in the presence of the judgment of God will take place where “the Lord shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor” (Mic. 4:12). It is a remarkable coincidence. In observing what is passing around us, we recognize certain prophetical descriptions; at least we see those who are to act, or upon whom God will act, developing the characters which prophecy puts into relief.

If you take the trouble, dear friends, to follow the chapters which we have been quoting (and many others, as doubtless there are), you will understand Matt. 25 which speaks of the Lord sitting upon His throne, and gathering all the nations (an allusion to Joel 3), judging them, and separating them “as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats."

Let us remember one thing; that is, that we Christians are sheltered from the approaching storm. We have said nothing this evening about the church; but let us recall its place to our memory. It is, that during these events (yea, even at present, as united to Him by faith), its place is to be with Christ, and to accompany Him; the church has the privilege, the glory, the special character, of being in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, if we search for the church in the Old Testament, it is only Jesus Christ we find. A striking example of this truth is found in Paul's quotation (Rom. 8), taken from Isa. 1 where Christ says, “Who is he that shall condemn me?” which Paul applies to the Christian, being united to Christ as of His body.

The union of the church in a single body, whether Jews or Gentiles, was not revealed in the Old Testament; if we seek for it, it is Christ Himself that is seen. Although there are many things in the relationship of Jehovah with Zion which often exist between God the Father and the church, nevertheless it is not in Zion that we are to look for the church. In the Old Testament the privileges of the church are of Christ Himself, in the person of Christ, because the church has the same portion as Christ. This is it (see Eph. 1:22, 23), “which is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all;” for this reason we are not to look for the church in the prophecies. The church is the body of Christ Himself; and Christ is to judge, not to be judged. We have seen that Christ is to smite, and break in pieces the nations; this is said also of the church. The church has nothing to do with that of which we have been speaking, as if it were to be subjected to the same judgments (Rev. 2:26, 27). Its place is not to be in the midst of the nations that are to be broken in pieces; but, being united to Christ, it is to enjoy the same privileges as Christ, and with Christ to break in pieces the nations. There is nothing true as regards Christ in the glory which He has taken, which is not also true of

the church.

It is always precious for us thus to understand our place, that of joint-heirs with Christ. And the more we think of this, the more our strength will be increased, and the more we shall become in our minds, as heirs of God, detached from the world, which is judged, as indeed the church is justified. The saints are justified; we see not all yet the effects of it; because the glory is not come. The church only has the fruits of justification in glory; the world only has the fruits of wickedness in the judgment. Nevertheless, it is true that the church is united to Christ. The world is judged because it has rejected Christ. “Holy Father,” said the Savior, “the world hath not known thee.” But this is what grace has done for us. Just as unbelief separates men entirely and for all eternity from Christ, grace by the Spirit has united us entirely and forever to Him; and we ought to bless God for it. (Concluded from p 336)

Chapter 100

Letter to the Editor 1

Dear Mr. Editor,

The article in the February number of “The Bible Treasury” on Drummond's book appeared to me so sound and true that it was with a little disappointment I observed the absence in it of any purposed continuation of the subject so as to include a more general review of the work. In the spirit of that article, though wielding a less able pen, I have made the following remarks, which I venture to submit for your consideration and that of your readers. The volume before me is “Natural Law in the Spiritual World,” by Henry Drummond F.R.S.E; F.G.S. Fourteenth Edition, completing thirty-four thousand. Such a sale in comparatively so short a time is indicative of the great public interest which the work has excited, and of a very large number of readers. So far, too, as we can judge from the general tenor of the public notices, and from the individual opinions one hears expressed, a large proportion of that number entertain a high opinion of the book. Some of them, doubtless, have read it but cursorily, and scarcely understand its true nature. One knows too well the general state of the church, and of individual minds, to be surprised at such a reception, deeply as it is to be regretted. Thank God, truth is yet to be found in the church, though the church herself has well nigh forfeited all claim to be “the pillar and ground of the truth.” The Holy Spirit however still dwells in the church, and God's sovereign grace makes good that truth in the hearts of not a few.

And it is of more than usual importance, in the present case, to insist on the fact that the grace of God, where sin and sinners are in question, always is and must be, sovereign in the most absolute sense, and in no sense a matter of course. Nevertheless the flood-gates of error and of infidelity are open, the barriers which should bar and shut out error, and shut in truth, are overthrown; the whole scene is as it were deluged with error, and, more than that, the foundations are being broken up. Nor can I hesitate to express my conviction that this book is not only a result of the existing state of things, but will in no small measure expedite further progress in the same direction. Not that the work in itself is one of power, though the language, as regards mode of expression (and with a few peculiarities not worth mentioning), is clear, forcible and elegant. But I hope to show that by the time we subtract, from the work as a whole, the pages which are occupied with Science pure and simple, and on our own part give its true value to the figurative language of scripture (for which of course we shall not be indebted to Mr. Drummond)—little will be left to characterize the work as original, or towards proving the extraordinary and self-contradictory notion of Natural Law in the Spiritual World. The author with exquisite modesty says, “In what follows the Introduction, except in the setting, there is nothing new, I trust there is nothing new” (Preface, p. xvi). He need not be apprehensive on this score—there is nothing new unfortunately. For, excepting the absurd and indemonstrable notion of Natural Law in the Spiritual World, all, or nearly all, is the current error of the day, into which, unhappily, so many who profess to be Christians have fallen. I purpose examining the book, first, in a religions and doctrinal point of view, appealing to the Christian sense (1 John 2:20, 27) to judge in the matter; and, secondly, as to its scientific and argumentative character, though these two aspects cannot be altogether

regarded separably. By the Duke of Argyll the “Reign of Law” has been treated in a sober, rational, and Christian manner; in this book on the contrary its treatment would be called grotesque, were not the subject too serious to be regarded in such a point of view.

The principle advocated is indeed profane, though the spirit in which it is handled is not so, and consequently I do not accuse the author of profanity. The ungodly theory of Evolution is not only held by him without a notion of its ungodliness, but is pushed even into heaven itself, and to God, as its goal. On this side it is called “Advolution.” “It is surely obvious that the complement of Evolution is Advolution” (p. 401). “Then from a mass of all but homogeneous 'protoplasm', the organism must pass through all the stages of differentiation and integration, growing in perfectness and beauty under the unfolding of the higher evolution, until it reaches the Infinite Sensibility, God” (p. 402). Were this not arrant nonsense, we should simply call it profanity; happily better motives and the utter want of logical sequence save the book, or at least its author, from such a charge. The fact however that Mr. Drummond is, doubtless, a good and a Christian man, is no excuse for doctrines and views of an anti-Christian and dangerous character. The most injurious heresies—those which have most widely and permanently corrupted the church—have owed their effect mainly to the personal character of their original propounders. Take Irvingism for instance, the poison of which heresy will probably (in a more or less diluted form) infect the church as long as it is on earth. And yet Irving himself was in the ordinary sense a good man as well as a very attractive man. And though the theory of evolution had a secular and so-called scientific origin, yet it is utterly antagonistic to divine revelation, and when accepted and propagated by Christian men, the result is terribly disastrous. It is no exaggeration to say that the state of things in the church is in the highest degree alarming, and that it fills one's mind with anxiety and solicitude, especially on behalf of the young. “Schools of thought,” and incessant conflict of opinion, tend to confuse and unsettle the mind, and to retard at least, if not finally to hinder, sound and settled conviction.

If at so early a period in the church's history it was needful for the apostle Jude to write to Christians, and exhort them “earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” certainly it is no less necessary for “the called ones, beloved in God the Father” (Jude 1), to do so now. That objective faith, which was once delivered unto the saints, we still possess in the word of God, and the resource of every right-minded and true-hearted believer is still as was expressed by the Psalmist, “Concerning the works of men by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa. 17:4). For our comfort and assurance we are told also, that we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). That subjective faith God will sustain in the hearts of all who look to Him and honor His word. Now faith is believing Holy Scripture because it is God's word—it is believing simply and solely upon the authority of His word, i.e. upon the authority of God Himself. It is throwing dust in people's eyes, and only deceiving oneself, to talk about rejecting human authority in this matter. The word of God in itself, by whatever channel it reaches a man, speaks to him with the authority of God; authority in the question there undoubtedly is, and cannot be got rid of, and that Personal authority will judge men in the last day. But faith is not believing because we know or understand, even though heart-knowledge and spiritual understanding are the result of believing. To make the acceptance and reception of divine truth, as revealed in Holy Scripture, contingent on knowledge (i.e. science), or understanding, is not true faith at all. And it is just in this that faith differs from intellectual belief;

for all, of course (even the devils), believe what they know. And so with men when they are outside this world—it is no longer a question of faith with them, it is knowledge—they are where they know, not where knowledge can accrue simply as a matter of faith..

Again, to talk of creation as being another revelation, or a part of revelation, is mischievously false. Doubtless by creation men should discern God's “eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20 θει■τησ, not θε■τηζ), and they are “without excuse” for not doing so; but creation is no more a revelation of God, than one of his paintings is a revelation of Gainsborough. Certain qualities of a man may be perceived by his works, whilst the man himself is wholly unknown. Much more is this the case with God, who Himself has been revealed only in Christ; as Christ is revealed by the Spirit in the written word; but neither God nor Christ is otherwise revealed. Utterly false then is the following statement (however essential it may be and is, to our author's theory): “Nature, it is true, is a part of Revelation, a much greater part doubtless than is yet believed—and one could have anticipated nothing but harmony here” (Preface, p. xvii.). This is a notion in which all mystics delight to revel, simply because they have unlimited scope to do so. But if nature is a revelation, will those who hold it to be so kindly tell us what facts or truths it teaches men? If nothing but harmony could have been anticipated here, in what does that harmony consist? If nature is a revelation, surely it appeals as such to all men and in all time. What did it teach men prior to the advent of Christianity? The wisest men, in the wisest city of the ancient world, mocked at Paul when he spoke to them of the resurrection, and even fancied he was speaking of another God; and yet if there is a truth which can be said to be clearly symbolized in nature, it is that of death and resurrection. If moreover nature is a revelation, how came the state of morals and of “religion” to be what it was in the world at the advent of Christianity? Poetic fancies, or speculative ideas, are indeed not uncommon amongst the heathen writers; but where will you find in them one spiritual truth, definitely seen, and generally accepted? What single quotation can be given, as furnishing us, in part or whole, with a heathen creel? “Harmony,” if harmony it can be called, was in abominable idolatry and wickedness, and in that alone. Alas, poor man! Not liking to retain God in their knowledge, men gave Him up—the consequence was their heart became darkened, their mind reprobate, and God in fact gave them up. Man is lost. In sovereign grace God by His gospel may and does save those who hear and believe; but though the final and judicial sentence on individuals has yet to pass the lips of Christ, the Judge of all—man is already morally and wholly lost. The Son of man came “to seek and to save that which was lost;” but the world would not have Him and cast Him out. How flatly opposed to Scripture then are our author's words, “The wicked are not really lost as yet, but they are on the sure way of it” (p. 102)! This is to confound the final and authoritative sentence, with a man's actual and moral condition.

It is from a state of complete ruin and liability to judgment, that the believer has been saved. Besides, if man is not lost, why does he need regeneration? Yet regeneration, like Christ Himself, is made much of in this book, though only in a scientific way; and so with redemption. “This,” we read, “is the final triumph of continuity, the heart-secret of creation, the unspoken prophecy of Christianity. To science, defining it as a working principle, this mighty process of amelioration is simply evolution. To Christianity discerning the end through the means, it is redemption” (p. 413). So that Evolution and Redemption both mean the same thing, and it is to be presumed that, on the principle of continuity, the process has been going on ever since evolution began. Here again is an instance of what evolution and Christianity comes to in the hands of Mr. Drummond! Are we to call

it preposterous or profane? But what under these circumstances can be the place he gives atonement? The word is indeed mentioned by him (see p. 362), where, speaking of Theology, he says— “The Trinity is an intricate doctrinal problem. The Supreme Being is discussed in terms of philosophy. The atonement is a formula which is to be demonstrated like a proposition in Euclid.” Now it is no doubt too easy to rest satisfied with a “form of sound words,” —with a head-knowledge of dogma; one may know and yet practice too little of the spirit of it. We are all prone to fail in this way, and few can afford to throw stones at others. Nevertheless sound doctrine, and particularly on such subjects, is of all importance; as on the other hand we are warned in scripture against “doctrines of devils,” and “damnable heresies;” and certainly there is something much more deliberate, wicked, and injurious in the propagation of bad doctrine than in faulty practice, though both should be abhorred by the Christian.

Again (p. 334), “Need we proceed to formulate objections to the parasitism of Evangelicism? Between it and the religion of the Church of Rome there is an affinity as real as it is unsuspected. For one thing these religions are spiritually disastrous as well as theologically erroneous in propagating a false conception of Christianity. The fundamental idea alike of the extreme Roman Catholic and extreme Evangelical Religions is escape Man's chief end is to 'get off.' And all factors in religion, the highest and most sacred, are degraded to this level. God for example is a great Lawyer, or He is the Almighty Enemy; it is from Him we have to 'get off.' Jesus Christ is the One who gets us off—a theological figure Who contrives so to adjust matters federally that the way is clear. The church in the one instance is a kind of conveyancing office where the transaction is duly concluded, each party accepting the other's terms, &c.” Now whatever may be the author's judgment, whatever might be a true judgment, of Evangelicism, or even of so gross an ecclesiastical system as the Church of Rome, no one who knows and values divine truth, who has felt the grace of God in the gospel, above all, no one who entertains in his heart due reverence towards the Deity, could warrantably express himself thus. Such a phenomenon can only be accounted for by supposing that it may be a tremendous rebound from rigid Scotch Presbyterianism. I should have thought that “escape” from everlasting punishment was indeed a very fundamental idea with any sober-minded person; and that the solemn truth that we owe our “escape” to the love of God, who gave His only-begotten Son to expiate our sins on the cross, should be a most powerful motive on our part to give ourselves to Him who gave Himself for us. If on the one hand a proper filial fear of God can never be absent from the heart of the true believer, yet the predominant feeling there is love and gratitude to our God and Father. But, again I say, what can be our author's sense of sin, of redemption, and of atonement, that he can write in this way?

Before closing this letter, and the first portion of my remarks, I would observe that next to redemption nothing could be of such transcendent moment to us all as creation, the divine account of which is given in Gen. 1. Whether as regards mere matter—the lower animal creation, or the creation of man, language could not be more clear and precise; nor could anything be more deliberate or more solemn than the mode in which God created our first parents, making them as He did, in His own image, after His own likeness, i.e. moral beings—rational and accountable. To make therefore anything co-eternal with God is to deny His absolute Deity. Yet our author says (p. 27), “We should be forsaking the lines of nature were we to imagine for a moment that the new creature was to be formed out of nothing. Ex nihilo nihil-nothing can be made out of nothing.

Matter is untreatable and indestructible!” This is simple heathenism, and in reference to evolution (which abominable theory is the very gist of this book), he says, “There is no intention here to countenance the old doctrine of the permanence of species” (p. 292, note)! And what has become of divine revelation, and of the Christianity it teaches, if the following is true? “All that has been said since, from Marcus Aurelius to Swedenborg, from Augustine to Schleiermacher, of a besetting God as the final complement of humanity, is but a repetition of the Hebrew poet's faith. And even the New Testament has nothing higher to offer than this!”

The fact is that, as regards Evolution, none are so utterly inconsistent as those who profess to believe the Bible, and yet attribute evolution to God as His plan and method. God has told us as plainly as it can be written that He created man from the dust of the ground; and there is no more difficulty in believing this than in believing that in the resurrection He will raise man from the dust. To attribute evolution to Him, therefore, is simply to contradict Him. Avowed infidelity is honest compared with this, and much less inconsistent. In short, our author's book is rejected alike by incredulity if honest, and by honest Christianity. He has fallen between two stools—much to his own injury and not a little to the injury of others.

I am, dear Mr. Editor,

Yours, in our Lord,

Theta

Chapter 101

Letter to the Editor 3

Dear Mr. Editor, The extent to which Mr. Drummond naturalizes (one might perhaps say, materializes) the spiritual World is shown very clearly by the following passages. “Then and not till then will men see how true it is, that to be loyal to all of nature, they must be loyal to the part defined as Spiritual” (Preface p. 22). “Thus as the Supernatural becomes slowly natural, will also the natural become slowly supernatural” (p. 23). “We shall not say what they see. But we shall say what they might see. If the Natural Laws were run through the Spiritual World, they might see the great lines of religious truth as clearly and as simply as the broad lines of Science. As they gazed into that Natural-Spiritual World, they would say to themselves, 'We have seen something like this before. This order is known to us. It is not arbitrary'“ (p. 27). Again, “In a word, Is the Supernatural natural or unnatural?” (p. 6) I should have thought the answer to this question would be, “Neither; a supernatural phenomenon is an exceptional interposition, on God's part, into the ordinary course of nature.”

If the spiritual ought to be regarded as part of nature, of course “Natural Law in the Spiritual World” would present nothing incongruous or contradictory to the mind. The title would simply appear to be rather tautological, and there would be nothing left to prove, since natural law would then be synonymous with spiritual law, and of course there is spiritual law in the spiritual world. Nevertheless the doctrine of evolution would still remain opposed to scripture, as well as most repugnant to all right and proper human feeling. Our author says (p. 227), “No secular theory defines the point in the chain of Evolution at which organisms become endowed with Immortality.” It cannot. But scripture tells us that God created man out of the dust of the ground, and made him in His own image after His likeness; in other words, he had an immortal soul from the moment that he became a living man. Man started in perfection and in an earthly paradise, and fell from that state into one of sin. Evolution denies this, and asserts that his course has been one of progression and of improvement, commencing with the spore of a seaweed, to the present time. Mr. D., by engrafting on this theory a scientific Christianity, carries on the process of evolution into the spiritual World, and to God as its goal.

“It may seem an obvious objection that many of the natural laws have no connection whatever with the Spiritual World, and as a matter of fact are not continued through it. Gravitation for instance—what direct application has that in the Spiritual World? The reply is threefold. First, there is no proof that it does not hold there. If the spirit be in any sense material, it certainly must hold. In the second place, gravitation may hold for the spiritual sphere although it cannot be directly proved..... Thirdly, if the spiritual be not material, it still cannot be said that gravitation ceases at that point to be continuous. It is not gravitation that ceases, it is matter” (p. 42). Imagine a Christian writing this! and observe the assumption that that may be which cannot be proved. This is not scientific. We allow our author, faith, or demonstration, but not surmise.

If the spiritual is a part of nature, so that natural law in the spiritual world would be a rational idea, there would of course be no difficulty in then supposing that the spiritual sphere, being regulated

by known i.e. natural laws, can be grasped by science, and treated accordingly. And as science is human or natural knowledge in a methodical form, this particular branch of it is included in that form, and thus, being capable of being perceived and comprehended by the human intellect, may be perceived and comprehended by all men. Our author admits that there are mysteries in the spiritual world, as in the natural, and says, “however far the scientific method may penetrate the Spiritual World, there will always remain a region to be explored by a scientific faith” (p. 28)—so that after science has done all it can, a region of mystery yet remains, which region has to be explored by a scientific faith! Now I know what science is, and I know what faith is; but I confess I do not know what a “scientific faith” is. It is a thing repudiated alike by the unbeliever in divine revelation, and by the true Christian.

However, Mr. Drummond says (p. 28), “How much of the spiritual world is covered by Natural Law we do not propose at present to inquire. It is certain, at least, that the whole is not covered.” Yet he says (p. 49), “Are there then no other Laws in the Spiritual World except those which are the projections or extensions of Natural Laws? From the number of Natural Laws which are found in the higher sphere, from the large territory actually embraced by them, and from their special prominence throughout the whole region, it may at least be answered that the margin left fort them is small. But if the objection is pressed that it is contrary to the analogy, and unreasonable in itself, that there should not be new laws for this higher sphere, the reply is obvious. Let these Laws be produced.” Our author is somewhat prone to meet the challenge that he should keep to his scientific method, and make no assertions which he cannot prove, by a retort of this kind. “The establishment of the Spiritual Laws on 'the solid ground of nature,' to which the mind trusts, 'which builds for aye,' would offer a new basis for certainty in Religion. It has been indicated that the authority of Authority is waning. This is a plain fact. And it was inevitable” (p.29). “Hence we must exhibit our doctrines, not lying athwart the lines of the world's thinking, in a place reserved, and therefore shunned, for the Great Exception; but in their kinship to all truth, and in their law-relation to the whole of nature” (p. 33). In other words they must have a scientific basis— “the solid ground of nature;” Christianity, as hitherto accepted having been “the Great Exception.”

Our author, at the beginning of his preface says, “Science is tired of reconciliation, between two things which should never have been contrasted; Religion is offended by the patronage of an ally which it professes not to heed.” The truth is, science has taken all care to avoid the possibility of any reconciliation for the future; its position in reference to religion, both natural and revealed, is simply and hopelessly irreconcilable. Happily for us all, Christianity does not need the aid of science; nor can right-minded and truehearted Christians feel otherwise than the utmost disgust at such an attempt, as this book makes, to engraft Christianity on science, in the present attitude of the latter. No doubt there is plenty of scripture in it; but then our author himself reminds us that “the devil can quote scripture.”

I regard the book as false in every sense; for the more attentively one reads it, the more one sees that it is guardedly expressed, so as not to frighten less advanced Christians, and that the author's views are more in harmony with some of the worst scientific and theological errors of the day, than he cares to say explicitly. But Christianity, like Christ Himself, finds that false friends are its worst foes. Again, “Men must oppose with every energy they possess what seems to them to oppose the eternal course of things” (what things are these? and in what sense are they “eternal?") “And the first step in their deliverance must be, not to 'reconcile' nature and religion, but to exhibit nature in

religion. Even to convince them that there is no controversy between religion and science is insufficient. A mere flag of truce in the nature of the case is here impossible; at least it is only possible as long as neither party is sincere. No man who knows the splendor of scientific achievement, or cares for it, no man who feels the solidity of its method, or works with it, can remain neutral with regard to religion. He must either extend his method into it, or, if that is impossible, oppose it to the knife" (Preface, pp. 21,22). This is plain speaking, and admits of no misconception. Well! we must leave it to science to do as it pleases: on the part of true Christianity there can be no compromise. We read, "Thou hast magnified Thy word, above all Thy Name" (Pa. 138:2), i.e. divine revelation has a place far superior to creation—just as faith in that revelation is far superior to natural knowledge. Not that the Christian undervalues the testimony of creation to the glory of God—far from it. Still we believe, not on account of what we see or know, but simply because God has spoken. Spiritual sight and intelligence are, no doubt, the result; but there is no science in the matter. For scientific Christianity the Christian would not give a "thank you." He takes Christianity as revealed in God's word, as if this were a myth; and then like an honest infidel, he would reject it. A mixture of Christianity and science is the most abominable of all things—a "cheap Christianity" indeed.

"The Spiritual World as it stands is full of perplexity. One can escape doubt, only by escaping thought. With regard to many important articles of religion, perhaps the best and the worst course at present open to a doubter is simple credulity. Who is to answer for this state of things? It comes as a necessary tax for improvement on the age in which we live. The old ground of faith, authority, is given up; the new Science, has not yet taken its place. Men did not require to see truth before; they only needed to believe it" (p. 26). That we may be better able to see truth, Mr. Drummond has reduced it for us to Science. He has already spoken of the "solidity of its method," and has told us that this method must be introduced into religion. To make this method more clear and unmistakable, he quotes Messrs. Huxley and Harrison, after a few words of his own. The extract is rather long, but cannot be passed over—

"And what will be gained if the point be made out? Not a few things. For one, as partly indicated already, the scientific demand of the age will be satisfied. That demand is that all that concerns life and conduct shall be placed on a scientific basis. The only great attempt to meet that at present is Positivism.

"But what again is a scientific basis? What exactly is this demand of the age? 'By Science, I understand,' says Huxley, `all knowledge which rests upon evidence, and reasoning of a like character to that which claims our assent to ordinary scientific propositions; and if any one is able to make good the assertion that his theology rests upon valid evidence and sound reasoning, then it appears to me, that such theology must take its place as a part of Science." "Mr. Frederic Harrison, in name of the Positive method of thought, turns: aside from ideal standards which avow themselves to be lawless, which profess to transcend the field of law. We say life and conduct shall stand for us wholly on a basis of law, and must rest entirely in that region of science (not physical, but moral and social science), where we are free to use our intelligence, in the methods known to us as intelligible logic, methods which the intellect can analyze. When you confront us with hypotheses, however sublime, and however affecting, if they cannot be stated in terms of the rest of our knowledge, if they are disparate to that world of sequence and sensation, which to us is the ultimate base of all our real knowledge, then we shake our heads and turn aside. "This is a

most reasonable demand, and we humbly accept the challenge" (pp. 2:3-24). Now all the "important articles of religion" are a matter of revelation, and have been recorded in Holy Scripture in the language of inspiration. As to this the apostle says, "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, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God: which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man 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. 2:9-14).

These words alone judge and condemn the whole of our author's system. I am aware he quotes them, as he constantly quotes the passages which are most against himself, seemingly unconscious how much they are so. Yet in the present case he makes a singular misquotation, for he says, "And Paul afterward carries out the classification consistently, making his entire system depend on it, and throughout arranging men, on the one hand as πνευματικ■ς-spiritual, on the other as φυχικ■ς-carnal, in terms of Christ's distinction," (p.382). But Paul does not divide all men into "spiritual" and "carnal," and our author only expresses his ignorance of Scripture in saying so—nor is there such a word as φυχικ■ς in Greek, that I am aware of. Had he said that Paul divides all men into spiritual, carnal, and natural, he would have been right. The "things of God" cannot be reduced to science, nor can they be known in their true character and power but by the Spirit. Our author's system consequently is anti-scriptural and anti-Christian; and the attempt to construct it on the lines of evolution makes it profane. I do not say this is intentional on his part; but it is so in fact, nevertheless.

Yours, in the Lord,

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Chapter 102

Letter to the Editor 4

Dear Mr. Editor, One would suppose after all this, that the ordinary difficulties to unbelievers, of a spiritual kind, would have been met by a sort of scientific bridge. By substituting, for the simple and homely phrases of scripture, the technical terms of science—by availing himself of the figurative language of scripture to run a complete parallel between spiritual and natural processes—and so to identify spiritual laws (as though we knew them) with natural, as to speak of natural law in the spiritual world—in this manner Christianity is so reduced to science, one would have hoped that unbelievers, and more especially scientific men, would derive some benefit from it. if scientific men have such a fancy for the words, biogenesis, protoplasm, embryology, &c. that to introduce these terms into theology makes them more willing to receive Christianity, by all means let them have this benefit. We should be truly glad to win them in such a way. But it would be wrong to deceive them. This merely puts a scientific aspect on Christianity without making it really such.

Evolution, too, in any honest sense, must be given up—whether therefore the word is honestly used or not in this book, they will find the word of little or no use to them. Ambiguous language may deceive simple Christians but will not deceive scientific men. They will take the word “Evolution” as meaning evolution, and that in the sense in which it is scientifically understood, and that is the true (though not always the obvious) meaning in this book, as is made clear by our Author's denial of species Again, if very unspiritual Christians appreciate such language as the following, let them take it: though, rejecting it ourselves, we will not quarrel with them.

After (p. 293), speaking of the bird—life seizing on the bird—germ, and building it up into a bird; of the reptile—life seizing upon another germinal speck and fashioning it into a reptile, he proceeds “There is another kind of life of which science as yet has taken little cognizance. It obeys the same laws. It builds up an organism into its own form. It is the Christ-life. As the bird-life builds up a bird, the image of itself, so the Christ-life builds up a Christ, the image of Himself in the inward nature of man. When a man becomes a Christian, the natural process is this. The living Christ enters into his soul. Development begins. The quickening Life seizes upon the soul, assimilates surrounding elements, and begins to fashion it.” And how does our author meet the “reasonable demand,” as he calls it, for rational proof as to the immortality of the soul, and the reality of a future life? Surely these are the most elementary of spiritual truths and facts! In the presence of their denial our author's pseudo-spiritual and biological notions are so many fictions: no progress can be made till they are granted or proved; and lying upon the very threshold, they cannot be rightly said to pertain to the unknown regions of the spiritual sphere.

If “it has been keenly felt by those who attempt to defend this doctrine of the spiritual life, that they have nothing more to oppose to the rationalistic view than the ipse dixit of revelation” (p. 66), yet since the natural laws “are great lines running not only through the world, but, as we now know, through the universe, reducing it like parallels of latitude to intelligent order” (p. 6)—surely that part of the spiritual region which is nearest to us should be the most distinctly marked out by these lines! But no, natural laws, it appears, are even of less use to us here than the ipse dixit of

revelation (not that our author on his own part questions the adequacy of revelation; still he should be consistent with his theory), for, “No secular theory of personal continuance, as even Butler acknowledges, does not equally demand the eternity of the brute” (p. 226). This however I cannot agree with; it has always seemed to me that there is much, which strongly tends to the conclusion that man has an immortal soul, I mean apart from revelation. Our own existence is a proof that there is a God, our knowledge of good and evil, is a proof that we are accountable to Him. Adjudication is clearly not in this world, and therefore is to be in the next. This however is the reasoning of natural religion, which we fully own and accept, as we do revealed religion, admitting that the latter cannot be put on a demonstrable basis. He can give no proof of the immortality of the soul, and little as, even of the existence of a spiritual world; for he says, “at the same time, although attempting no philosophical proof of the existence of a spiritual life and a spiritual world, we are not without hope that the general line of thought here may be useful to some who are honestly inquiring in these directions” (p. 26).

Mr. Drummond truly says that life can only come from life, that the organic kingdom is hermetically sealed on the side of the inorganic, and that similarly “the passage from the natural world to the spiritual world is hermetically sealed on the natural side (p. 71). “The door from the inorganic to the organic is shut, no mineral can open it. This world of natural men is staked off from the spiritual world by barriers which have never yet been crossed from within.” So far so good. He continues (p. 72), “There being no passage from one kingdom to another, whether from inorganic to organic, or from organic to spiritual, the intervention of life is a scientific necessity if a stone, or a plant, or an animal, or a man, is to pass from a lower to a higher sphere. The plant stretches down to the dead world beneath it, touches its minerals and gases with its mystery of life, and brings them up ennobled and transformed to the living sphere. The breath of God, blowing where it listeth, touches with the mystery of life the dead souls of men, bears them across the bridgeless gulf between the natural and the spiritual, between the spiritually inorganic and the spiritually organic, endows them with its own high qualities, and develops within them those new and secret faculties by which these who are born again are said to see the kingdom of God.” As a sort of general illustration, one would let this pass as sufficiently near the truth; but when it is used in support of identity and continuity of law, it is requisite to look more minutely into it; and I think that it will be found that not only law but even analogy then fails. Our author says (p. 75), “It is clear that a remarkable harmony exists here between the organic world as arranged by science, and the spiritual world as arranged by scripture. We find one great law guarding the thresholds of both worlds, securing that entrance from a lower sphere shall only take place by a regenerating act, and that emanating from the world next in order above. There are not two laws of biogenesis, one for the natural, the other for the spiritual; one law is for both. Wherever there is life, life of any kind, this same law holds. The analogy therefore is only among the phenomena; between laws there is no analogy—there is continuity.”

Now the inorganic and. the organic kingdoms of nature form but one physical system—each enters into the very existence of the other. Leaves drop off plants decay, and mold is formed. This very mold is taken up by another plant and absorbed into its system. Vegetable life cannot exist alone—it exists only in combination with mineral elements. When we plant a vegetable in the ground, doubtless the process goes on, described above; but from first to last, that process goes on in consequence of a mineral organization coming into contact with mineral, though in an

inorganic state. But the Holy Spirit has nothing in common with men; in dealing with the soul He has to effect a re-creation. He re-organizes that soul, receiving nothing Himself This is not like a soil He can simply come into and assimilate. The man thus enters the kingdom of God—a spiritual sphere totally distinct from the physical, and having no necessary connection with it. And he enters that kingdom, not on account of a mutual and reciprocal connection and relationship with it (as regards his human nature), such as there is between the mineral earth and the mineral plant, but by an act of sovereign grace and power on God's part, which is subject to no rule (often choosing the worst instead of the best), and in which the man can supply nothing but a ruined soul—in itself worthless to God; but which God renews, and then admits into His kingdom. Continuity of law, then, is out of the question.

But the most singular line of reasoning, perhaps in the whole book—the most desperate of all his attempts to surmount difficulties, is in his endeavor to make good the continuity of the law of evolution. We have seen and accepted his lucid statement, “the door from the inorganic to the organic is shot, no mineral can open it; so the door from the natural to the spiritual is shut, and no man can open it.” On p. 404 he says— “This attempt to incorporate the Spiritual Kingdom in the scheme of Evolution may be met by what seems at first sight a fatal objection. So far from the idea of a Spiritual Kingdom being in harmony with the doctrine of Evolution, it may be said that it is violently opposed to it. It announces a new kingdom starting off suddenly on a different plane, and in direct violation of the primary principle of development. Instead of carrying the organic evolution farther on its own lines, theology at a given point interposes a sudden and hopeless barrier—the barrier between the natural and the spiritual, and insists that the evolutionary process must begin again at the beginning. At this point in fact, nature acts per saltum,. This is no evolution but a catastrophe—such a catastrophe as must be fatal to any consistent development hypothesis. On the surface this objection seems final; but it is only on the surface.” So says Mr. D.; but indeed the objection is fatal to any consistent development hypothesis.

Again, “any objection then to the catastrophe introduced by Christianity between the natural and spiritual kingdoms applies with equal force against the barrier which Science places between the inorganic and the organic. The reserve of life in either case is a fact, and a fact of exceptional significance. What then becomes of evolution? Do these two great barriers destroy it? By no means” (p. 406). But they certainly do. Science will hear nothing of catastrophe—as little as it will admit of a “great exception.” Even if God acts, it must be by law. Nor does science like the idea of a lawmaker, that lawmaker being Himself a perfectly free agent. Even Mr. Drummond says, “The fundamental conception of law is an ascertained working sequence or constant order among the phenomena of nature” (p. 5). Not so—it is rule imposed by authority, which may be abrogated whenever that authority chooses.

But our author continues, “what we are reaching in short is nothing less than the evolution of Evolution. Now to both Science and Christianity, and especially to Science, this enrichment of Evolution is important. And, on the part of Christianity, the contribution to the system of nature of a second barrier is of real scientific value. At first it may seem surely to increase the difficulty. But in reality it abolishes it. However paradoxical it seems, it is nevertheless the case that two barriers are more easy to understand than one—two mysteries are less mysterious than a single mystery. For it requires two to constitute a harmony. One by itself is a catastrophe. But, just as the recurrence of an eclipse at different periods makes an eclipse no breach of Continuity;...so the

recurrence of two periods associated with special phenomena of life, the second higher, and by the law necessarily higher, is no violation of the principle of evolution" (p. 407).

Now Mr. Drummond has laid down the undoubted law, that the door of the organic world is hermetically sealed on the inorganic side, and that the door of the spiritual world is hermetically sealed on the natural side, as also that death to the old man, and an altogether new life, are requisite to enter the spiritual world. He has moreover said, "In either case the first step in peopling these worlds with the appropriate living forms is, virtually, miracle" (p. 76). He now says that these two breaks are no breach of continuity, that Evolution is not destroyed by them: in fact it is the "evolution of Evolution." He asserts that on the contrary these two barriers make a harmony. Yes! by confirming each other as barriers, upon the principle that two negatives only make the negative more emphatic, not upon the principle that two negatives make an affirmative. Two eclipses do not prove that there is no such thing as an eclipse at all. Can this argument be called honest? Present this to upright men, who reject divine revelation, and who do not believe that the being of God is a proved fact; and they will laugh at it. Present it to the right-minded and truehearted Christian; and he will utterly reject it. The fact is, Mr. Drummond's attempt to turn Christianity into science is, for any earnest infidel or Christian, a palpable and an egregious failure. He owns that life came originally from God, and says, "so everywhere God creates, man utilizes" (p. 140), by which I suppose he means that, "ex nihilo nihil" does not apply to God. He also speaks of our Lord, and of some of the truths of Christianity, in a way which leads one to hope and believe he is himself a Christian, even if under a terrible delusion. How then a man who is a Christian can think and write as he does, is a marvel.

We however are concerned only with the errors and inconsistencies of the book. The idea which runs through it is, Continuity of law upon the principle of Evolution; but both the Continuity and the Evolution are myths of science. Much of what he says about Christianity is true; but there is no need to turn the simple yet profound language of scripture into any scientific phraseology, for this is proof of Continuity of law only in appearance, and not in reality. So carried away is he with his deadly doctrine of evolution that he says (p. 398), "Third and highest we reach the Spiritual kingdom, or the kingdom of heaven. What its characteristics are, relatively to any hypothetical higher kingdom, necessarily remains unknown. That the Spiritual, in turn, may be the preparation for, and the prophecy of, something still higher, is not impossible" (p. 398). One who can talk like this, is not likely to argue consistently. A few words should be added in reference to the following statement (p. 409), "Modern science knows only two kingdoms, the organic and the inorganic." I would warn my fellow-Christians earnestly against this dictum of science. It is essentially infidel. The object simply is to get rid of the line of demarcation between the spiritual and the natural. For the infidel, the latter alone remains; for Mr. Drummond, the two are combined into one by natural law. The true distinction is inorganic and organic, forming the natural or physical world; and the spiritual world. We have had abundant proof how Mr. D. naturalizes the spiritual. To cite one more instance only, I take the following, "The visible is the ladder up to the invisible; the temporal is but the scaffolding of the eternal. And when the last immaterial souls have climbed through this material to God, the scaffolding shall be taken down, and the earth dissolved with fervent heat—not because it was base, but because its work is done" (p. 57). How completely everything is seen by him, through a natural medium, and grounded upon a natural basis! His ladder to heaven is unquestionably a very material one.

Mr. Drummond may say, “Certainly, I never premeditated anything to myself so objectionable, and so unwarrantable in itself, as either to read Theology into Science, or Science into Theology” (Preface, p. x); and, “Inappropriate hybridism is checked by Sterility” (p. xiii). He must be more simple than I give him credit for, if he does not see that this is just what he has attempted to do; and that such “inappropriate hybridism” cannot but be completely sterile as to what is good and of God. Most unholy must be the fruit of this work. In fact Mr. Drummond may not have intended it, and may not be a ware of it; but he has nevertheless turned out one of the worst and most injurious books ever written by a Christian—a book injurious to souls, as it is a deep dishonor to God, and to His word. It has been a painful process to go through it. I have endeavored (and I trust in the main have succeeded) to give a just and true account of it; and if I shall have aided others in forming a true estimate of its character, and in avoiding any ill effects which an erroneous estimate of it might entail, I shall be abundantly thankful.

I am, dear Mr. Editor,

Yours, in our Lord,

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Chapter 103

Letters on Points Chiefly Practical: 1 and 2

My Dear Brother, Your questions all are really questions as to spirituality. “The spiritual man discerneth all things,” and “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” There are as to many details directions as to speaking in the assembly. These of course we have to follow: not more than two or at the most three to speak; and all for edification.

As to being led of the Spirit, while clearly scriptural and characteristic of the Christian, Rom. 8, yet the realizing it depends on the spiritual state. When we are washed in the blood of the Lamb, the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in us, and then leads us in following Christ. We know Him because He is in as, John 14:17. Now the word is inspired by Him, and no path can be His which is not according to it. But in many details of life there is no positive direction. Here the Spirit will guide us sometimes by motives. Love to others, or practical righteousness, charity to a soul, or Christian kindness, may make me take a long journey; but in all Christ must be the one motive. There and then the eye is single, and when not single is evil; and it requires attention, or we may take human kindness for Christian love. When the blessed Lord heard “he that thou lovest is sick,” He abode two days in the same place; then, God's time and will being there, He went. God had allowed death to come in for His glory and Christ's. This connects obedience and being thus led. In the days of Scripture there were direct motives of the Spirit. I do not expect this; but it shows that in its nature it was not unscriptural, and I believe He will guide us and may suggest things to do. But the mind must be subject and lowly to enjoy this guidance. And if any man lack wisdom, let hint ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. Such as are meek—them will He guide in judgment, them will He teach His way. But it will be in the spirit of obedience, not the acting of our own wills, however hidden the motive.

The state of the heart and the word hidden in it is always in question here. The word forms the judgment in forming the state of the heart, without perhaps a particular test being in the mind. And God is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Christ must be the only motive, His Spirit and grace form our spirits, besides His being ostensibly to oneself the motive. See Luke 9:55, 56. And the outline and tone of heart do much to guard us from deceiving ourselves. But in everything we should be led of the Spirit: this supposes true liberty and known salvation. The Holy Ghost first shows us the Father's love is—a spirit of adoption—in us; next, shows us that we are in Christ and Christ in as, and sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. The fruits are love, joy, peace; then the walk in long-suffering, temperance, &e. Thus if living near to God He may specifically lead as to special efforts in which the life and Spirit of Christ is displayed. But general precepts help to guide here. Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, &e. This will guide in any suggested service. The mere fact of intending Christ's glory, though right, is not enough. Is it what will glorify Him in me Paul was to preach to every creature under heaven, but at a given moment not in Mysia, nor in Bithynia, nor in Asia.

A reading meeting is in a general way a most useful thing, and I do well to use it diligently as other things; but we have to seek. But while the one object is the first great thing for light, the principle of

obedience must come in, if not self will (1 Peter 1:2)—our own will—as a spring of action.

There is one point not noticed, though I must soon close. Acts 3:19, 21 are quite clear; but God knows beforehand how the testimony will be received and waits in that knowledge: our responsibility is quite another thing. Christ presented Himself as Messiah to the Jews to confirm the promises; and they were bound to receive Him; yet His rejection was the basis of accomplishment of all God's purposes. So in Jeremiah you will find calls to repentance and promising blessing, thereon and actually accompanied by a declaration that they would all go to Babylon. One was the present responsibility of man; the other, the way and purpose of God's counsels, which always go far beyond the result of responsibility even if attained, as Christ's heavenly glory and universal Lordship goes beyond the accomplishment of Messianic promises, though in another way I believe there will be. But long ago it struck me as a remarkable thing that Acts 3 should come after Acts 2. I shall be very glad, if anything occurs to you, to help as far as God enables me. Love to G—— and the brethren, though, save G——— , I do not know them.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. DARBY

2.

My Dear Brother, Another word is used for death as to the saints falling asleep. Otherwise in reasoning on man's state death is often spoken of. But death and going to heaven have mischievously taken the place of the Lord's coming and being like Him. Going to glory when we die is quite unscriptural.

As to funerals, I would not go to any where the clerical system is kept up, no, not to my father's. If it gives offense, you cannot [but] expect the offense of the cross.

As to the age of infants the statement you refer to is as to when conscience begins to work. I have no doubt that little children are saved. We cannot fix a date, for it varies with each. Matt. 18 seems to me quite clear.

It is true that, when justification and sanctification come together in scripture, sanctification comes first; because the Spirit of God sets a man apart to enjoy the efficacy of Christ's precious blood. And this is important, because evangelical teaching sets justification as a kind of imperfect work; and that we are made meet afterward for something higher. This is unscriptural. The thief was fit to go and be with Jesus. There is progress, or ought to be: little children, young men, fathers, growing up to Him who is the Head in all things, changed into the same image from glory to glory, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God. But as to acceptance, “as He is, so are we in this world.” By faith in Christ I am quickened, and that life is in itself a perfectly holy thing; and believing in Him and His work I am perfectly justified. The actual state I am in then comes in question; but as to my person, I am set apart to God.

As to an assembly meeting, it is when those who compose it meet as such in Christ's name.

What Paul's heart was upon was first to possess Christ; then that he might have part in the first resurrection. He was running for this. Philippians, though based on it, never treats of a finished salvation, but of the race we run towards the glory towards being like Christ.

I should not frequent the world's house as I might meet the infidel there. Did I find him there, I should not stop. What, deference to his relationship demanded, I should show; but I should not be free with him while he made no difference with an unbeliever. Yours sincerely in the Lord,

J. N. DA R BY.

Letters on Points Chiefly Practical 3 and 4

3.

My Dear Brother, The ordinary rule of scripture is that, in the calling wherein a man is called, he should therein abide with God. The blessed Lord was a carpenter till called to His own further service; and Paul was a tent-maker, and at times supplied his own wants.

In a certain sense all things are lawful for me; there are many where the motive is everything. Christianity does not change the order of the world, even where sin has given rise to it. I could not systematically sell gin; if gin was of use, I could give it to the sick unless it were a stumbling-block to others.

The disciples were taken out of the world to represent God in it, walking in His ways, not its ways, deriving their life and all their ways from Him, to live as Christ did. The world is an immense system built up by Satan around fallen man to keep him insensible to his ruin. (Gen. 4:20-22.) The Lord does not pray we should be taken out of the world but kept from the evil.

Your friend is solemnized by the voluntary. Is he content to be unfit for worship till he hears the organ? This is a poor plea, and putting nature instead of grace, which has even boldness to enter into the holiest. This lowers and falsifies the whole nature of our relationship with God and Judaises it.

As to conversion, whenever Christ is presented, souls can be converted; yet this is not worship but preaching. Christians becoming more and more worldly is no reason for our going with it but the contrary. No doubt people are attracted; but so they are to gin-palaces: the Puseyite recommends it in church on that ground. So they are [attracted] largely to Popery. God may rise above all mistakes in grace; but it is one of the strongest marks that worldly attraction has taken the place of grace and Christ. Did you ever find Christ or Paul have music or a band to draw people? It lowers the whole character of Christianity.

The earthly promises to the Jews do not directly apply to us, but in general God's faithfulness and loving care, as “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” is used in the New Testament as well as the Old. And this latter is written for us, for our instruction on whom the ends of the world are come, that we through belief and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. 1 Peter is, after redemption stated, a treatise on these ways of God now, using the Old Testament for it. The Old Testament cannot give us an accomplished redemption nor glory into which Christ was not yet entered; but it is “able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” You have to discern what is earthly Jewish promises. It is important to do so; but what is in God, faithfulness, grace, love, condescending care of us, is always true. We get it perhaps more clearly applied in the New. Thus, “Seek ye first and all these things shall be added unto you.” I should be sorry to reduce Christianity to mere Jewish promises, but what is in God is always true. 2 Thess. 2 shows, that when people would not receive the love of the truth that they may be saved, they are (when Christ rises up) given over to darkness.

I think the way of stating the gospel you speak of wholly wrong—only God bears with many a mistake where Christ is truly preached. But the statement is quite unscriptural and no true gospel at all. Yet it might reach a man's conscience with the feeling He was not willing to give them up.

What I said as to the transfiguration was that those three were going to be pillars (see Gal. 2); and that it was to cheer and strengthen their faith. The tendency of having a companion with less faith is to weaken our own; still faith may overcome this.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

J. N. DARBY.

4.

My Dear Brother, I am very thankful your conscience has been exercised about the music. I can sympathize with you; for, as far as ear goes, music had the greatest power over me though never taught to play. But the ground of those who wish you to keep it up is all wrong and not true. It is not for Christ they wish you to keep the harmonium; and that decides the case. I am not a Jew, nor can I [do so] in the New Jerusalem where all will be for God's glory, though not in the highest way (for the Father does not come in there). I could suppose a person earning his bread by music, though I think it a very dangerous way, as Peter did by fishing; which is no excuse for a person spending his time fishing to amuse himself. All these pleas of “gifts of God” are bringing in nature, when it is fallen, into the worship and service of the new man and the Lord, and spoiling it. (I have known hunting justified by the hounds having scent!) No instrument can equal in effect (so Haydn said) the human voice.

Besides, as I said, it is not true; it is merely keeping the pleasure of fallen; nature not a thing evil in itself, but a connecting sensuous pleasure with spiritual life. It is not the thing to begin with a ruined soul; but we have to live by God's word. Harps and organs down here began in Cain's city when he had gone out from the presence of the Lord.

In point of fact artistic musicians as a general rule are not a moral class. The imagination is at work, not the conscience nor the heart. Judaism did take up nature, to see if they could have a religion of it; which proved it could not be but ended in the rejection of Jehovah and His anointed. We are dead and risen with Christ and belong to another world. Hence I cannot seek my enjoyment in what belongs to the old, though I may recognize God's work in it; but I do not seek it as a world I belong to now. It is not a legal prohibition, but the heart elsewhere. If I could put a poor sick father to sleep with music, I would play the most beautiful I could find. But it only spoils any worship as bringing in the pleasure of sense into what ought to be the power of the Spirit of God. They cannot go really together, save as water may take away the taste of wine.

It is a wholly false principle that natural gifts are a reason for using them. I may have amazing strength or speed in running; I knock a man down with one, and win a prize with another. Music may be a more refined thing; but the principle is the same.

This point I believe to be now of all importance. Christians have lost peace and moral influence by bringing in nature and the world as harmless. All things are lawful to me. But, as I said, you cannot mix flesh and Spirit. We need all our energies under grace to walk in the latter, “always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal

bodies.” Let Christ be all, and the eye is single and the “whole body is full of light.” The converse is, if our eye be evil because it shuts out Christ, our affections are not set on things above where Christ sits at God's right-hand. This is the point for us: happy affections there, and steadfastly, not being distracted.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. DARBY

Chapter 105

Provision for the Levites

Numbers 18

The principle of giving and receiving is opened up in this chapter. Man gives to man, hoping to receive again; or, at least, not for the glory of God. Man receives from man, and sees no source beyond. From all this the Lord delivers His people.

There are, in this chapter, the children of Israel, to whom the Lord gave the fruitful land, and they are put forward as givers, but givers unto the Lord. They gave Him the tithes of what they possessed, and thus owned that it was He who freely gave them all they had. In these tithes they owned the Lord to be the source of their blessings, and not themselves, or any around them; the principle of departure from this is to be seen, when God is disowned, and some false power brought in.

We have the Levites presented in a different aspect from the children of Israel. They had no inheritance among the children of Israel; the Lord was their inheritance, and His provision for them was in another way: “The tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave-offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit” (Num. 18:24).

If one asked the children of Israel, To whom do you give the tithes? the answer of the godly would be, We give them unto the Lord. And if one asked the faithful Levites, From whom do you receive the tithes? their answer would be, We receive them from the Lord.

The Levites also had their acknowledgment in thanksgiving to make that these tithes were given unto them of the Lord. For his command was: “Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave-offering of it to the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe” (Num. 18:26).

As soon as we receive, the first thing to be seen is, the Lord has given. The next thing to be done is, that the Lord is to be owned in that which He has given.

And so it was that, when the people offered willingly to build the house, David in his thanksgiving owned how meet and right it was, “For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chron. 29:14). Here is the lesson taught in the tithes, but going beyond the mere precept there, in willing devotedness.

It is very precious in all this to see, how they that have little in common stand before God in their offerings with those that have much. The Levites had a less offering for the Lord than the children of Israel. The one had the tithes of the fullness of the land; the other had only the tithe of the tithe for their offering; but of it the Lord said, “And this your heave-offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, and as the fullness of the wine-press” (27); because it was according to that they had, and not according to that they had not, that the Lord accepted of them. And so, when the poor widow cast in her two mites unto the offering of God,

although many that were rich cast in much, yet the estimate formed by Christ of her two mites, in comparison with the much that the many rich cast in, was that she cast in more than they all (Mark 12:41-44).

But awful, very awful it is, to see the mighty power that Satan gets over him who in his act appears and assumes to give unto the Lord, while virtually giving only to men! It was thus that Satan filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira his wife, to agree together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, and to lie to the Holy Ghost. They acted not before God who tries the heart, but before men who could not see so deep; but God searched them, and revealed the result to His apostle Peter, and judged them in the presence of those from whom they expected glory. “How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?” (John 5:44).

And here we see the godly care of the apostle Paul for the saints at Corinth, that their ministry to the need of poor saints should not be the occasion of their own sin. Money he sought not of them, unless God were glorified in them through it; and so his direction was: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2).

Nothing here like looking for a few good contributions from some rich men, but “Let every one of you.” He who had very little more than met food and raiment, because he was therewith content, could own this to be prosperity, and lay by him his little store in thankful acknowledgment of the providing hand of God, and to meet the necessities of the poor saints in another place.

The contribution was thus made in individual devotedness, according to the conscientious review, by each, of his circumstances through the past week. The apostle put away all influence that his own presence might have in this; it was, “that there be no gatherings when I come.”

But there are godly thoughts, with regard to the receivers of this bounty, put before those who themselves, in giving, gave unto the Lord. What would be the comfort of those who gave as to those who received? It would be this, that they should receive from the Lord. Well, says the apostle, “The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God” (2 Cor. 9:12). Many would be found among the poor saints, whose wants were thus supplied, all putting up their thanksgivings unto God for thus supplying them. And when they think on the saints who contributed to their need, what do they do? “They glorify God for their professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for their liberal distribution unto them and unto all men; they also pray for them, longing after them for the exceeding grace of God in them” (2 Cor. 9:13, 14).

How very precious is all this! how different, inexpressibly different, from the false alluring kindness of a corrupt and deceitful world, to draw the heart away from God, and fix it on itself!

The ambassadors from Babylon had nothing of the Lord in their kindness to Hezekiah, and it drew nothing fur the Lord from him. The devil demands to be worshipped for all he gives: and so, in the service of the Lord, when godly men went forth for His name's sake, it was, “taking nothing of the Gentiles” (3 John).

The ground on which the laborers received was not the same as that on which the poor saints at Jerusalem received, though they were connected, as we shall see: the former were devoted to the

service of God in the burden of the gospel and truth; the other suffered from poverty, which broke in on their circumstances.

The Levites, as thus devoted, stand in very holy connection. Their service was in things that were outside, but always connected with that which is within; and this connection never should be let go, or outside service becomes dead and barren.

The service of the sanctuary and priesthood belonged to Aaron and his sons; but the Levites were joined unto him for the service of the tabernacle (Num. 18:4); and they were given to Aaron as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation (v. 6). The Levites waited on the priests, and their service flowed from the service of the priests.

As having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we are priests unto God; this is our high and exalted place of blessing and service there; but we also, in subjection to this service, serve outside in the world too.

There were distinct provisions made for the sustenance of the Priests and the Levites: they who served in the holy place were sustained with what belonged to it; they who served outside had natural sustenance ministered unto them. The priests fed on that which was offered in sacrifice (Num. 18:9); the Levites fed on the tithes of all the fullness of the land.

As priests we feed upon Christ, having access where He is; as serving in the world, we are supported there according to the care of God our Father. May we be sustained in these services according to the power of God!

There is an important connection in which the Lord classed the Levites, whose inheritance He Himself was. He classed them with those who were the pitiful objects of His care in a poor groaning creation—not amongst those who are highly esteemed among men, but amongst those who are mercifully dealt with by Him. “The Levite (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee), and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest” (Deut. 14:29).

In the first epistle of Paul to Timothy, the elders that rule well, as laborers worthy of their hire, are set in this connection with poor helpless desolate widows. The direction first is, “Honor widows that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:3); and then, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and, The laborer is worthy of his reward” (verses 17, 18). A humble spiritual laborer could enjoy this holy association with those trusting in God and continuing in supplication and prayers night and day—godly objects for the church's care, even as the laborers in word and doctrine.

May we in all things be kept from the proud and haughty ways of men, humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time! T. T.

Chapter 106

Life More Abundantly

(John 10:10)

As soon as our first parents fell, God in His grace gave a word for faith to take hold of and trust in, and so it has been ever since, divine revelation becoming gradually fuller and clearer, and perhaps more and more generally known in the world.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith in His word, its reception because it is God's word and comes to us with divine authority, is the indispensable condition of spiritual blessing, and of personal intercourse between the soul and God. Yet the degree and specific character of the blessing have altered from time to time. The case of Abraham, for instance, stands out conspicuously, in contrast with the antediluvian patriarchs, and in some respects even in contrast with his descendants under the yoke of the law. For, though testimony as to the Messiah and His kingdom was constantly getting clearer and brighter with the unfolding of prophecy, still the Sinaitic covenant “gendered to bondage” (Gal. 4:24); such was the result to the Israelites of putting themselves under law, instead of casting themselves upon the grace of God, as expressed in His unconditional promises to their fathers, the result in fact of their utter ignorance alike of God and of themselves.

But though Jehovah's righteousness has ever been that in virtue of which sinners have been saved—though in the mind and purpose of God even before our being justified by faith, and not by works, (by works only evidentially,) nevertheless of accomplished righteousness, and the subsisting justification which depends on and follows it, none could derive the benefit, as a known state and standing, till it became and was proclaimed as an existent fact. The prophets prophesied of it (Isa. 56:1); and Daniel stated (9:24), that seventy weeks were determined amongst the things “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” It was spoken of, and trusted in, from of old, but not “revealed,” nor could the Spirit consequently be given as the seal of accomplished righteousness (John 7:39), till the Lord Jesus died, rose, and was glorified in ascension. Paul however, formally dwells upon it as accomplished and revealed (Rom. 1:17; 3:24-26); and the whole teaching of the New Testament as to Christianity, and even as to eternity, is based on it. Vain is the attempt, then, to obliterate distinctions God Himself has made, and to reduce all His dealings to one common level. The wisdom of God's ways, as displayed in the successive dispensations, will remain for over marked, like the rings which mark the growth of the tree, or the successive accretions, the age of a stone.

The glory of God, and blessing of man, have all and completely depended on Christ as Mediator. Through Him only have men ever been saved. But this does not mean that, in the administration of divine grace to men through Him, there have been neither degrees of spiritual intelligence nor diversities of spiritual privilege. An infant has not the intelligence of a full-grown man, and what is in this true in the case of individuals is true of dispensations. The spiritual status granted to saints of previous economies was wholly and in all cases inferior to the Christian status, as is very clearly stated in Luke 7:28 and consequently the spiritual capacity and intelligence were also very

different. It is fallacious to say that because Old Testament saints were born of God, and are now in heaven, that therefore what is known by the Christian, such as remission of sins, justification of life, peace, the heavenly calling, &c. were known to them as to us. They had simple childlike faith in God, and in His word—a faith given by God in the coming Messiah, sustained by Him, and which God did not disappoint, for He uses this resource in this world, and afterward took them to heaven. But to apply to them, either as regards spiritual intelligence, state, or condition, truth, which for its revelation and subjective realization depended on the accomplishment of atonement, and on the descent of the Holy Ghost, is altogether a mistake, and (though unintentionally) disparages virtually the work and person of our Lord. The Epistle to the Romans, for example, is written from a Christian stand-point: the spiritual experience and privileges, therein spoken of, must be taken as in the light of Christianity, and can be understood only from the Christian position, and by the Christian sense. The sins of the Old Testament saints are said simply to have been “passed over,” or pretermitted (Rom. 3:25). In fact the value and effect of the work of Christ could be known, in the intelligence and power of the Spirit, only after Christ had suffered, been raised, and was glorified. And the personal and practical state is necessarily and at all times contingent on, the revelation which God gives, varying in degree with it in such a way that whilst in each dispensation, individual and personal faith and apprehension varied, yet dispensational light, state, standing and privilege vary also, as a whole and as a system—the Christian economy being the climax and perfection of all, and justification of life, and life in resurrection, being characteristically Christian privilege. In Rom. 7:14-24, the man spoken of has light beyond that of an Old Testament saint, but not up to the full Christian standard. As to the divine nature there was that in the saints of Old Testament times, which through grace enabled them to please God up to the light He gave them. They were born of God, and therefore feared, trusted, and obeyed God. But we must distinguish between the quickening grace of the Spirit, and the Spirit as indwelling and so the seal of accomplished. righteousness. “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you,” could not have been said till the Spirit was given. It is a test now, but would have been no test then, because, though born of God and by the Spirit, they had not the gift of the Spirit. Nor in their case was the distinction brought to light between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit, because flesh and Spirit were not then known to be irreconcilable. Without this profound and Spirit-taught knowledge, they simply walked in the fear of God, and with the sense of His mercy which enabled them to say, “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no flesh be justified,” whereas the Christian knows that he will never come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.

As soon as our Lord came into the world, hearts were opened to see in Him the Savior, and to receive Him as such. Simeon takes up the blessed Infant in his arms and said, “Now lettest Thou. Thy servant, O Lord, depart in peace according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” And when thirty years after, that Blessed Man, anointed with the Holy Ghost, went forth upon His mission, far surpassing any that the Old Testament saints knew was the privilege of those who saw, heard, and received Him. In short His appearance in the world constituted an epoch (1 John 1) a fresh starting-point in every sense, and in all God's dealings with men, either spiritually or temporally. Saints were not merely quickened but made “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” with the Spirit of adoption given to enjoy it and cry to the Father. They had a conscious relationship, and a nearness of position, never known before. Of this salvation, Peter tells us, the prophets had inquired, but were told that not unto themselves but unto us they

ministered the things now revealed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1:10-12). We are told also by Paul, Titus 2:11, that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” &c. True, this does not mean that men did not look for a Savior before; but it certainly means that a vastly more advanced and privileged position is now proclaimed to all, and is ours by faith. J. B. P.

Chapter 107

The Lord's Supper: Part 1

1 Corinthians 11:20

The subject on which I have to speak to you tonight is one that concerns not you only, but the Lord: and this emphatically so. I shall have to treat, on another occasion D.V., of another theme, which no less concerns the Lord, and the Lord primarily, not merely Christians. Indeed it is remarkable that these are the only two applications of a special word that the Spirit of God has employed in the New Testament. It is not every scholar has taken note of, or given just importance to, the fact, that the breaking of bread and the first day of the week are each called κυριακ■ς, and these only. The Lord's "table" even has not the same form of expression; and I have no doubt there is divine wisdom in thus making a difference, however slight A may seem. The Lord's Supper has for its central truth His death, the Lord's day His resurrection. In both cases, the grand point is that each is sacred to the Lord, belonging to Him in a special way—not merely in a general one, but so strictly that the Spirit of God employs for them a term He uses nowhere else. One might show a reason for this change of word. It is not unimportant for as to observe it; for it is our wisdom to learn of Him through His word. I dare say many may think this trivial enough; but there is a power in the actual words used by the Spirit of God that will be found to abide when all mere feelings on the one hand, and reasonings on the other, melt away, so that nothing but what is divine may govern the believer's heart and mind.

The Lord's Supper differs from the other standing institution of Christianity in this, that while baptism is essentially individual, the breaking of bread is distinctively congregational. Individuality of enjoyment is not at all the thought in the Supper, but rather communion. There is in Christianity the utmost moment and scope given to that which is individual; and we need this, for it is the first thing for both God and man, and should take precedence of all else. That soul is never right which loses itself in a crowd. The first thing needed is, that the soul should be set right with the Lord by His grace.

Baptism being an individual thing, in it each soul is said to put on Christ as the sign of His death; for "as many as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized onto His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death." Burial unto His death—that is the thought; but it is individual, even if ever so many were baptized at the same time. There is no such thing as fellowship with one another in baptism. Baptism by proxy is a simple absurdity, if not worse. Christian baptism is the confession of Christ's death. There the soul is brought under solemn responsibility, though immense privilege too, because he that is so baptized is bound to walk as one alive from the dead; but this has nothing to do with others—it is one's own responsibility, and is entirely independent of association with them.

In the Lord's Supper it is another thing altogether. It was not a mere circumstance that the disciples were assembled when the Lord instituted it; their gathering to partake of it together is not merely a fact but a principle. It is therefore continually pressed as a doctrine. There is no such thing in Scripture, or in the sense of the institution, as an individual taking bread and wine in

remembrance of Christ; the doing so would rather be an error to be forgiven. The whole force and blessedness of the Lord's Supper consists in this, not only that it is essentially an act in common, but that it is based on the truth of the one body of Christ. Being the expression of our common worship of Christ, anything that does not leave full room for every member of His body, walking as such, destroys (as far as it goes) the aim and character of the Lord's Supper. Not, of course, that even in each city all could eat together in one spot; but, let them eat in ever so many, it was to be on the same ground, and in real intercommunion. The very principle of it embraces the saints walking as such in the whole world: whatever does not is not the Lord's Supper.

There is another remark I have to make. Not only was Christian baptism liable to be perverted (and every Christian will allow that this has been the case far and wide in Christendom), but the Lord's Supper was even more liable to misuse. Whether Christian baptism was or was not perverted in apostolic times, I do not now take up: but it is certain that the Lord's Supper was almost immediately. It was the more exposed to have its character forgotten and misrepresented, because it is a matter of spiritual fellowship. The First Epistle to the Corinthians testifies to this. Even in apostolic times the Spirit of God has recorded it plainly, full of shame and sorrow though it be. How great the humiliation, and how deep the grief, for the apostle to expose it! for what was their fault but the common shame and sorrow of all “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” It is not merely that they ought to suffer, but it is supposed they do. But though to write the eleventh chapter of 1st Corinthians was to spread and even perpetuate the bad tidings, the Spirit of God felt it necessary for their good and the welfare of all the assembly. This sad failure must be fairly laid before them, and now left on the pages of divine inspiration for our admonition and the instruction of all afterward who value the mind and will of God.

The way in which the misuse of the Lord's Supper came in at Corinth is highly instructive. The Corinthians valued the social character of Christianity more than moderns, and it is a very valuable trait. In those early days Christians loved to see their brethren together, and then partook together of a love-feast. No doubt plausible reasons were not wanting for uniting this with the Lord's Supper. As all were assembled then, it would be a saving of time; why not on the same occasion take the two together? Was it not so at the last passover?

I dare say many Christians now are willing to take the—Lord's Supper together who would shrink from taking a meal in common. But the Corinthians had not yet lost sight of the bonds which unite the holy brotherhood. They had a much higher sense of it than many who love to speak of their faults. Nevertheless their low spiritual state exposed them to evil and error; and this very effect not being corrected in the Spirit brought out their fleshly state. There was levity among them, a low moral condition. At these love-feasts they each brought their fare as at the convivial feast (or ■ρανος) of the Greeks. This was, in point of fact, a contribution-meal. What a descent from Christianity to heathen practice, when each would bring his own; and thus the rich came with plenty, and the poor had little or nothing to bring! Thus the effect of their coming together to have these feasts was that selfishness, not love, characterized them. Those who had plenty soon proved how easy it is to have too much; those who were poor were made to feel it on these occasions. Thus the whole scene became a reflection, not of God and His grace, but of the world, to the confusion of all who loved the Lord and His church; and the holiest feast on earth—the Lord's Supper for the church of God—was dragged down into the disgrace that covered all. In fact, their state at this very time was such as to bring down His hand in judgment on His people. This

and more is what we have before us here.

Many wonder how this could be in “the church of God,” and some go so far as to make comparisons and to draw conclusions favorable to themselves and their own times. The Spirit of God would never lead to such a thought. Whenever you read the word of God so as to think highly of yourselves and disparagingly of those who lived before, it is a plain proof that you do not read it aright, or understand the object of the Holy Spirit in what He records. “The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;” and those only read it to profit who judge themselves by it rather than their brethren, and still less those of primitive times. Let me inquire of each, With whom are you comparing yourselves? Do you compare your ways with those of the Corinthians when beguiled of the enemy? How much wiser to judge yourselves, not by what the Corinthians slipped into, but by what the apostle wrote, by what the Lord instituted! And let none think this too hard; for it is fair to ask, who is entitled to alter the institutions of Christ? Has the church such a license? Is she not, on the contrary, called to submit herself to the Lord as a virgin espoused to Him? Who would think highly of the character of one who set herself up against her husband? But this is but a small part of what Christendom has done—taking advantage of His name to speak proudly and act independently, not to say wickedly, and most especially that Church which claims for herself to have altered nothing, whereas scarce a shred remains to her of Christ in truth, love, and holiness.

But let us look at Scripture, not to condemn Rome, but to judge ourselves. Let us search and see whether and how far we are doing the will of the Lord. How are we to know we are pleasing Christ? The word of the Lord is our only sure guide.

We have the description of the institution of the Lord's Supper given to us in three of the Gospels, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Eternal life and the gift of the Holy Ghost are the great themes of John. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper enters into either his Gospel or his Epistles; but in the historic Gospels we have a full account.

The apostle Paul, too, had a fresh revelation about the Lord's Supper, not about baptism. He expressly tells us that the Lord did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel: I doubt if the other apostles could have said so. They were given by Himself a commission to baptize. “Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” But the apostle Paul was not charged in the same way, being called from heaven. From his very conversion he learns the union of the assembly with Christ. Of this the Lord's Supper, not baptism, was the suited sign, and that was revealed to him, though of course he was baptized and did baptize like another.

Baptism is the confession of Christ, emphatically of Christ's death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is the expression of union with Christ founded on His death who is now on high. That those who partake of the one loaf are the one body of Christ, is the great idea of the Lord's Supper, as well as the announcement of His death. Hence the apostle Paul, who beyond all made known the mystery of Christ and the church, has a special revelation concerning this given to Him from heaven. So he says, “For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread.” Now, nothing strikes one more than the extreme simplicity of the materials the Lord was pleased to use for His supper. He took bread. There is nothing more common than bread. He blessed, and brake, and gave to them, while they

all remained in the same position. He blessed; but there is no thought of consecration here, still less of consubstantiation, or of transubstantiation. He gave thanks; but He did exactly the same when distributing the five barley loaves and two fishes, when nobody, I suppose, would say that they were consecrated or changed. It is a mere delusion to conceive that there was any change in the elements. Scripture intimates nothing of the sort, but rather indeed, and very expressly, the contrary. The disciples ate bread and drank wine; and the whole point of the blessing is the power of faith coming in and investing what it had before it, though the very simplest materials, with the deepest associations of God's grace in the death of His beloved Son.

Every scheme which would exalt the elements or aggrandize those who “administer” to the communicants is taking away from Christ. All accessories of sight or sound accompanying it are purely human additions, and contrary to His word. Scripture repudiates them as not of the Spirit, and of the first man, not of the Second. The Lord's Supper belongs to Him, and to Him so specially, that to bring in anything else is to slight Him, being an infringement of His heavenly glory, as well as of the cross, whereby the world is crucified to the Lord, and the saint to the world. For he that hath His word and keepeth it, he it is who loveth Him. It is in vain to think we care for His glory if we slight scripture which reveals it.

He says to all His own, “Take, eat.” Not take thou, because the “thou” would bring in individuality; and this is never the thought of the Lord's Supper, but the body. The whole point of the Supper is communion in the remembrance of Christ, but of Christ in death. Christ is everything, and the common blessing of all is in and with Christ.

The love-feast was what we may call the Christians' Supper; this was its primary aim. It was their feast; but the Lord's Supper is far more than their supper. In it, therefore, so far from a person eating or drinking for himself alone, it is intended to embrace the whole body of Christ, save those who may be through discipline put outside. Whatever narrows this holy circle, either in principle or in practice, infringes on the Lord's intention in His Supper. Hence the moment you bring in any peculiar doctrine, only admitting to the Supper those who expressly or virtually subscribe to it, you make it your supper and not the Lord's. If guided of Him, we meet there as members of His body, and everything else is set aside as secondary but Himself.

Nothing can be more valuable in its place, and for God's ends by it, than Christian ministry. It embraces rule as well as teaching, pastorship as well as preaching. There are those that can teach, who have not the power of thus ruling; as, again, others who might rule well, having great moral weight, who could not teach. Some again have the gift of preaching to the unconverted who need teaching themselves, and are not at all fit to lead on, clear, and establish, the church of God. Nor does a gift for ministry in itself suppose moral weight for rule; and so we see in the facts of every day.

Christian ministry was founded by the Lord who died for us, but the spring of it was when He went up to heaven. He gave gifts to men, but He gave them after He went on high (Eph. 4:8-11).

This is very important; for if Christian ministry had commenced while Christ was on earth, it might be said that things have wholly changed since. But there has been no change for Christ, but only alas! amongst Christians since He went up to heaven.

Our Lord Jesus when here below sent out twelve apostles in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; as He sent out the seventy afterward with a final message; but still in testimony to Israel. Was this Christian testimony? Not so. It was after His ascension that He gave gifts to men—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Not that these are all, but those named in Eph. 4 are enough for my purpose now.

(To be continued)

Chapter 108

The Lord's Supper: Part 2

1 Corinthians 11:20

When the Lord Jesus died, rose, and went to heaven, then from His ascension glory He gave gifts to men. It was a new source of supply from above. What He did when on earth was to send a testimony to Israel. The disciples were even forbidden to preach to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles: this therefore could not be Christian ministry. No doubt eleven of the disciples previously used were again sent forth now, but they had a fresh mission when Christ went up to heaven. Has Christ then, I ask, ceased to give gifts to men? or is He still owned by us as the Head of the church, not in word only but in deed and in truth? And those who in practice and principle deny this and take His place, are they not really conspiring against Him and His rights as the fountain of all gifts for the church? Rome is the chief of the conspiracy against the Headship of Christ—the harlot who rises up in insubjection to the Lord of all. Babylon—the false lady, the would-be-queen—was not content to be subject, and she is therefore looked upon as an enemy going to be judged by God. Take care that you do not fall into the same error of disowning the Headship of Christ in another form.

So far from questioning Christian ministry, I hold it to be a divine institution and a permanent one. If others plead for change, I hold that, if divine, it is the same now as when Christ first ascended. Christ, and Christ alone, through the Holy Ghost, has authority in His hands. He gives gifts, and appoints ministers. I feel it to be a part of my work in His name to recall the saints to what they have forgotten by making the church regulate ministers, instead of bowing to Christ in this matter. Christ alone has the title as Head of His church; and the Holy Ghost is come down as alone competent to carry out His mind on earth in accordance with the written word of God.

But I want you to see that, while we would hold up the place of Christian ministry, and slight none who are Christ's ministers—owning all who are really His, and disowning all who are not—while we maintain this to the full, still there is one occasion where all distinctions disappear, where only One is or ought to be prominent, even Christ and His grace to us; where, no matter what our position and standing in the church, everything for the time gives place to Christ and His death; and this occasion is the Lord's Supper. It is precious to merge all else and have nothing before the soul but Himself who died for us in infinite love. This it is the Lord, (the night before He was betrayed) commended to the saints. This it is He would have us to do in remembrance of Him till He comes. It is well even for the most richly gifted not always to be in the position of giving out; and it is well for the poorest saints not to be ever taking in. An evangelist might else get so occupied with winning the souls of others as to forget he has a soul of his own to praise and remember the Lord; and so with every other gift. “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” It is good for the heart of any man, no matter what his gift, that all should have for Christ the Lord a little quiet time, and that these quiet times should not be too far apart.

All this is provided for amply in the Lord's Supper. It is blessed and wholesome for the soul to have seasons when it is occupied neither with delivering nor with hearing a sermon. It is blessed when even the apostle is merged in the saint, when we and all are called to be occupied only with the remembrance of Christ. There is a feast provided by His love, in which we all may enjoy Him together, and enjoy Him to the full; for He does not want us to treat His love as a doubtful thing, or an uncertain sound. On the contrary, He would have our joy to be full; but if you do not value this feast, because of its own nature and His love who invites you, no wonder you do not enjoy it. If you join in a rite which bears His name but with its character altered, how can you expect it to be the feast to which He invites you and guarantees His presence? Some make an idol of the Eucharist and worship its elements; others, running away from the idolatry of Rome, seem to have forgotten His word and to have put His supper nowhere, save as a gloomy appendix to the sermon and that once or twice a year.

The early disciples came together not once a month, nor once a quarter, nor once a year, but the first day of the week to break bread. And I assure you it is not myself or others who have put this into God's word. It is no strange Bible, but your own from which I am reading to you. It is no new theory or notion of moderns or ancients, but what God has written. Does it not concern you as much as me? I am speaking of Christ's feast for His disciples, for what in a special way concerns you, children of God, though Christ and His glory even more.

I remember the time when the Lord's Supper was a thing of awe and dread, lest one might fall into the condemnation that is written here—eat and drink “damnation,” being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. No wonder a person with so fearful a danger before him could not enjoy the Lord's Supper; and being a believer, with no one to show me any better, it was so much the more a tremendous burden to me. It was no feast, but a fast of the most solemn description. Was it not a perverting of the Lord's Supper to produce such a result? Of course it was. Nor was mine at all a singular case. Think me not wandering away from what is of importance for souls in giving you this bit of personal experience. Somewhat similar alas! is the condition of many a soul now.

But the Lord Jesus died on the cross to suffer for the sins of believers and to blot them out. Yea, He glorified God about sin itself, instead of leaving it to stand as a perpetual reproach to God. He, the Son of God, having gone down Tinder it in love, and risen again without it in righteousness, from His ascension glory gave these words to Paul for us. They come, in the infinite grace of God from the Lord and Savior who bears witness to judgment borne for us, from resurrection accomplished, from the ascension revealed to us in all its glory: thence the Lord commends to us this institution of His grace. Do not treat it as a mere commandment, and hence a means of grace for those who have not faith. It is a call of love, embracing all who are His, and only for His, by faith: “Do this in remembrance of Me!” It is not for those who, slighting His love, love Him not.

For whom it is, need I argue more? The only persons who have the smallest title to the Lord's Supper are those who are resting on Him and His redemption. You might even be converted, and not be in a fit state to partake of this feast. For the Christian state is more than being converted (that is, by grace turned from one's evil ways to God). Besides this, the Christian believes the gospel of his salvation; he has peace with God, being justified by faith. He is not waiting for righteousness, but made the righteousness of God in Christ. He is therefore waiting for the hope of righteousness, that is, for glory. We do not get righteousness when we go to heaven. It is here by

grace we have it, the object being to glorify Christ when we are in. the presence of His enemies and now called to serve Him. It is here we are to confess by faith in His cross and glory, how truly all the evil is already judged, all the good is already given in Christ by our God and Father.

What does a person come to the table of the Lord for? Is it to pour out his doubts? If he has them, he will; but this would be to make it a fast, and not a feast. You would scarcely like this even at your own festivities. You would not like to have at a marriage feast one with a gloomy heart and face: this would slight the bridegroom and the bride, and might spoil it for every one else. You would say such a person was best away; and the more you loved the person, the less you could desire his presence thus, because his sadness would be the more a burden to all concerned. It would be a poor proof of love to be indifferent to his troubles, and to be just as joyful in presence of such a breach of fellowship, not to speak of propriety.

The soul that is troubled with doubts and fears had better look to Christ and listen to God's gospel. The Lord's Supper is the best and the holiest feast on earth; but whatever does not consist with His presence in peace and liberty and love is not fit for it.

Ministry is not meant to furnish, adorn, or guard the table; even an apostle comes there merely as a saint. Ministry has to deal with souls, to preach the gospel, to give meat in due season, to guide, instruct, correct and rebuke. But in the Lord's Supper we rightly come only as members of Christ's body—as once sinners but now saints, justified, made happy because of Christ's love, full of peace and joy in believing. We are walking in the light: such is the place of a Christian; but the next point is that we should walk in accordance with the light in which we are. This is the object of ministry, in dealing with saints to fit them for and keep them in their place at the Lord's table. Thus the Lord's Supper is the present practical end, we may say, of ministry; and the end is greater than the means.

I should scruple to call it the Lord's Supper when it is not taken according to the Lord's own institution. But we may notice that there is a difference in the way in which the apostle speaks in 1 Cor. 10 as compared with the language in chap. xi.: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” In this passage it is not the Lord's Supper viewed from within, i.e., not the state, of those partaking it. Neither their right state nor their wrong state is the point here discussed, but communion with Christ compared with what was outside. It is an external view. The apostle is comparing it with what the Jew or the Gentile had. It is not the internal view of eating worthily or not; but, contradistinguishing the Jew and the Gentile in their worship, he proceeds to show what the nature of the church's communion is. “We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

“The table of demons” has been foolishly applied to that which is not celebrated in accordance with the Lord's own institution. This is certainly not the meaning of the apostle's words, but to my mind a grave error on the part of those who have so applied it. The apostle is contrasting what the Christian has with what the Jew had on the one hand, and what the Gentile had on the other. What the Gentiles sacrificed was to demons. The idol might be nothing; but their danger was from forgetting the demon that was behind it; and it is a dangerous as well as a wicked thing to have to do with demons. But if you go to these idol-feasts, you are tampering, you, have fellowship, with demons.

Israel, again, had their peace-offerings. They were their symbol of communion with Jehovah's altar; while the church of God, as he shows, is as distinct from the Jew as from the Gentile.

Thus the apostle is contrasting both with the Lord's table which Christians have.

But in chap. 11 he is dealing with the state of soul of those who regularly partake of the Lord's Slipper. It is a question of Christians rightly or wrongly partaking. If you know the joy of remembering the Lord's death, do not you satisfy yourself with the fact that you are a Christian. You are made worthy by the blood of the Lamb to partake of that Supper; but put yourself to the proof whether you are partaking of it in a worthy manner.

How can a Christian partake of it in an unworthy manner? If the day comes and you merely go to it as a religious habit, it seems very like an unworthy partaking of it. Familiarity breeds contempt where the soul is unexercised; where self-judgment is kept up, the spirit of worship is strengthened and enlarged. Do you go to the Lord's Supper in the morning and to your supper in the evening in much the same spirit? Surely this is not a worthy manner. Not that you should go to any meeting or even meal lightly, but seriously. Still the Lord's Supper makes a distinctive appeal to the conscience, as it has a special place for the heart. This is not a theory, but the doctrine of God in 1 Cor. 11.

As for the notion that you may have the Lord's Supper without the Lord's table, it is beneath sober Christians. We may distinguish, where we must not separate. All such speculations are but the fruit of idleness with a certain small activity of mind, but none the less injurious to faith and practice.

To you who have no doubts I speak now. Your danger is in coming to the Lord's Supper without adequately weighing your ways and state of heart. “Let a man examine himself,” not to see whether he is a Christian, as some say. But, if assured of salvation as we should be, the Lord intends that there should be a solemn searching of heart, and challenging of the soul every time, with a view to our seeing in what spirit and state we are coming to the Lord's Supper. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty with respect to the body and blood of the Lord; for he falls into no small offense as to Christ who treats His Supper irreverently. Consequently the Lord does not fail to come in and vindicate the honor of His name thus set at naught, and to judge, as we see He did at Corinth.

He does not suppose that, when a man has thus tried himself, he will stay away. “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.” It is well to search, judge, and blame yourself. For it is always assumed that a Christian is one who is here to obey the Lord and please God. To partake unworthily then means not that the communicant is not a Christian, but that the Christian partakes without due self-examination and self-judgment.

But, again, “damnation” here is quite wrong. The word κρ■μα should be rendered “judgment.” The only possible meaning of the word here is very simply judgment in this world. The context is decisive and plain in giving this sense, even for those who have no knowledge of the language in which the Holy Ghost wrote. The saints have to judge themselves in order that they may not be condemned (or damned) with the world. Thus the solemn guard of the Lord comes in to maintain gravity and holiness among those who partake, on the peril of His judgment now.

When a soul begins to be careless, the first thing the Lord does is to make him feel miserable and distressed as to his ways, applying the word to his condolence. If he bows to the word, it is well—he is humbled and walks more softly in future. If he is hardened by not heeding the word, then comes in the work of those over him in the Lord to admonish, entreat, or rebuke, seeking to restore. A little evil unjudged always leads to a great deal more. If those that meet as the church are in a bad state and fail, the Lord never fails to come in and judge them here by sickness or even by death. Such is the meaning of “sin unto death.” It is death in this world. So Ananias and Sapphire sinned unto death. The time and circumstances made their sin the more heinous, and brought down on them the Lord's unsparing judgment in a peculiarly solemn form; but the principle is the same.

Chapter 109

The Lost One Sought, Found, and Blessed: Part 1

Luke 15

It is a wonderfully blessed thing to have one who could so well manifest God, not only in His words, but in His works and ways, as the Lord Jesus.

We may look at our sins, as a question to be judged of in the light of righteousness before God; and most important it is. But still, in one sense, God moves above all the evil, and asserts His right to show what He is. And blessed it is for us that God will be God in spite of sin. God is love; and if He will be God, He must be love in spite of all the reasonings and murmurings of the heart of man against Him. God will act upon (what I may call) the feelings of His heart and make them find their way into the hearts of men. And this is the reason there is such a freshness in certain passages of the word of God, however often we recur to them; because God especially reveals Himself in them. God never fails; the moment He speaks and reveals Himself, we have always the full blessedness of what He is. It is Himself who has come forth with power to our hearts—the blessed God. He will take no character from man. He has to deal with sin, and show what it is, and how He has put it away; but still above and through all He will manifest Himself. Now this is where our hearts get rest. We have the privilege to have done with ourselves in the house and bosom of God.

Man could not have borne the manifestation of God in the brightness of glory; so He hid it in grace in the person of the Son, of man. He clothed Himself in flesh; but the effect of the wicked and heartless reasonings of man's corrupt judgment was this—it forced Him to show Himself what He really was as God. When He presented Himself as Messiah, the Son of man, the fulfiller of the law and the like, this was not all the fullness of God. Man was always rejecting, and finding fault, and carping at certain things with which he could not agree; but, by thus pressing upon and urging Christ, man only forced Him to reveal Himself more fully, pressing out Him from what He really was.

In the chapters which exhibit this, the soul is arrested, and finds itself with unhesitating certainty in the presence of God Himself—in the presence of love. There we get rest and peace.

So in this chapter: He was forced to tell all the truth—that God would be God. If there was that which could make God “merry and glad,” as it is expressed in the parable (and such was the case in the welcome of the poor prodigal son), He would have His own joy in spite of the objections of men. This is what men object to. They do not deny that He is going to judge men (I do not, of course, speak of professed infidels); nor, as a general principle, do they object to God's being righteous, because their pride makes them think that they can meet Him on this ground. But the moment He comes to have all His own full joy, and to bring out that which is the joy of heaven, man begins to object. It must not be all of grace—not God dealing with publicans and sinners thus! And why not? Because what then becomes of man's righteousness? Grace makes nothing of man's righteousness; “there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of

God.” Christ manifesting the light proved this; and man hated it. The thing that levels down the moral condition of man, and brings in grace to the sinner, is what man cannot bear. It is the setting up of what God is, and the putting down of man.

What man is always seeking to do is to make a difference between the righteousness of one man and another, so that character may be sustained before men. In John 8 we read that Jesus had one brought before Him who by the law was worthy of being stoned—undeniably guilty—that He might deny either mercy or righteousness. They thought to place Him in this inextricable difficulty. If He should let her off, He would break the law of Moses; but should He say, “let her be stoned,” He would do no more than Moses did. How did He act? He let law and righteousness have all their course; but “he that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Conscience begins to work (not rightly, it is true, for their character was what they cared about; still it would speak); and they get out of the presence of light, because the light made manifest what they were—it proved them sinners. From the eldest to the youngest all went out. He that had the reputation of the longest standing was glad to be the first to go away from that eye which penetrated and detected what was within; and they left Jesus with the sinner alone. He would not execute the law, for He came not to judge; “neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” That which is produced here is light and love.

“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” And after all it may seem strange to many, that, if God did come down here, He should take no notice of the righteousness of man, but be found in the company of publicans and sinners. Why this would upset all the moral righteous thoughts of men! And this is what God has to do, because they are wrongly based.

These parables then show with what sort of spirit grace is objected to. We have in them this great and blessed truth—God manifested.

“I will suppose,” it means, “a man in the worst and vilest condition you please—one reduced to the degradation of feeding with swine: but then there is something still beyond all this that I am going to bring out, something which your natural hearts Ought to recognize—the father's delight in receiving back a child. The father's heart would justify itself in its own feelings of kindness, let the condition of the child be what it may.”

After sorrow of heart among men—after the Lord Jesus had gone through the world and found no place where a really broken heart could rest (He could find proud morality, but no place where a poor wearied broken heart could find sympathy and rest, to open it and give it life), He goes on to show that what could not be found for man anywhere else could be found in God. This is so blessed! that, after all, the poor wearied heart, wearied with its ways, wearied with the world, can find rest in the blessedness of the bosom of the Father, and—what it could not do in any other place—tell itself out; now, that it has found God, it can; and this in truth of heart, too, as we read in Psa. 32— “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” So long as I am afraid of being blamed, there is guile in the heart; but the moment that I know that all is forgiven, that nothing but love is drawn out by it.

I can tell out all to God. The only thing that produces “truth in the inward parts” is the grace that imputes nothing. This is the secret of God's power in setting hearts right with Himself— “there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.” There is all the difference between finding a man flying from God by reason of his conscience, and his finding in God what in truth relieves and heals a conscience completely convicted. We cannot in our actual state, if under the law and acknowledging its righteousness, take it into our own hands. If I take the law to smite you, I must kill myself; it is too sharp to handle. The man who would stone the adulteress must put his own head under the weight of the blow. “O wretched man that I am!” If I am a man, I am undone.

We have three parables presented to us in this chapter. The source of that which is taught in them all is love.

1. The shepherd who sought the sheep that was lost.

2. The woman who sought the piece of money that was lost.

3. The father that received back again the prodigal son that was lost.

In the last it is not a question of seeking, but of the manner of receiving the son when he had come back. There is many a heart that longs to go back, but does not know how he will be received. The Lord Jesus says, that the grace and love of God are shown out, first in seeking, and then in the reception. In the first two parables, we have the seeking; iii the third, the reception by the Father. One great principle runs through them all; it is the joy of God to seek and to receive the sinner. He is acting upon His own character. No doubt it is joy to the sinner to be received, but it is the joy of God to receive him “It is meet that we should make merry and be glad,” —not merely meet that the child should be—glad to be in the house.

Beloved friends, this is a blessed truth! It is the tone that God has raised, and that every heart in heaven responds to. The chord God strikes Himself; heaven echoes it; and so must every heart down here that is tuned by grace. What discord, then, must self-righteousness produce! Jesus tells forth the joy and grace of God in thus acting, and puts this in contrast with the feelings of the elder brother—any self-righteous person—though the description be of the Jews.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 110

The Lost One Sought, Found, and Blessed: Part 2

Luke 15

It is this note that is sounded from heaven in love, that we read in the heart of Christ down here; and oh, how sweet! In one sense it is more sweet to have it here than up there. It is down here that this love of God (and it must be, if man is to be reached) is astonishing.; it is natural in heaven. It is here, on earth, amongst us, tint God has manifested what He is; — that He has delight in saving lost sinners; and angels desire to look into it.

The shepherd puts the sheep upon his shoulders, and he brings it home rejoicing— “Am I not right to seek lost sinners Is it not a meet thing for God to come among publicans and sinners?” This may not suit a moral man, but it suits God; it is His privilege to come amidst sin—to come near to ruined sinners—because He can deliver out of it. The shepherd has the sheep upon his shoulders and rejoices; he charges himself with it; he takes the whole toil of it. It was his own interest to do it, because he valued the sheep; it was his, and he brings it home. Thus he presents the shepherd to us. And thus it is with “the Great Shepherd of the sheep.” He presents it as His interest to “seek and to save that which is lost.” He even makes it His interest in the sense of love; and He does bring the sheep home rejoicing. There is the strength and power of salvation. But how does He set about it? We tell people sometimes to seek Christ. Well, in one sense that is right; for it is quite true that “he that seeketh findeth;” but He never said, “Come unto me,” until He had first come to them—come “to seek and to save that which was lost.” He did not say it from heaven, for the sinner could not go there; but, because the poor sinner could not go to heaven to seek Christ, Christ came to the earth to seek him. He does not say to the poor leper, Come up to heaven; but He comes Himself down here, and says, “Be thou clean.” Had any other laid his hand upon the leper, it would have made him as unclean as himself; but Christ could touch the power of evil in the leper, and receive no contamination but dispel it. He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor..... and I will give you rest.” It is not to be found here, any more than it was for Noah's dove amidst the deluge. I have tried the world all through, and it is a sea of evil without a shore: come to Me, and you will find rest. Who but Jesus could have said this?

Then there is another thing in the second parable—the painstaking of this love in seeking that which was lost. It is not a sheep, but money in a house. Everything is done to get the money. The woman lights the candle, she sweeps the house; she could not stop in the task of love—diligent active love—until the piece was found. It was her affair and interest again. And then we have the joy when her possession is recovered. She gives the tone to those around her: others are called in to have communion with it— “Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.” And this is the way of the Lord.

Thus then we have the same great principle in this parable as in the former. There is the patient activity of love until the result is produced. In the two I see this common principle—it was the joy of the woman, as of the shepherd. The first great thing was the energetic power and activity of this grace, as well as the good will. There was entire inactivity in the sheep and in the money. The

shepherd and the woman alike did all.

It is true, at the same time, that there is a most important work—an effect produced in the heart of the one who has gone astray and is brought back again; and therefore we have the third parable, which she ws the feelings of the wanderer and the manner of his reception. In a word we have not only the manner of the workings within, but also the manifestation of the father's heart. It is not the estimate of love in the one brought back that gives the answer to all his thoughts, but the manifestation of the father's own heart. There is this one simple fact—the father is on his neck kissing him! and this tells him what that heart is.

Here the Lord takes up a case, meeting the objections of the Pharisees to His receiving publicans and sinners. He says, as it were, I will take the case of a man brought into the degradation of feeding with swine (we must remember what swine were to the Jews); I will suppose him to be as bad, as worthless as you like; and then I will show you what grace is—what God is. But remark, whether we are living in vice or not, we have all turned our back on God. The young man was as great a sinner when he stepped rich across his father's threshold, as when feeding with the swine in the far country; he had chosen to act independently of God, and this is sin. He reaped the fruits no doubt, but this is not the question. In one sense the consequences of his sin were mercies, because they showed him what his sin was.

But man makes a distinction between sinners. So the Lord puts a case, where the sinner is gone even in man's judgment to the fullest degree of evil, showing that it does not outreach the grace of God—a case which wonderfully exhibits the truth, that, if sin abounds, grace does much more abound. This young man goes forth (verse 13) to do his own will; and this is the secret of all our sins. Our child sins against us, and we feel it. We sin against God and do not feel it. We are all of us big children.

“And there he wasted his substance in riotous living.” Any person who lives beyond his means looks rich; so does the sinner, wasting his soul, seem happy.

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land: and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.” There is no giving in the “far country.” Satan sells all, and dear: our souls are the price.

If you sell yourself to the devil, you will get husks: he will never give you anything. Would you find a giver, you must come to God. Hearts are not easy in the world: leave a man for a few hours to himself, and he will soon be in want. “He began to be in want;” but his will was not touched yet. There are very few hearts that have arrived at a certain time of life, without beginning “to be in want.” They go to seek in pleasure or in vice something to satisfy them. The last thing the world thinks of is God; and then only when they are convinced that nothing else will do. They never think of the Father's house, for they know it not. If indeed they think of God, it is in judgment, not in grace. So it was with the prodigal.

“When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy

son; make me as one of thy hired servants." He had not yet understood how he would be received, yet he did understand that there was love in that house: the very hired servants had bread enough and to spare. And he did understand, too, that he was not only hungry but perishing with hunger. All was happiness there; the very servants were happy. And it was all over with him where he was; the need of his condition, all, told him he must get back— "I will arise," &c.

Every soul that returns to God is thus brought to the conviction of goodness in God.

I see the same thing in Peter. He goes and falls at the feet of Jesus, and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." What an inconsistency! at the feet of Jesus, and yet telling him to go away! And there is ever this apparent inconsistency where there is a work on the conscience and the affections. God becomes necessary to us, and yet conscience says, "I am too sinful." Peter felt his worthlessness—that Jesus was too holy, too righteous, to be with such a one as he: and yet he could not help going to Him.

Well, the prodigal goes back, and says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He did not understand what his father was—what a father's heart was. He was glad to be in the father's house, but still "make me as one of thy hired servants" was his thought. He measured the father's love in some little degree by the sense of what he had been, and the evil in which he had been; he thought to get into the place of a servant. Now there are a multitude of hearts in this state—lowering down the standard of what the father must do, to some sort of adaptedness to their fitness—(I am not speaking of positive self-righteousness). They have still the remains of legalism, and would take the place of a servant in the house— "make me as one of thy hired servants." But this will not do for the father, if it would do for the son: it would be constant misery to the father's heart to have a son in the house as a servant; neither would it be testimony to the servants in the house as to the father's love. The Father cannot have sons in the house as servants; and if His boundless grace brings them, He must show the manner of the reception to be worthy of a Father's love. The prodigal was not yet brought to thorough humbleness—to feel it must be grace or nothing.

The father does not even give him time to say, "make me as one of thy hired servants!" He lets him say, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" but no more, for he is on his neck kissing him. How can he say, "Make me a hired servant," when the father is on his neck, producing the consciousness that he was a son? The prodigal's judgment about the father must now be drawn from what the father actually is to him, and not from any abstract reasonings about it. The one was a father, if the other was a son. And in this way we truly receive the gospel of the grace of God. It is not the working of manic mind as to what I am before God, but the revelation by the Holy Ghost of what the Father is to me; and, if He is a Father, I am a son.

I dwell on this, because I know there are so many souls who fail to show that they received the Spirit of adoption, neither knowing what they are as sons in the house of the Father, nor finding their rest in that of the Father.

See again the manner of the reception of the prodigal here. His mind now renewed, he says, "I will arise," &c. But before he has time to reach the father's house and say all this— "while he was yet a great way off," —we read, the father sees him, and has compassion on him. The son's path is now

lost in the father's love: the father rims to meet him, falls on his neck and kisses him. There is nothing in the son but confession of unworthiness. Once received, we are left, as it were, to discover what were his thoughts and feelings from our knowledge of what the father is.

So—entirely—is the estimate of salvation: we are left to discover what we are in the love of the Father. The father is on his neck, while all the rags of the far country are on his SOIL. The father does not stop to ask him anything: he knows he has acted very wrongly; he could see this very well. It is no question of fitness in the son: the father is acting for himself—worthily of himself as a father. He is on his neck, because the father loves to be there.

But there is another thing. The servants are called out to introduce him into the house fittingly, to make merry and be glad. It is the knowledge of the father's love that makes me feel what I am. But if I know my sins are forgiven, and the Father is on my neck kissing me, then the more I know of my sins while I know the Father's love, the happier I am. Suppose a merchant having liabilities which he knows himself unable to meet; he would be afraid to look through his books. But if the debt was discharged, and he had the certainty of an immense fund of riches after all was paid—if some friend had done it all—he would no longer be afraid to look at them. The discovery of the extent of his obligation would only enhance the sense of his friend's love. If, instead of £1,000, he found his debt had been £10,000, he would say, “Why, this is better than I thought;” and if on looking farther, he found the amount £100,000— “Well, there never was a friend like this friend of mine!”

Grace has put all away; and the whole effect of the discovery of sin, when we know forgiveness, is but to enhance the love and heighten the joy. If the Father is kissing me, the very consciousness that He is doing it while I am in my rags, proves what a forgiveness it is. There is not another in the whole world who would not have thought of my rags, before he was on my neck.

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it,” &c. God shows His love towards us as wretched sinners, but then clothes us with Christ. He brings us into the house where the servants are with nothing less than all the honor He can put upon us. His love welcomes us while in our rags, but here the same love acts in another way. He introduces us into the house, as He would have us be there, with His mind expressed about the value of a son. We read here the description of the fatted calf, the best robe, the ring, and the feast. The Father's mind was that a son of His was worth that robe, &c.; and that it was worthy of Him to give it. How little worthy would it have been of a father, acting in grace, to keep him as a servant in the house! There are, perhaps, some who would think it humility to be a servant in the house. Now it is not; it is only ignorance of the Father's mind.

I read, “that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” For, if you begin at that end—the Father's mind and grace, would it have been worthy of Him to put us in the house with a constant memorial of our sin and shame, of our former dishonor and degradation? If there was any, sense of shame—the merest trace of the far country, would it have been worthy of the Father? No! “The worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins.” The condition that finds its place in God's house must be worthy of God. Perhaps our wretched unbelieving hearts may say, “Ah, that will be quite true when there—when really in the Father's house.” Let me ask what faith is. Faith judges as God judges. I see sin in the

light of God's holiness, I judge it most truly when I see its opposition to Him, and the dishonor it puts on Him. I learn grace, too, in the heart of my father. He that believes sets to his seal that God is true. Faith is the only thing that gives certainty; reasoning does not. Reasoning may be all quite well for the things of this world; but, if God speaks about anything, faith receives it; faith sets to its seal, not that it may be perhaps, but that God is true. Now, having this, I am as sure that it is true, as if I was now in heaven.

Just so of old, Abraham believed God—not in God (though this is also true), but God; he believed that what God said was true. And this is what we ought to do; the first point is to believe God. What does He tell me if I am a believer in His Son? That my sins and iniquities are remembered no more; and I believe it. And I believe that I have eternal life: it is sin to doubt it. If I do not believe what He assures me of, I wrong God. It is a sin not to believe myself a son—that I am in God's presence without a spot of sin through the blood of the Lamb. Faith believes this. If it were only my own righteousness, it must be torn to shreds; but it is the blood of the Lamb: and what has this done? Cleansed half my sins? The question is, What is God's estimate of His blood? Do you think that God limits the efficacy of the blood of Jesus? No! He says, it “cleanseth from all sin.” If we go on to see farther, it is— “who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Is it some of my sins? It is my sins. If my soul knows, on the one hand, the value to God of the blood of the Lamb, T know, on the other hand, that it all results from the love of the Father. It would be an evil thing to doubt this love, as it would have been an evil thing in the prodigal (when the father was kissing him) to say, I have the rags of the far country upon me. Did he then think of his rags as a reason why there should not be that expression of the love which was in the heart of his father? Then, when I see the character Christ gives me of what God is towards me as a sinner (and He was forced to do this by the self-righteousness of the Pharisees), the doubts of man's heart are silenced before such grace.

Is there one here who would say, Divine grace sanctioned sin? Let him read his judgment in the spirit of the elder brother here. Yet let even such a one see how grace speaks to him: “the father went out and entreated him” —this wretched one—not merely a poor prodigal, but the wretched man who shared not in the general joy. The servants were glad; they say, “thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed for him the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.” All catch the tone but one: and who was he? The man who thought of self and self-righteousness! “therefore came his father out and entreated him.”

Take care of this, lest your hearts be turning to sourness the love and grace that God shows to a fellow sinner. “He would not go in.” The father reasons with him— “it was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found.” But he remained without, and had none of the happiness and none of the joy, but manifested opposition of heart to the riches of the father's grace.

Do you know God thus? You would know yourselves too? Be it so: it is indeed well; but do not roll God's heart in question because of that. How can I know God's heart? Is it by looking into my own heart? No, but by learning it in the gift of His Son. The God we have to do with is the God who has given His Son for sinners; and, if we do not know this, we do not know Him at all. Do not be saying to God “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” Service must result from the knowledge of Himself. Do not be putting the estimate of your own heart as God's goodness. Our hearts have

such a tendency to turn back to legalism, and to think it humility. The only real humbleness and strength and blessing is to forget self in the presence and blessedness of God. We may be brought thither by a humbling process but it is not in merely thinking evil of self, that we are truly humble: we have the privilege of forgetting ourselves in the love of God and our Father, who is love to us.

The Lord grant you through Jesus to know, as poor sinners, God thus revealed in love.

J. N. D.

Chapter 111

Made Dead to the Law

Romans 7

On this follows a full discussion of law. We are free from law, following the same great fundamental principle that we have been crucified with Christ. Now law has power over a man as long as he lives. This is illustrated by the case of marriage, and the law or bond of husband and wife, which lasts evidently as long as one lives, and can no longer; the survivor is free to be to another when one is dead. It is of all importance to the understanding of this chapter to see that the whole subject treated is the bearing of the law—the connection of a soul with it. First, the doctrine on the subject and the distinction of a soul being under law, or connected in life with a risen Christ; and then the experience of a soul quickened and renewed in its desires and delights, but not knowing deliverance by the knowledge that it has died with Christ, and is now connected with another—Christ raised from the dead. The description of the deliverance follows, and the condition of the delivered soul in chapter 8.

Law has power over a man as long as he lives—and cannot have it longer; the person to whom it applies exists no longer. If one to be punished for crime dies, law can no longer reach him. We have seen, in chapter vi., that the fact of not being under law does not cause to live in sin; but that, being under law, one has no power to resist sin. Law requires, but it does not free from the dominion of sin. But we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ. Had the law reached ourselves, it would have been death, but it would have been condemnation also. But we are delivered, being made dead to the law, by the body of Christ. The figure is changed. Death puts an end to the bond, but it is we who die; yet not actually we, but Christ effectually for us; and now we are united to Him who is raised, that, the power of life being there, we should bring forth, fruit—not merely be dead to sin—unto God.

Having thus died as Adam's children, in that Christ has died, we are no longer in the flesh, in that nature or place and standing before God. We do not stand as Adam's children before God at all. We have died to such. We say therefore, “when we were in the flesh” —a thing we could not say if still in it; when we were, the motions of sin which were by the law wrought to bring forth fruit unto death. The prohibition of a will or lust, though right, does but provoke; it makes you think of the object, and does not take away the lust; it does not change the nature. Were I to say to a lover of money— “You must not desire that gold,” it would only awaken the desire. Do I resist a willful child? He only pushes the harder against the obstacle opposed to him The motions of sin are by the law—a poor way of holiness or righteousness. They wrought in us to produce actual sin unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held. The life in which we were connected with it is ended; the bond which attached to that life exists no more, ending with the life it subsisted in. The law addressed itself to the child of Adam, and required from him what was according to God's will. Man was in sin, not subject to the law of God; nor could his sinful flesh be so, or it would not have been sinful flesh. The law only stirred up that flesh in its will and lusts, but now in Christ we have died; the bond with the law is broken in our death with Christ,

and we are connected with Christ risen, serving in the newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter; bound to a husband—not however the law, but Christ. We could not have both together.

This is the great point here. Chapter 6 laid the groundwork of doctrine and truth, namely, that our old man is crucified with Christ. We are for faith dead. Chapter 7 takes up the effect of this on the connection of the child of Adam with law. Death has dissolved the bond, and we are to another—to Christ risen, now to bring forth fruit to God, for we are alive unto Him. The whole point of the passage is, that we cannot have the law and Christ together—the two husbands at once. It is impossible. But our deliverance from the law is by having died to sin. Christ risen is now our life and husband, where there is power to bring forth fruit to God, which the sinful flesh never could do. The contrast of Christianity with law is not only for justifying, but for life, obedience, and fruit-bearing. Under law we are under the dominion (not guilt merely) of sin; in Christ we are made free, and able to bring forth fruit to God.

But this is not all. The law has its use, namely, in bringing out the consciousness of what we are—of our state. Was it the fault of the law, this dominion of sin, while we were under it? Nay, it was the fault of the sin and lust, which the law condemned. “But that,” says the apostle, “I had not known, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust.” If he had murdered, he would have known the fact; his natural conscience would have taken cognizance of it. But we are not treating of sins now (as before observed), but of sin. I had not known this, unless the law had dealt with its first movements as evil. Many have committed no crimes—have neither murdered, stolen, nor committed adultery; but who has never lusted? It would be to say, I am not a child of Adam at all. And, note here, we are not speaking of guilt by acts, but of state; not of judgment, nor of forgiveness, but of deliverance, of setting free. And, note further here, how great the error is of those who hold lust not to be sin if not consented to. The object here is to detect the evil nature by its first motion—lust. Not, indeed, what we have done, but what we are; and the sinfulness of flesh is detected by that first movement, which is lust will in evil. It proves, by its sinfulness, the sinful source in me. I know that in me dwells no good. Important though humbling discovery! Not, I repeat, what I have done, but what I am; but how important that! What simple folly the thought to make the child of Adam good, unless he be born again!

God's way is, not to improve the wilding, but to cut it down and graft it. Then when we are grafted with Christ, the fruit of that life is to be brought forth. Law does not condemn the nature nor consequently treat the man as lost. Law supposes it is yet to be proved and tried, but forbids what is its only first movement—lust. Law thus gives the knowledge of what it is. The true force of the word translated “nay,” in verse 7, is “but.” And note, it is sin, not sins; for he would not, as natural men do not, have judged and taken cognizance of lust in himself as evil and sin, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust. The law was thus a means, not of righteousness, but of the knowledge of sin. By it, moreover, sin deceived and killed us. It took its occasion, or point of attack, from the law. Thus did Satan come when Adam was innocent. Now sin takes the prohibition to provoke the will and suggest the lust; for, till the law came in and forbad it, the conscience took no cognizance of lust.

We must remember he is not treating of sins, but of sin. This was provoked and stimulated by the commandment; without it sin was dead. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and guilt and death came upon my conscience. Otherwise there was no sentence of death in the

conscience by sin. Sins would be judged in the day of judgment, bringing condemnation; but a sinful nature, as such, does not give a bad conscience. We remain alive, untested, unawakened. I was a living child of Adam, unconscious of sin, as we see hundreds; but when the law of God forbad lust, the conscience was affected, and I died under its judgment. What had said, Do this and live, and was thus ordained for life, I experimentally found to be to death. I took up the law, thinking I had power to be good and righteous by it: sin profited by it thus to deceive me and bring me into death by the commandment. Still it was to profit. Sin became by the commandment exceedingly sinful. It was there, and I unconscious of it as fatal evil in my flesh (we are not speaking of committed sins); but it appeared as sin when the law came, and it became exceeding sinful. It appeared in its true nature of sin, and took the characteristic, moreover, of opposition to, and transgression of, the holy, just, and good will of God.

But another element comes in here—the spiritual judgment which can thus estimate all this— “We know.” This is a technical expression for knowledge belonging to the Christian as such. (1 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 5:1; 1 John 3:2; 5:13; and other places.) We know the spirituality of the law; not applying it to crimes merely, but to the inward man. But if I look at myself as a child of Adam, I am carried a captive to sin, sold under it. I say, a child of Adam; for the apostle says, “in me, that is, in my flesh.” He is looking at the man as standing on that ground with Christian knowledge as to it, but as married to the first husband—the law: “When we were in the flesh.” It is Christian intelligence applied to the judgment of the state of (not an unrenewed person in mind and desire, but) one under the law. Hence the law only is mentioned, not Christ or the Spirit, till the cry for deliverance from that state come. It is not a question whether the flesh is in us; but “when we were in the flesh,” the motions of sin there, we being met in that state by the requirements of law in our conscience, not as redeemed and dead with Christ, delivered and having the power of life in Him, consciously in that state.

Three immensely important lessons are learned, under divine teaching, in the conflict connected with this state. First, in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. This is not the guilt of having sinned, but the knowledge of what we are, that is, as flesh. Next, I learn that it is not I; for, being renewed, I hate it—would it not at any time: the true “I” hates this. It is then sin in me, not I—a very important lesson to learn. Thirdly, if it is not I, it is too strong for me. To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I know not.

But it is well to enter into this a little more in detail. It is not really any individual person, but the judgment of a nature; but a nature which (till I know redemption, and that I have died to sin in Christ, and am in Him) constitutes myself for the conscience. It is to be remarked that the will is supposed always right, and good never to be done. This is not the Christian state. We can do all things through Him that strengthens us.

Further, the man here is a slave: in chapter 8:2 he is set free. In verse 5 we are supposed to be in the flesh; in chapter 8:9 we are not in the flesh, if the Spirit of God dwells in us. If a man be not dead with Christ, he is fully in the flesh. If he do not know it, the conscience and mind are on that ground with God. What he is, not what Christ is, is the ground on which he judges of his state before God. As to his conscious standing, he is in the flesh; and it is the process of deliverance from this by the thorough humiliation of self-knowledge that is here described. The operation of the law is what is contemplated; grace working in the man, but he, as to his mind and conscience,

under law undelivered. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Grace has given him to see that the law is spiritual. It is not sins, but sin, which is in question. Conscience has by grace recognized that the law is good, yea, the spirit consents to it; more than that, he delights in it after the inner man. He is a renewed man.

We have first, then, the state of the man. Light from God has come in. The law is spiritual for him; but he is carnal, a slave to (sold under) sin; for he sees himself in flesh still alive—in that life of a child of Adam in which the law asserts its claim. “I am (that is, consciousness, individually) carnal,” “sold under sin.” That is, you have a man looking at himself as in flesh, and knowing that the law is spiritual, perceiving it by divine teaching.

We have then, further (this being the state of the person's soul), two points in respect to the law—nothing, mark, in respect of Christ and the Spirit. He is not there yet, but on the way, getting, while taught of God, knowledge of sin (that is, of himself under law). In the first case he is doing evil, but would not; he does what he hates. He does wrong, but would not. He consents to the law that it is good. His conscience and mind accept it as right—coincide with it, but he does the contrary; but thus under grace, by this very word, he is taught that it is not he does it, but sin that dwells in him. He has a new man, a new life, in which, thus taught, he can treat sin as a stranger, though dwelling in him—as not himself. And now he has experimentally learned, not mere doctrine, even though taught of God, as to something outside himself— “we know” —but something about himself, and a great lesson too: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” The flesh is a judged nature, a great point of progress. And now the second point in the renewed man comes out—the positive will to do good. He delights in the law of God in the inner man—not merely consents, having it as his own approved rule in conscience, but he would do good; but evil is there—he cannot perform it. Power is wholly wanting: the law gives none. There is a law in his members, a constantly operating power of evil which brings him into captivity, though now against his will.

Poor wretched man! But (immense advantage) he knows it; he knows himself. Desires and efforts to do right have resulted in this—in the knowledge of himself and his real state: in him, that is, in his flesh, there is no good thing. But it is not (now he is quickened of God) himself at all. But this makes out no righteousness for him, no deliverance from the power of sin; he is still under it, being under law. It is an immense lesson to learn, that we have no power (like the poor man at the pool of Bethesda—the disease of which he had to be healed had taken away, even if he willed, the strength through which he could get healed). Thus taught, the man ceases to look to being better, or to doing; he has learned what he is, and looks for a Deliverer. The moment God has brought him there, all is clear. He thanks God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But though the subject treated be the experience of the soul under the law when its spirituality is known through grace, the thing learned is not what the law is, but what sin is—what we are. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Hence though the process be carried on under law, by which through the secret working of grace that knowledge is acquired, yet the thing we have learned to know—what sin in the flesh is—is always true.

Hence, although (as we have said) it is the description of a soul under law, yet it is in a way in which the lesson remains for the Christian at all times. Not that he is ever under the law, or in the flesh—he never is: he has died as connected with the first husband, and for faith the flesh is dead,

and he is delivered; but the lesson he has learned remains always true. In him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. And it is experimentally known. The flesh may deceive him if he is careless, and he forget to bear about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus; but it can no longer deceive him as to what it is itself. He may have left a door open in his house to an unfaithful servant, but he does not now take him for a trustworthy or unsuspected one. And the difference is immense. The power of flesh is broken.

And, further, he has no thought of being in the flesh before God. The Galatians shows his position. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, that ye may not do the things that ye would.” “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” You are not in Rom. 7, though the evil flesh be there. You are free with the liberty wherewith. Christ has set you free. Be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Hence, too, after the deliverance is spoken of here, the abiding fact of the two natures is affirmed, though going on farther than the law, the subject before us. “So, then, I myself with the mind serve the law of God; with the flesh, the law of sin.”

There is such a tendency in us to be occupied with ourselves, and really to set up self in God's place, that He uses these exercises to make us thoroughly glad to have done with ourselves. Thus we put ourselves under law, though born of God, which only leads us to cry out, “O wretched man that I am!” for it is only man And his efforts after good, not Christ. We have to learn that we are powerless, after owning and hating our wickedness, and thus we are compelled to cry out, “Who shall deliver me?”

Now one looks for another to deliver him. It is not that self gets better, but a deliverance from self we need, and God gives it. This may be soon, or not for a long time, according to circumstances but, when one is thus brought to his true level, God, in grace comes in, and bring out thanksgiving, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Power follows when we find that we have none in ourselves, not by our gaining the victory over self. Powerlessness is learned experimentally, which leads to our having done with ourselves and looking to Christ for deliverance. And we find that by grace we are in Christ, where there is no condemnation. On the one hand the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has freed us; on the other God has already executed sentence of condemnation on sin in the flesh in the crops of Christ. We are delivered to walk according to the Spirit. J. N. D.

Chapter 112

The Manner of the Love of Jesus

Matthew 9; Mark 2; Luke 5

God was showing His rich and various mercy in the old times; but this was done after a peculiar manner. He forgave sin, He healed disease, He fed His people. But all this was done after a peculiar manner. There was a certain distance and reserve, as it were, a remaining still in His own sanctuary—still in the heavens, though He was thus gracious. He met the need of a sinner; but He was in the temple, withdrawn to the holiest place, and the sinner had to come through a consecrated path to get the virtue of the mercy-seat. He met the need of His camp in the desert; but it was by remaining still in heaven, and sending from thence the angels' food, the mighty's meat, and giving them water, after His mystic rod had opened the rock. He met the disease of a pool leper; but it was after such a leper had been separated outside the camp, every eye and hand—all interference and inspection of man—withdrawn and removed. There He was God, acting in His own due love and power; but there was a style in the action that bespoke distance from the object of His love and goodness. Whether He pardoned, fed, or healed, this manner was preserved.

The Lord Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, is seen doing the same works of divine love and power. He pardons, feeds, and heals; and He does so in full assertion of His divine right or glory, thinking it no robbery—to be equal with God. But there is altogether another style in those same actions when in His hand. The reserve, the distance, is gone. It is God we see, not withdrawn into the holiest, but abroad in the prisons, the hospitals, and the poorhouses, of this ruined world. He pardons; but He stands beside the sinner to do this, saying, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or Neither do I condemn thee. He feeds; but He is at the very table with the fed. He heals; but He puts forth His hands in the crowd on as many as were diseased, or stands at their sick beds. He thus comes down to the needy ones—with pardon, food, and healing. He goes among them, letting them know and see that He is supplied with various virtue to be used by them without reserve. And there is in this a glory that excelleth; so that the former has no glory by reason of it.

How should, we bless Him for this display of Himself! It is the same God of love and power in both; but He has increased in the brightness of His manifestations.

The religious rulers found this way of Jesus to interfere with them. Their interest was to keep God and the people separate; for then they had hopes of being used themselves. Thus they were angry when the Lord said to the man, Thy sins be forgiven thee. It was a great interference with them. It trespassed on their places. “Who can forgive sins but God only?” —and God was in heaven. The Son of man forgiving sins on earth was a sad disturbance of that by which they lived in credit and plenty in the world. But whether they received it or not, this was the way of the Son on earth. He dwelt with our necessities in such wise as encouraged the happy, near, and confident approach of all needy ones to Him. He did all to show that He was a cheerful giver—nay more—that He gave Himself with His gift. For with His own hand, we have seen, He brought the blessing home to every man's door.

It was therefore only the happy confidence of faith which fully met and refreshed His spirit—that faith which knew the title of a needy one to come right up to Him, the faith of a Bartimaeus which was not to be silenced by the mistaken scrupulousness even of disciples. And little children are to be in His arms, though the same mistake would forbid them.

This was His mind: He came into the world to be used by sick and needy sinners; and the faith that understood and used Him accordingly was its due answer. Such answers we see recorded by the Evangelists here in the action of the faithful little band, who, breaking up the roof, let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay “into the midst before Jesus.” There was no ceremoniousness in this, nothing of the ancient reserve of the temple, no waiting for introduction. This little company felt their necessity, knew the virtues of the Son of God, and believed that these suited each other—nay, that the Lord carried the one, because necessitous sinners were bearing the other. It was a strong expression of faith, and I believe the strength of it was according to the mind of Jesus; so that, on seeing their faith, as we read, without further to do or more words, His heart and the grace that it carried uttered itself in an expression as full and strong: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Here was sympathy. Jesus was rending all veils between God and sinners; and so was the faith of this happy little company. His blood was soon to rend from top to bottom the veil of the temple, which kept God from poor sinners; and now their faith was rending that which kept them from Jesus. This surely was meeting and entertaining the Son of God in character; and His spirit deeply owns it: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Happy faith which can thus break down partition walls! O this faith which takes knowledge of Jesus, the Savior of the world, as the mighty render of all veils! “Join thou, my soul, for thou canst tell” &c. In the lively happy impression of this truth through the Spirit the soul tastes something of heaven. What blessedness to know that this is the way of God our Savior! Grace and glory are both brought to us: we have not to ascend to heaven to seek them there, nor descend to the depths to search after them there. “Behold I come: and my reward is with me,” will Jesus say when He brings the glory; as we have already seen Him with His grace standing at the door, or by the bedside, or in the crowd of needy sinners.

This is of God indeed. It is only divine love that can account for it. But the rulers did not like it. Their interest and credit in the world would keep the forgiveness of sins still in the hand of Him who was in heaven; for then, as the consecrated path, they hoped and judged that they themselves would still be used.

And so it is to this day. Forgiveness is brought near and sure to the soul—the word of faith to the heart and to the mouth. This shortens the path; but it does not suit those who transact (as themselves and others judge) the interests of the soul.

Nothing appears more simple than all this on the principles of nature. The Pharisees, in the Lord's time, represented it. They were the religious rulers; and the more God was kept in the distance, reserve being thus maintained between Him and the people, the more they were likely to be venerated, used, and enriched. Jesus, God in flesh, the Son of man forgiving sins on the earth, was a sad trespasser on their place and plan of action. How, alas! is this principle still alive, still dominant, and the “people love to have it so;” it suits the religiousness of man's nature too well to

be lightly refused. The simplicity that is in Christ is sadly thus “corrupted;” and our souls, beloved, should be grieved, deeply grieved, because of it.

But we may also say that much occasion, in our day, has been given for this principle to live and act as vigorously as it seems to be doing. For there has not been the meeting of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, this pardoning, feeding, healing, love and power of Him who has come down to walk amid our ruins, in the spirit which alone was clue to it. There has been the assertion of grace, and the denial that God in this dispensation is to be sought for as at a distance, under the hiding of ceremonies or within the cloisters of temples. There has been the producing of the blessed Savior, and giving Him to walk abroad among our necessities according to the place He has Himself taken in the Gospels. There has been the presenting of the marvelous condescending grace of the dispensation; but those who have asserted it have not carried themselves towards it, and in the presence of it, with that reverence, that holiness of confidence, which alone became them. And this has given man's religiousness (which would keep God still in heaven) occasion to revive, and be listened to, and learned again.

But is this religiousness the due corrective of abused grace? Is this the divine remedy?—is this God's way of rectifying evil?—or is it not simple human reaction? Many are doing what they can to withdraw the Lord to that place which He has most advisedly and forever abandoned. They are making Him appear to build again the things which He had destroyed. They are putting Him back into the holiest place, there to be sought unto by, the old aisles and vistas of the “worldly sanctuary” —to cover Him with veils and cast up the long consecrated path by which of old the sinner came to Him. It were well to be righteously angry at Jesus and His grace being treated with so indelicate and untender a hand; but these correct the error by a worse. While they would protect the holiness of Christ, they obscure His grace. They are seeking to do a service for Him that grieves Him the most deeply. They are teaching man that He is an austere Master; they withdraw Him to the place where it is felt to be a fearful thing to plant one's foot.

Indeed this is a service He did not ask for. “Who hath required this at your hands,” is, I am assured in my son], the voice of the Son of God to those who withdraw Him from the nearest and most assured approach of the poor sinner. They have been doing what they could to change HIS place and attitudes, instead of MAN'S. Correction was needed surely. It is ever needed. Man will be spoiling or abusing everything. There has been an intellectual arrogance and carnal freedom with Christ and His truth, which may well have grieved the righteous. But it was man that ought to have been challenged to change his place and bearing, and not the Lord. He has not repented of having come on earth to forgive sins, of having visited the poor Samaritan at the well or Levi or Zacchaeus in their houses, or Peter's wife's mother on her bed of sickness. He is still the same Lord, and He purposes to be so. He has not retired within the veil again, nor bound up that which was rent from top to bottom. He has not built again that which He had destroyed. It is not a worldly sanctuary that He fills and furnishes again, nor ceremonies and observances, and rites and practices, under which He is again concealing Himself. He has descended front heaven to earth; He is abroad among men, in the ministry of His precious gospel and by His Spirit, beseeching sinners to be reconciled.

What then alas! is the character of that effort that would force Him back to the thick darkness? (2 Chron 6:43). It is an attempt made in the strength and with the subtlety of the devil upon the Son of

God, as of old. It is a taking Him, as it were, to the pinnacle of the temple, to some withdrawn and proud elevation, where the multitude may gaze at Him. But His purpose is, blessed be His name, to stand in the midst of them, that they may use Him.

We should change our place; that is equally true. We should learn to pass and repass with the unshod foot before this gracious, blessed, Son of man. It is for us to change our attitude, and not to seek to make Him change His.

We have still to see Him in all the grace of this dispensation; we have to read “the gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1), as they read it of old who knew and felt that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. But we have to read all this more in their spirit also. We are to wonder at the strange sight, as they did—to tell Jesus, with the centurion, that we are not worthy that He should come under our roof, while we still use His immediate presence and grace—to stand before Him like Zacchaeus, and call Him “Lord,” though, like Him, receiving Him to our house; and to follow Him in the way with adoring thankful gaze, though having refused, as Bartimaeus, to be put at a distance by the vain religious scruples of even His own disciples.

Ah! this is what should have been done. This would have been the divine corrective of the mischief that has come in. But this was not so easy; for this would have been spiritual: the thing that has been done is carnal. Elements of the world are revived and multiplied. Jesus has been forced back at a distance from the sinner. He has been put into the thick darkness,” under cover of fleshly observances and rites, and at the end of a long path through the aisles of a sanctuary, where He waits to receive the homage of a fearing and bondaged people. This is the place and attitude which many teachers (who are daily rising in the esteem of the people) make the blessed Savior to fill and take.

The Lord Jesus is kept at a distance; religious observances are brought near; and the people (for they have ever been so minded) like the feelings that come from all that which is acted before them. Their eye and ear are engaged, a certain sacred sense of God is awakened; but the precious immediate confidence of the heart and conscience is refused. Ah! shall any one who loves the Lord thus sink down again into wan, when the Spirit would have him up with Christ?

“O foolish Galatians; who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?... Are ye so foolish? Raving begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?.... Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” (Gal. 3, 4)

Thus speaks the aggrieved Spirit in the apostle over those who once had been eminently his joy but were now his sorrow, because they were turning again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto) they were desiring again to be in bondage. Indeed they were deserting faith for religiousness, “the simplicity that is in Christ” and in which the “virgin” or “uncorrupted “mind ever walks, for the ceremonies and observances of “a worldly sanctuary.”

But religiousness is neither faith nor righteousness. With the Pharisees it was adopted as a relief for a bad conscience, or a cover for evil; in them it was, therefore, opposed to faith. The Galatians cannot properly be said to have been Pharisees, it is true; but the Spirit of God had a serious question with both.

And I may just further observe, that in our passages (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:2; Luke 5:24) the Lord seeks to lead man away from His own reasonings and calculations to Himself and His works. He perceived that the Scribes were “reasoning among themselves,” and then proposed to them what He was doing— “that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.”

How simple, how precious! And on this hangs the grand distinction between faith and religiousness of which I have just been speaking. Religiousness, or man's religion, gives the soul many a serious thought about itself, and many a devout thought about God. But faith, or God's religion, gives the soul Jesus, and the works and words of Jesus.

And yet it is faith, and faith only, secures the end which is valued of God. Faith “worketh by love “; faith “overcometh the world;” faith “purifies the heart.” By faith “the elders obtained a good report.” Religiousness does not this. It ever “works” by fear, not by love. It does not “overcome the world,” but oftentimes takes it within to some recess or hiding place. It does not “purify the heart” by giving it an object to detach it from self, but keeps self in a religious attire ever before it, and leaves the conscience unpurged. And in God's record it gets no “good report.” From the beginning to the end of that record, it is the people of religion, the devout observers of carnal ceremonies, those who would not “defile themselves” with a judgment-hall, that have stood most cruel in the resistance of the truth. But it is the men of faith, the lovers of the truth, the poor broken-hearted believers who have found their relief in Jesus “forgiving sins,” who have stood and labored and conquered.; and they have their happy memorial with Him and in the records of Him whom they trusted, in whom by faith they found eternal life and their sure and full salvation.

J. G. B.

Chapter 113

Man's Sin and God's Grace

Man was tried without law, and the flood had to come in; he was tried under the law and broke it; he was tried by the patient goodness that sent the prophets till there was no remedy. At length God said, I have yet My Son, My well beloved: it may be they will reverence My Son. But when they saw Him, they said, This is the heir: come, let us kill him; and the inheritance shall be ours Man has both seen and hated both Him and His Father. Then the Lord pronounced the sentence, “Now is the judgment of this world.” Except death were gone through, the “corn of wheat” remained alone. God's wrath was revealed from heaven; but that work was wrought which cleanses the believer for God according to His own perfectness in light, and man in Christ took his place in heaven according to God's righteousness. If flesh's mind was enmity against God, the veil was rent and heaven opened. The answer to the spear (which made sure that the Son of God come in love was got rid of from the earth) was the water and the blood, which cleanses and expiates every believer coming to God by Him. Love was revealed; but so was wrath from heaven. And if God so loved the world that He gave His Son, so was it equally true that the Son of man must be lifted up; or we should have perished under just wrath. Christ was God's representative to take away our sins, as He was man's when made sin for us and bearing our sins on the tree. J. N. D.

Chapter 114

Matthew 26

In Matt. 26 we see how Christ's perfect communion with His Father caused the anguish, not to break forth into complaints, but to be in secret between Him and His Father. It is very precious to see this perfect result in Christ, and at the same tune all that He felt in His heart as man, both as sensible to circumstances without and so deeply exercised within. Perfect exercises within produces perfect quietness in walk without; for in both God, is fully brought in. If we avoid the full dealing with the matter before God, the heart cannot act as if all were disposed of; and this is peace in action. Yet how precious to see the reality of Christ's human nature in all the intimate exercises of His spirit!

Chapter 115

Natural Law

Dear Mr. Editor,

In my last letter I endeavored to show the true character of Mr. Drummond's book in a religious and doctrinal point of view. My endeavor now will be to examine it more particularly in its scientific and argumentative aspect—that is, as to the author's fundamental principle, and as to the logical consistency of his argument. The very nature and structure of the book, however, prevent its being regarded in either the religious or scientific point of view quite exclusively of the other. I shall be obliged in this letter to make rather long and frequent extracts, for which I trust no apology will be necessary. I might begin by dwelling on the contradiction in terms which its title involves, but perhaps this will be best proved as the conclusion to which the following remarks tend. Even the author himself constantly distinguishes between the Natural World and the Spiritual World. The orthodox Christian holds these to be totally distinct spheres—each with its own mode of existence and system of laws; and if anywhere tangential so to speak, yet without being mutually connected by continuity of natural law.

Before beginning my quotations it may be well to make the following statement. The notion is not uncommon (though it is very erroneous), that Adam, had he not fallen, would have been taken to heaven. I say it is erroneous for two reasons: first, because Adam was created expressly as the head of this terrestrial system; and secondly, because title to heaven comes to us only through the second Man, the last Adam, and as a consequence of His meritorious work on the cross. And here is the true answer to the question sometimes asked, If man has an immortal soul, and men are liable to everlasting punishment, why did not God forewarn him of this, when He created him, and forbade him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? Now God's purpose in creating Adam was to make him head of this terrestrial system; and though God foreknows all things, this never interferes with the responsibility of the creature and with the proper course and propriety of things It was not for God, if I may say so, to presuppose that Adam would fall—at least by dilating on the consequences. He did tell Adam all that then concerned him to know; for the rest, Adam should have reflected that no consequences of disobeying God can be too serious. In itself disobedience to God must always be ruinous to the creature; to fall from his first estate is to plunge himself into moral wreck and ruin—a ruin which, unless God intervene in grace, is irreparable.

Besides, motive arising from fear alone, or from a mere calculation of consequences, in the absence of motive arising from a sense of fealty to God, and of dutiful affection towards Him—must have proved useless, and indeed would itself imply a heart estranged from God, i.e. a fallen state. What could it have profited Adam then to have told him more than God did tell him? Simply nothing. In the order of creation, man was not intended for heaven; and so no evolution, even had there been any in this world, could have brought him there. To identify evolution with redemption, and thus to make of the latter a scientific process, one not simply analogous to the evolution which, it is asserted, has taken place in the past, but by the law of continuity one which is

a continuation of it in some sort, is to evince a blindness of heart, and perversity of judgment, of which one would have thought no man with the slightest knowledge of Christianity could have been capable. Surely one who can say with the apostle, “Who loved me and gave Himself for me,” one who believes and feels the truth, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” who realizes the fact that if we are saved it is in sovereign grace on God's part, that men are not saved en masse, or as a matter of course (for we see from scripture that all will not be saved), but as individuals, and that universalism is a deceptive and destructive falsehood—such will reject this scientific Christianity with horror. The moral results of divine grace in the soul, producing conviction of sin, contrition, and repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, cannot possibly be reduced to science, and therefore can have no place in this pseudo-intellectual system.

The terra “law” being so much used in this work, what I ask is the proper definition of law? Law is rule imposed by authority. I do not, deny that the term may be used in a secondary or accommodated sense, but doubtless rule imposed by authority is its primary and strict meaning. There is no “impersonal authority” in law; the authority and the power alike are in God, or in the lawgiver. On this point I may be permitted to quote J. S. Mill, who says (infidelity being generally more honest than mere nominal or corrupted Christianity), “It is the custom wherever they can trace regularity of any kind, to call the general proposition which expresses the nature of that regularity, a law; as when in mathematics we speak of the law of decrease of the successive terms of a converging series. But the expression, law of nature, is generally employed by scientific men with a sort of tacit reference to the original sense of the word law, namely the expression of the will of a superior, the superior in this instance being the Eller of the universe.”

Natural Law is simply the operation of the will of God in any particular case of nature, as carried into effect by His own power; and the whole creation is divided into two distinct departments, viz. the natural, physical or visible, and the spiritual, immaterial and invisible; in each of which there are sub-systems of law, wheel within wheel, each department forming an harmonious system within itself, and all tending towards a moral end and object, the glory of God. Our author, in a passage to be presently quoted, denies that there can be analogy between laws; he maintains that between phenomena there is analogy, between laws there is not analogy but identity (p. 11), or continuity, (p. 76). I question how far this dictum can be accepted, even when the phenomena all belong to the same order of things, i.e. when they are all physical, or all spiritual; but I am perfectly certain it cannot apply where they are of different orders, i.e. one set physical, and another set spiritual: in such a case there is neither identity nor continuity. For instance, I should not myself say that the law of magnetic attractions and repulsions is the same as that of gravitation, though, as regards the mere abstract and mathematical mode of expression, it can be expressed in the same manner. We may have attraction or repulsion in the former case, attraction only, in the latter. So, the rate at which a static charge of electricity is dissipated, resembles that at which a hot body cools, as expressed by Newton's law of cooling; yet I could not say it is the same law. There is analogy rather than identity in these cases. Take again the law of induction, as we have it in natural philosophy, or in pure mathematics. There is analogy but not identity between them. But these instances are, so to speak, generically the same, i.e. they are all of the physical order; and hence, if people choose to call these laws the same, at least no harm is done. Now unquestionably God has seen good to teach us spiritual truth by figurative language, language borrowed from the

natural world (how else could we learn?). But to regard these spiritual truths simply as phenomena, to bind them together into a law, and then to assert that there is identity and continuity (not analogy) between this so-called law, and natural law, is to falsify the character of the spiritual, being a profane intrusion into the spiritual sphere, and ignores (in principle, if not intentionally) the personal will and operation of God acting in grace. The place and application which our author gives to law is logically a denial also of miracle, and here again consistency is altogether on the side of thorough-going infidelity.

“For Theology must pass through the necessary stages of progress, like any other science. The method of science-making is now fully established. In almost all cases the natural history and development are the same. Take for example the case of geology. A century ago there was none. Science went out to look for it, and brought back a geology, which, if nature were a harmony, had falsehood written almost on its face. It was the geology of catastrophism, a geology so out of line with nature as revealed by the other sciences, that, on ■ priori grounds, a thoughtful mind might have been justified in dismissing it as a final form of any science. And its fallacy was seen and thoroughly exposed. The advent of modified uniformitarian principles all but banished the word catastrophe from science, and marked the birth of geology as we know it now. Religious doctrines, many of them at least, have been up to this time all but as catastrophic as the old geology. They are not on the lines of nature as we have learned to decipher her” (p. 19).

Now that the treatises on geology, which have appeared since the epoch of Lyell's “Principles of Geology,” exhibit the subject as treated in a totally different manner and spirit from that in which it had previously been viewed, is true. The grand object now, is to represent the whole process, by which the earth has assumed its present form, as a gradual one, effected by forces similar both in kind and degree to what we are acquainted with in historical times, the denial in short of catastrophe. That change is very gradual, and that catastrophe on a very large scale is absent during the historical period, i.e. whilst the earth is the platform on which man's history is being worked out, no one denies. Farther than this the modern theory is false; its object in representing change as always gradual and occupying immense periods is to shut out God, and to deny creation by substituting a sort of perpetual motion. But the various phenomena presented by geology and physical geography are wholly opposed to the notion of a merely gradual process. Time after time sudden and violent destruction has come upon both plants and animals. The mountain system of the globe exhibits the action of force on a prodigious scale, infinitely surpassing anything which has happened since the earth became the abode of man. The former theory such as that granite forms the substratum of all the rocks is denied—a denial which is sought to be justified by the fact that granite is found intruding and overlying as regards the super-incumbent rocks. But such action is simply local and partial, and is no disproof whatever of what Humboldt says in his Cosmos I. 305, “What we call the older Silurian strata are only the upper portions of the solid crust of the earth. The eruptive rocks which we see breaking through, pushing aside, and heaving up these, arise from depths that are inaccessible to us...I also hold it as more than probable that a primordial granite-rock is the foundation of the great systems of stratification which are filled with such variety of organic remains.” In the main this is true, though since Humboldt's time fossil indications of life have been found somewhat lower down than was then known. But geological (including paleontological) and biological theories are now made to accommodate each other. Valuable testimony on this subject is contained in D'Orbigny's Cors de

Palaeontologie, Vol. II. pp. 251-258, for a quotation from which, with some sensible and important remarks, my readers should consult “Lectures on the Pentateuch,” by Mr. Kelly, Introduction, p. 29 (to be had of W. Walters, 53, Paternoster Row). The whole of that Introduction should be read, dealing as it does in a godly and able manner, with several of the errors of the present day. In fact, works of science (more especially those dealing with geology and biology) are palpably constructed on the atheistical principle of shutting out God. Past, present, and future, continuity is the grand object. There is law, but as little of God as possible; and unhappily this is the idea, not only accepted and adopted by our author, but actually sought by him to be carried into theology, and into the spiritual world. Religious doctrines, the facts and truths “revealed” not by “the other sciences,” but in Holy Scripture, are too “catastrophic” for him, and must undergo the process of “science-making” such as is exhibited in this book. Whilst infidels with more consistency deny creation and Christianity, he, whilst owning these in a certain sense, does his utmost to alter their divine character. It would be bad enough if evolution were confined to this world; to adopt the notion in reference to the next, to the spiritual world (in however modified a way), is to do despite to the Spirit of grace, and is revolting to every proper Christian thought and feeling. Ruined sinners by nature, saved through sheer grace, and in consequence of the sufferings of Another; our title to heaven, His precious blood: where can there possibly be room for evolution here?

I would add on again looking at the passage quoted in my last letter, “ex nihilo nihil, &c.” it may be, from his context, our author only denies that there can be any creation or destruction, so far as nature and man are concerned as the agents. This is of course true, and I trust his meaning is limited to it. The fundamental idea in this work being natural law, its identity and continuity whether in the natural or spiritual world, I have dwelt thus much on the general subject, and purpose (D.V.) proceeding with further extracts and remarks in a subsequent letter.

Yours in our Lord,

THETA

Chapter 116

A Letter on Neutrality As to Christ

Beloved Brother, I am glad at having received your second letter, and I purpose, if the Lord will, to give it a larger answer than perhaps you counted on. But I do so designedly—for I believe the “Brethren” have, under present circumstances painful as they are, an opportunity of learning some good lessons, and we may, through grace help each other to improve the moment.

For that end and with that hope, it is well to separate our minds, as far as we can, from the personalities and even the acts, which have marked the progress of this controversy, that we may be the more free to look at the principles involved in it. But if you judge that there has been too easy a passing over of certain offenses, I refuse not to own (as I said in a former letter to which you refer) that I have indeed been stumbled by some things done, said, and written, which I believe every saint ought to be able to judge, and judging, to resent.

If it he said, in defense of these things, that relative claims are to be postponed when faith apprehends the Lord's claims, I can understand that, and see it largely illustrated in scripture. But I do not understand, that, because Satan is assailed or because a work of the enemy is undergoing exposure, respect to some ordinary rules of good faith and charity is to be denied. I read that, when Michael contended with Satan, he did not bring against him a railing accusation.

One from whom for more than twenty-five years I have learned much of the mind of God, long since said to me, “Take care you do not correct the flesh by the flesh.” Had this been remembered by us all in the progress of this sad controversy, we should now have to rejoice in results instead of mourning over them.

And it is not only that wrong things have been done; opportunities of good have also been hindered and lost. A sifting has been going on, I would not deny. But in the progress, some have not had the skill of a Master's hand. Has there been that “gentleness,” that “patience,” that “meekness,” in instructing, which the Apostle enjoins, even where a work of the devil is distinctly owned? Has there been his required “absence of striving?” (2 Timothy 2)

I am quite ready to say these things, and to ask these things, dear brother. But still I say, I would rather that we could consent to lay this aside for a time, and look together at what through God's grace, even this occasion (grievous though it be) may afford us and bring to us a blessing. If there were in each and in all a readiness to discover and confess one's own measure of wrong, a harvest might be and would be reaped. And from the letter of request lately written to B from brethren near London, I cannot but hope that this readiness does exist.

You ask me to answer one or two questions as to what my conduct would be, were I in certain places. I do not like the language generally of either threat or resolution; nor do I find that I am as yet equal to say what would be the course in many cases which might be suggested. Here in Dublin we are speaking together, and desire to do so patiently, not listening to hearsays or charges, but considering principles of action, with God's mind in His word about them, as far as we have grace to discern it.

To deal however, with principles in the abstract, or as at a distance, is a different thing from dealing with persons and places long loved and cherished. The affections get at once engaged. I should not, for the present, lightly seek many places which I could mention to you from this feeling; greatly longing for a time of restitution among us, and willing to escape from the necessity of acting, if I may do so, without foregoing clear duty or service.

You tell me, there are precious saints at B—. Sure I am of it, dear brother, and can recall happy moments of the Lord's presence, times of refreshing, as we speak, between their souls and mine. Would there were an open heart in all to let in the flow of these sweet remembrances! For sure I am there are many misinterpretations, and in a thousand instances confidence is deserved where now it is withheld.

And further I say as to B—, let acts be allowed to cancel acts. If prejudice were not at work among us, this, I believe, would be readily allowed. If B— at the beginning were slack in judging the evil doctrine, her subsequent dealings with it may be received as restoration or repentance. Common grace and candor would (under ordinary circumstances) be pleaded for as much as this. And I could indeed say, O that this candor and grace were in exercise! But still, on the other hand, I would expect that B, on her part, would be ready to act further than she has, if uneasiness remain as to the real value of these ulterior acts of hers in the minds of any. If her faithfulness to the Lord be still questioned, let her add zeal, and revenge, and clearing of herself, to what she may have already done.

This is not too much to expect from either side.

But acts, dear brother, are not the only ingredients in the case. There have been standards lifted up. And B—'s standard puts her on wrong ground. I am sure of it. Principles avowed by public writings, after the most solemn sanction of the whole assembly, are (in my eye) standards. And these writings are not to be canceled by acts or by any private communications.

They must be canceled by writings of equal dignity with themselves. If the assembled brethren sanctioned them, let the brethren be assembled to annul them, with confession too of the error they were betrayed into. I allude to the “Letter of the Ten.” And I say further, that if that letter but seem to admit that doctrines which involve reproach on the Lord Jesus may be carelessly passed by—if it but seem to admit that communion may be held with places defiled by such doctrines, let me ask you, dear brother, ought it not to be renounced with indignation? Ought not private injuries to be forgotten, that this service may be done in a way worthy of it? But my present purpose is not with B. They are surely not only at liberty but bound to act to their Master. But as my late letter, to which you refer, has led to no action on their part, I am not appealing to them again. A letter from an individual, though printed, is no act of the assembled brethren, such as the case asks for. My business therefore is not now with them. But I have a purpose and a desire towards others who are truly dear to us all.

There are, as you know, (because you refer me to them) other public writings as well as this “Letter of the Ten.” They are called Memorandums or Statements put forth by the gathered saints of some different places, well known to us and long loved and cherished. I invite you to look again at those writings for a little. I lament them very much, for they are hindering restoration. Be sure of it: negative ways are not sufficient in moments of general alarm and suspicion. Defective

statements ought to be remedied; they hinder restoration. These writings do not, I know, give us all which the brethren in those different places would set forth, if they saw the need. I want them to see this need. The anxiety and diffidence which have been raised demand a heavy pressure to allay it, and these writings only increase it. They are direct stumbling-blocks in the way of restoration.

They do not give pledges that anything more than Christian fellowship is proposed. Read the Declarations for instance from Tottenham, Torquay, and Taunton. They are not the voices which would naturally break forth from church-ruins; and nothing other than such voices ought to be heard in these Declarations. I do not say we need them at all. But if we get them, let them be such. Evangelical brotherhood, or Christian association, will not meet (as you happily express it) “the instincts of the living stones.” No, indeed. Those instincts desire “the spiritual house, the holy priesthood.” If these Memorandums come forth in such an hour as the present amongst us, let them avow the peculiarities of the church. The moment demands this, and anything less than this will be a stumbling-block. It is not like one's infancy of twenty years ago. Questions are now raised which had no place then. Fears and suspicions are now awakened as to the principles of our common ways in Christ. The time is important to the edification and health of our gatherings, and calls for more consideration than those writings give it.

I greatly desire the dear brethren would review them. One letter from a kind-hearted brother (well-known among us) seems to speak as though false doctrine were not matter for the action of the gathered saints, wrong practices being their due concern. I know you are not of this mind, and I know not where I am, if such a thought as that is to find place among us. We might well open our eyes, not with admiration but with amazement and sorrow, and ask, “what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” Weak though we be in more senses than one, still we are to be as decided as John himself in shutting the door in a given case—as fervent as Paul himself in purging out leaven; and though but a church-ruin, we are still to do the duty of the church in being a pillar of the truth. Those Memorandums or Statements (to say no more) do not avow right principles, while (in a very important article) the “Letter of the Ten” is inconsistent with right principles.

It is this which led me to say (to which you refer) that they were not as guilty as the Letter from B—. They were put forth, I do not doubt, simply to meet a moment of peculiar character, and seem to take independent ground; and, as I said before, they do not, I know, adequately present the mind of the brethren who signed them. But desire that the stumbling-block may be taken out of the way. “Cast up, cast up the high way,” dear brother, “gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.” These writings are stones to be gathered out, I am sure. They hinder our traveling together “the high way.” The recalling of them would be a gathering out of stones, and lead (I have hope) to the lifting up of a standard worthy of the people of God in this day. I dread a fixed and adopted separation among us. Efforts ought still to be made for a restoring of gatherings one to the other, and for their finding themselves in an advanced position. It is terrible to contemplate a permanent breach.

Thus have I taken upon me to speak to you, beloved, but designing it to be in the hearing of those brethren who have put forth those writings, and indeed of all the brethren. For it is my thought, as I have already said, that we have an opportunity now of growing together, if heat and pride and the spirit which brooks not delay or opposition do not work to spoil us of it.

And here I will consider something further with you, which this matter has suggested to me.

I am aware that some are hindered by the fear that we are abandoning our former ground, on which the thoughts of “the church being in ruins” had put us. But this is not so.

Connected with this, let me remind you, that Israel, after their return from Babylon, was Israel still. They had not the ark, the glory, nor the Urim; nor did they affect that to which such things were needed. But they, fully recognized themselves as God's Israel. As far as they could, they did” the services of such, and behaved, themselves as such; but they never did anything in any other character, or what was inconsistent with that character.

This is much to be remembered. Did they, I ask, bring home with them the customs of the heathen? “The latter house” was not what “the former house” had been, and the old men wept; but, as far as conditions allowed it, the ways of the two houses were alike. They never brought in the customs of the heathen; and, as simply and surely as ever, they took knowledge of themselves as the Israel of God. Their circumstances were changed. They were in ruins. Their fair things and their honorable things were spoiled. They were subject to the Gentile. But they were Israel still. This was their principle. And accordingly, as soon as anything was discovered inconsistent with that, it was judged. You remember the case of intermarriages, and the more pertinent one of Nehemiah avenging the act of Eliashib who prepared a chamber for Tobiah the Ammonite in the house of the Lord.

They owned their circumcision, their separation to God, as jealously as ever. They refused Samaritan brotherhood, while they were debtors to the patronage of the Gentiles, and were partakers of their bounty. Horonites, Ammonites, and Moabites, were the same to them as ever they had been.

No glory had entered the latter house, as it had the former. This may have tried their faith. The Ark had not been preserved for them, as in another land of Philistines, nor had it returned to them as in victory from another temple of Dagon. It was lost to them. This may have tried their faith also. Nor had they their priest with Urim and Thummim. Thus were they in ruins, shorn of beauty and strength; and some of their brethren were still in Babylon. But in the presence and midst of all this, they avow themselves to be God's Israel as surely and simply as ever. They allow of nothing inconsistent with “the former house,” they well knew and were constrained to feel, that they had not all its glory in “the latter house.”

This is for us, dear brother. We are, in our way and measure, to be “stewards of the mysteries of God,” and that too, under the holy sanction of being “faithful.” And neither love' sake, nor brotherhood' sake, or any other impulse, is to prevail with us to forego the services which attach to so precious a stewardship. The peculiarities of the house of God are to be our peculiarities; and though we own Israelites in Babylon, we are not to own Samaritans or Chaldeans in Zion. Nor are we to own ways unworthy of Zion in a returned captive, though we see him the witness of ruins and of weakness.

This theme is worthy of our thoughts; and I confess I desire all our dear brethren to take counsel upon it. Would that they were to do it together calmly and in love!

I own saints (to be sure I do) where I cannot see church-ruins, as for instance in the Establishment. The Establishment is not a church-ruin. It is an important thing in the earth, which must scorn the idea of ruins. Nay, it denies the church in her very first element; for it has not gone to Christ as a Stone “disallowed of men,” but has linked His name with the government and men of the world. But God's dear people are there.

But even, when an assembly is not of that earthly and important character, and takes a lowlier bearing, yet it may not be a church-ruin. I must still inspect it, whether or not it own the peculiarities of the house of God.

Christendom is not to be mistaken for church-ruins. Christendom is as “a great house,” which I must judge—the few who call on the Lord out of a pure heart form the church-ruins where I must be found. (2 Tim. 3) And it is a holy question for us, beloved— “Are we upholding merely Christian fellowship? or are we dwelling, according to the holiness of God, within the precious precincts of a church-ruin?” In a time of growing intelligence and social advancement as the present is, when long peace among the nations has given great play to the skill and speculations of man, and when the religion of the human mind has been cultivated and respected, it is needful to remember, with increased care, that the truth of God and the house of God have their blessed peculiarities; that not, one of them is to be sacrificed to the morals, the politics, or the religion of man; and that we are not to mistake for them what man produces, be it as good as it may. Ruins are weak things; but still they tell of the original building. And so, in our present weakness, we must still tell of the peculiarities of the church.

In the truth or mysteries witnessed by us—in the nature, subject, and purpose of our discipline—in the ways and ordinances of the assembly—in the whole process of our common edification, the peculiarities of the house of God must be seen. I avow ruins as simply as ever. But if it be necessary, I add, that they are church-ruins, unlike either the old Roman temples, or the buildings of the philanthropists or Reformers of this our day.

Farewell, beloved. Do not blame this letter as a mere protracting of a painful discussion. Is it not better to be patient with one another, or (if it seem so) to protract discussion, than to sit down contented with our divided state? I remember the same brother (to whom I have already alluded) also saying to me some long time since, that it was a terrible thing to be indifferent about those with whom we were ever joined at the Lord's table.

May he, and you, and I, and all of us, cherish this godly sentiment, now that a trial has come upon us.

Let our dear brethren at Tottenham, Torquay, and Taunton, read this letter; I mean to send a copy to Bath. Indeed I should be glad if all saw it; and if we could but get our hearts exercised together, so as to meet again in an advanced position for our common blessing in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ever yours,

beloved brother,

J. G. B.

Chapter 117

Not Ashamed of the Gospel (Duplicate)

(Romans 1:16)

The apostle had met with many trials and difficulties, “In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons oft,” &c. He had known privations more than most for the gospel's sake; yet he says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” There was an energy and a power in his own soul that brought home to his conscience the truth of what he was about, that amidst disagreeables made him bold to persevere; as he says, I was bold at Philippi to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. There is nothing more shameful in man's sense than to be beaten and flogged, but he says, “I am not ashamed.” The reason is that it is “the power of God.”

Is not this what souls really want, to be forgiven their sins, and to be delivered from sin? It Is a bitter and evil thing to forsake the living and true God; yet this is what man has done and is doing. He is hewing out to himself broken cisterns that can hold no water; he seeks happiness, and, if he gets any signs, puts all into a broken pitcher. But sin stings like a viper in the end. It may be found out with sorrow and regret, when power against it is wanting. It is a sorrowful thing to see sin mastering a soul. Man is a slave of his own lusts, as well as of Satan. Sin is degrading, and men feel it, yet for all that there is no power. Man is lying under it. A child may have been carefully guarded by a loving parent from the indulgence of its natural propensities; but what sorrow for the parent, when the guard is removed, to see them break out in full energy, the will at work, and no power against sin!

Unconverted persons know they love the things that are not of God. Whence does it all come? From a heart that is contrary to God—a nature at enmity with God. The heart loves the things that suit its own lusts. We all by nature turn away from God, and all are alike in this, those who have been most restrained by natural checks and the most vicious. There may be least care about it in the least vicious, because a very vicious man would be glad to be out of the scrape. When the prodigal left his father's house, he was as wicked as afterward, he was glad to get away from his father and to do his own will. There may be a desire to please the father from natural affection; but there is the wish to have the opportunity to do one's own will, and this was all the prodigal wanted. What can we say of such a heart as that? The prodigal son was as guilty, though not so degraded, when he crossed his father's threshold as when eating husks in the far country.

There is no other thing brought out in testifying to the sinner. Present Christ to the heart: is there any inclination for it! No; the more absence from God makes a man set up for something in himself; when in His presence, man shrinks, and would get behind a tree if he could, as Adam did. To get mercy from the grace of a Savior does not suit him: “I never transgressed.” There is the natural self-righteous man, whose pride makes him reject the presence of the father, and so puts him farther off than the vicious man, though both alike would be right glad to have nothing to say to God.

And is there never to be any remedy? Is there no Savior? It is plainly shown how there may be an end now put to sin. There is a remedy given in the cross of Christ. The time is hastening when He will come as it were to see, and then execute judgment. When God left man to himself in a sense, there must come the deluge. So afterward the land spews out the inhabitants thereof. Do you say the law of God is broken, and it is no matter? God's authority is no matter! His power in government is no matter! His wrath must come; for is sin to go on, and no judgment on God's part? The law to be broken, and no judgment? The Son of man to be smitten, and no judgment? Impossible! Wrath must come against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of man.

All had been done to try man when Christ died. “Now is the judgment of this world.” The very fact of the cross closes up the scene towards man as a sinner. The wrath is revealed from heaven (not as under the law, for He is not now come out of His place to punish). The very speaking of wrath thus beforehand is grace. It is not come, but plainly “revealed” that it will come. Are you then despising the warning of that which is coming? Do you not know that you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, not only by committing sins, but by rejecting the testimony of God's Son? You all know (I speak to the unconverted) whether you have peace with God, whether you are in the state of the prodigal or the elder son, whether you are within or outside. God will not take your thoughts of yourself, but He will judge you by the word Christ has spoken.

You may think yourself all right as the elder son did; but God does not, unless you have come within and are at peace with Him. See the activity of love to those to whom wrath is revealed. They are children of wrath, natural heirs of it; yet though the wrath is fully proved to be due and the vineyard given up, He sends His Son, and shows grace to the sinner. He gives up seeking fruit, and provides a marriage-supper for His Son, furnishing Himself everything that is needed. The prodigal was perishing. It is not only that there was the famine: this man feels and would get what he can; but he is perishing, and nothing to be got. Satan has nothing to give in his country, though he may sell things to keep from dying. The world may get pleasures and vanities to feed its lusts, but nothing more. You who are not converted, you who have not eternal life and are indifferent about it, you are totally away from God; you must be either indifferent or miserable, because you do not know that you have life: whichever state you may be in, you are talking about something that we have, and that you have not.

The gospel of God is sent for you. The activity of God's own love was shown you when you cared nothing about it. If you struggle to get it, you will find it hard. Conscience cannot master itself—it may talk a great deal, but it talks to itself. When conscience is at work, it feels that one ought to judge the guilt and to judge oneself—not only the sin but the guilt. Conscience will say, I cannot get rid of this, and, more, I do not wish to get rid of that. Conscience knows it should be in the presence of God, though the more it gets there, the more terrible.

The gospel that is sent is what God has Himself done for you. A person may say, I must get power over this sin; but he cannot. He may seek the power, but he cannot do it himself. What can you do then You must be brought to this—I can do nothing. The truth brings out what you are, and what you can do. In Rom. 7 it is not, Now shall I get strength against myself—this “wretched man,” but, I want a Deliverer, not strength for to-morrow, but deliverance for today (though I shall want that). You need mercy; and if you want anything else, you are not yet brought to own what you are. The gospel will give power, but first of all what is wanted is God's righteousness; and it is this which is

revealed in it. Are you going to add to His righteousness?

Has God only half met your need? He puts the soul as a sinner into His own presence, but reveals His own righteousness in the gospel to him that believes. He met the poor prodigal all in his rags, and He Himself clothed him. In Christ I have nothing short of the righteousness of God. In learning this I have found God for me.

Thus another thought is come in: God must be Love to have done this. I am accepted in the Beloved. There is abundant help given for living the life of the Christian: but we now speak of standing in the presence of God, with no sin to disturb His eye.

Therefore 1 can stand in perfect rest before Him on Christ who has perfectly glorified Him, and He is perfectly satisfied. His glory can ask nothing more. God is now glorifying Christ, and, as a believer, I can rest in conscience in His presence. It is all a settled and accepted work; and it is thus revealed on the principle of faith. So from Abel downwards all born of God have believed; and I too believe. Then can I add anything to it? No, I bow before Him; I believe in Christ, and rest in Him.

I cannot believe the gospel if the righteousness of God is not revealed in it. But as the gospel is true, so God's righteousness is perfect. And faith takes it, as He gives it, in full grace. Therefore the just shall live by faith. Then God is for me; and what shall separate me from His love? I want spiritual strength; I need temporal mercies; how shall I get them all? Because God is for me. He seals me by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost cannot seal the fruits without hiving produced them. We are sealed. when we have believed. Those are sealed whose souls have bowed to Christ in God's presence, and to whom this righteousness has been revealed. Do you say that you are striving? Your striving will do nothing for you, unless it be to discover your powerlessness to you. You are one foot in and one out all the time, until you find yourself utterly needy and helpless. It is only God can attract the heart to exercise that which the activity of His own love has provided in Christ. J. N. D.

Chapter 118

Nothing but Christ

The Epistle to the Hebrews calls us to leave all for Christ. Whatever be the objects in which thus far we may have gloried, it is necessary to abandon them now, and to receive in their stead Jesus the Son of God. Angels give place to the Son: Moses, the servant of the house gives place to Christ, who is the Builder; Joshua, the ancient captain, that led Israel into Canaan, gives place to Christ the Captain of salvation who is now conducting the children to glory; Aaron, the carnal and dying priest, gives place to the true Melchisedec who lives and serves in the heavenly temple forever; the old covenant gives place to the new which Jesus administers; and at the same time the old carnal or earthly ordinances give place to the spiritual and efficacious ministrations of the heavenly Priest; finally, the blood of the victims gives place to the blood of Christ offered by the eternal Spirit.

Such is one of the principal characteristics of this divine and glorious Epistle, which thus annihilates all that in which man puts his confidence, in order to establish the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, as the object of glory and only refuge of poor souls.

But this was a doctrine hard to bear, particularly for a people such as the Jews, who had in so many ways put their confidence in the law and legal righteousness. Amongst us also at the present day when, amidst so many religious forms, men propose with authority other foundations of confidence than Jesus, and other men blindly receive them, we have to consider carefully what are the bases of this doctrine. In these days, when all creation groans, the soul thirsts after this simple gospel which preaches to us the perfect satisfaction of Jesus; and it is the design of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews to unfold to the eager soul the reasons for which it can thus embrace Jesus as all that forms the object of its confidence and glory. This Epistle declares what authorizes it thus to appreciate Jesus—to estimate Him as having no equal—to judge that He is in a word the one and only stay of the poor sinner.

But how does the Holy Spirit assure us of this truth by this Epistle? How does He show us that it is our own salvation to leave every other prop in order to have none but Christ alone for our stay? He shows it to us in the only way in which it could be done—by presenting to our soul the appreciation which God makes of Christ.

That which warrants the value I am to attach to Christ is that God has already before this made known to us the worth which He possesses. If my soul confides exclusively in Him I cannot be grounded in so doing but by seeing the foundation of Israel's confidence at the time of the blood-sprinkling in Egypt. God had prescribed this blood—such is my divine and sure-warrant; and the Epistle to the Hebrews assures it to me. It speaks to me of the high value God sees in Christ; it tells me how clearly, simply, and exclusively He has laid upon Christ all that can relieve the soul. Such is the reason why this admirable Epistle lingers with so much complacency upon Christ in all His present relations with us, in all the ministrations He accomplishes for us. There is what explains the numerous quotations (chap. i.) which establish Jesus far above angels; there is what explains the glorious commentary which chap. ii. gives on the dignity of the Son of man, the

declarations of His great superiority over Moses, (chap. the abundant and varied testimonies (chap. iv.) borne to His priesthood, supplying in quite another way that wherewith Aaron had been honored or what the law conferred (ch. vii). There is the reason why He is represented as anointed and consecrated by an oath, and seated in the heavens in the midst of the sanctuary, as well as at the right hand of Majesty (ch. 8).

In all this we have the hand of God Himself exalting the merit of Jesus, weighing Him in His dignities known in heaven and on earth. The soul is invited in the most pressing manner to conic and be present at this grand work, at this divine proof of the merit of Jesus. Just so the congregation of Israel was commanded to wait at the door of the tabernacle, in order that each for himself should contemplate and know how pleased with the priest God was; so that each, however large the congregation was, should have personally, individually, all liberty to resign himself to the care and intercession of Aaron (Lev. 8 ix.) It was a matter which concerned each individually; and the same liberty should also appertain to every one of us individually.

The soul is a thing which concerns ourselves; for it is written that “none can by any means redeem his brother;” and it is ourselves who should know the divine remedy, ourselves who should possess it. It is not a faithful brother who can hear and believe for us; it is not a church which can represent us; we must be at the door of the tabernacle ourselves; we have ourselves to know the worth of Jesus in the eyes of God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is commissioned to reveal this secret in the holy of holies. It is addressed, not to a certain order of privileged persons, but to us all, in order that there we may each contemplate Jesus, such as He is there, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and that we may gather the blessed fruits of this ensured supply which has been stored in Him. It is not the question in this epistle of a particular church, nor of a class of privileged persons, as is very often thought and said; but it is the voice of the Spirit addressing itself directly to the soul, in order that it may learn to know for itself Him in whom God has placed the help which is necessary to it. In this Epistle, our soul breathes, in some sort, the perfume of the plain which the Lord has blessed, and faith breathes the perfume of Christ; it enjoys Christ as God Himself enjoys Him and we have the divine light in our hearts, we are converted from darkness to the light of God. In a word, God becomes our own.

There is yet another thing in this Epistle: it makes us understand in what characters God has set this exclusive value on Christ; and these characters are such as fully answer to our necessities. The victim or the sacrifice, 9:14; the priest, 7.; the prophet or teacher, 2:1-4; the captain who brings His own to glory, 2:10; and in all these qualities, as in each of them separately, we see Him estimated in the most exact manner by the hand of God, and we find Him perfectly what it is needful He, should be, for persons so wretched as we are. According to God, Jesus is a victim perfectly suited to purify, a priest perfectly suited to intercede, a prophet perfectly suited to instruct, and a guide perfectly suited to transport us safe and sound unto glory. There is that precisely which we need. This Epistle traces our book or travels, in leaving our place of exile sinners, up to our dwelling in glory, where we shall be in the companionship of Jesus. Yes, we clearly read there our rights, and we rest on Jesus as our Victim, our Priest, our Prophet, and our Guide, because God has given Him all that is possible or worth in these qualities with which He is endowed for us, and God has appreciated Him because of His work, because of His person, because of His obedience, because He has shed His blood and fully accomplished the will of God for us. There, in this Epistle, the soul may read its titles, not according to the estimate which itself makes of them,

but according to that which God makes of Christ.

Chapter 119

Occupation With Evil

It is an evil thing to simply know evil without having to act in respect of it; it always tends to defile and lower the sentiment or habit of mind. Under the law he who was occupied with the cleansing of him who had touched a dead body was unclean until the evening; because he had had to say to it, though himself otherwise clean. We have to remember that we are judged by the law of liberty; we are always free to do right and avoid wrong, because God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation give a way of escape that we may be able to bear it. We all fail in one way or another, but there is power to avoid it where there is watchfulness and prayer. It is not always at the moment one caught the strength. Habitual and diligent seeking God takes out of the power, or out of the way, of evil. Do not suffer a light appreciation of evil. There are many things we know are wrong and judge ourselves for; yet we are not sufficiently in the presence of God to judge in their true light. And hence the root and power are not destroyed—I mean practically.

Chapter 120

Threshing-Floor of Ornan the Jebusite (Duplicate): Part 1

1 Chronicles 21

It is an affecting and solemn truth presented to us by scripture, to which we desire that our thoughts may ever be fully subject, that our God has, through our transgression, been separated from His due place, as over the work of His own hands; that this world, which is all His handy work, has acknowledged another god and prince. (John 14:13 Cor. 4:4.) Since the day when the Lord God walked with Adam in paradise, He has had no abiding place among us. He has visited the earth in divers manners, to bring mercies to His chosen in the midst of it, but—when His errand of love has been finished, He has, as is said, “gone His way” again. (Gen. 18:33.) He would, it is true, have found a place among His chosen Israel, but He was even by them too speedily disowned, and His tarrying there proved to be but that of a way-faring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night. (Jer. 14:8.) “The ox knoweth his owner,” said the God of Israel by His prophet, “and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” (Isa. 1:3.)

But the Lord's title to the earth of course stands unimpeachable; “the cattle on a thousand hills” are His, “the earth, and the fullness thereof;” and accordingly in one way or another, He has been making continual claim to it in the face of the usurper, so as to express His purpose of finally taking it into full possession again. This indeed was so clearly intimated by the first promise, that the whole creation is represented as hoping and waiting for it. (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 8:19-21.) And so in the day of the kingdom of our God, these hopes of the creation shall not be ashamed, for the “heavens shall then rejoice, and the earth be glad, the sea and the fullness thereof; the field shall then be joyful and all that is therein: the floods, and the hills, and the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord.”

By tracing for a while the dealings of the Lord with this world of ours, we may discern the ways in which He has been pleased, since the day when man sold himself and his inheritance into the hand of a strange lord, thus to claim the earth as His. When the giants of old had finished the antediluvian apostasy, corrupting the earth and filling it with violence, doing with it as if it were their own, the Lord asserted His right by judging that generation as oppressors and wrong-doers. (Gen. 6:1-13)

Then in the new world He witnessed His title to the earth by making man the tenant of it under Himself, delivering it into the hand of Noah, under express condition imposed according to His own good pleasure. (Gen. 9:1-7) And again, when these children of men, doing the deeds of their fathers, affected independency of God their rightful Lord, as they did in the matter of Babel, He again asserted His right in the way of judgment, scattering the confederates over the face of the earth. (Gen. 11:1-9)

But the Lord in His fruitful sovereign wisdom had now another mode of continuing His claim to the earth. This scattering of the nations from Babel He so orders as to have respect to His setting up one of them as the future witness of His name and rights. (Deut. 22:8, 9) And in the mean time He

separates the father of this nation to Himself (Gen. 12:1), making him also personally the witness of the same truth—that let the peoples imagine what vain things they might, Jehovah, and He alone, was “possessor of heaven and earth.” (Gen. 14:18-22)

Accordingly then, when in due course of providence Abraham's nation was manifested, the Lord who had chosen them to be His witnesses, puts them into possession of a portion of the earth, to hold it under Him their Lord; thus showing that He, who took what portion He pleased, had title to the whole; as He says, “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine.” (Ex. 19:5.) And Israel thus established as God's people should have continued in the midst of, but separated formally from, the nations, reflecting the light of God's glory as King of all the earth. But again and again they revolted, and rejected Jehovah Christ from being King over them. The nation first (1 Sam. 8:7), then the house of David (Isa. 8:13, Jer. 21:12), give up their testimony to God; and at length the wicked husbandmen cast the heir himself out of the vineyard, and slew him. (Matt. 21:39.)

Abraham's seed thus refused to do the works of Abraham—and then Abraham's God abandoned their land, leaving the boar out of the wood to waste it, and the wild beast of the field to devour it. But the Lord has had pity for His holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, and has called forth another witness to the glory of it. By the voice of heralds He is publishing “Jesus and the resurrection,” opening the heavenly places and the Father's house to all believers, and letting all men know, that the kingdoms of the world are to become His, and that all things are to be put under His feet again. (Heb. 2:8; Rev. 11:15)

But how is the kingdom of the world to become the Lord's? And how is His presence to be preserved among us? We can prepare Him no habitation or dominion; for we have been found unable even to retain that which in His love He once committed to us. The Lord then must, and so He will, prepare Himself a place over and among the children of men, so as to secure His presence and authority (O blessed expectation) from ever being clouded or denied again.

When the Lord took Israel of old, as we have seen, to be His peculiar people, of course He prepared Himself a place among them—the tabernacle first, and then the temple. The tabernacle was but a moveable pavilion; there Jehovah dwelt as between curtains, and walked as in a tent, refusing with infinite grace to enter into His rest while His Israel sojourned from one nation to another people. (2 Sam. 7:5-8.) But the temple was fixed; for when Israel was brought into the land of their covenant, and all their enemies had been reduced, then the Lord would enter into rest among them. In their affliction having been afflicted, He would now rejoice in their joy (Isa. 63:9); and He, whom the heaven cannot contain, seated Himself in the midst of His chosen nation.

But where was the honored spot? Who of us that clings with all desire (as, if we be saints, we at least should) to the hope of God's restored presence and kingdom in this world, that would not but know something of it? I speak not of what travelers have told us of it, but how the oracles of God mark it out. And from them we learn this simple story of it, that it had been the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite; and it was the place where the angel of God stayed his destructive course through the city of Jerusalem, whither he had been summoned by the sin of the king and the people. It was this spot which became the place of the temple, and most fitly so, as we shall see, if we can a little more narrowly survey the ground, as it is spread out before us by the Spirit of God in Chron. 21.

1-6. “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said unto Joab and the elders of the people, Go number Israel, from Beersheba even to Daniel and bring the number of them to me that I may know it. And Joab answered, The Lord make this people an hundred times so many more than they be; but my Lord the king, are they not all my Lord's servants? Why then doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? Nevertheless the king's hand prevailed against Joshua Wherefore Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. And Joab, gave the sum of the number unto David; and all they of Israel were a thousand thousand, and a hundred thousand men, that drew sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore, and ten thousand men, that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them, for the king's word was abominable to Joab.”

At the time when this scene opens, the sword of David and of Israel had been victorious over all their enemies. The Philistines had been subdued—Moab had brought gifts—garrisons were put in Damascus; and the Syrians, as also the Edomites, had become David's servants. With all promised blessings the house of God's servant had been blest, and naught of the goodness of which the Lord had spoken to him had failed. “The fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.”

But Satan, we here read, too soon serves himself of all this; and Israel proves again, that man, utterly without strength, is unable even to hold a blessing. The gifts with which their gracious Lord had thus endowed Israel, and which had been ordained for their comfort and His praise, became, through the craft and subtlety of the devil, an occasion to them of self-congratulation and pride, as to Adam of old. (Gen. 3:1-8) For David's heart in all this was moved by the old lie— “ye shall be as gods.” Anything for poor fallen man but the living God! “Nay, but we will have a king to reign over us,” said Israel to Samuel of old, rejecting Jehovah Christ, “that we also may be like all the nations.” (1 Sam. 8:19, 29) But the Lord will not give His glory to another: none have ever forsaken Him and prospered, as it is written— “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord.” (Isa. 31:1.) “The Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose.” (Isa. 30:7.) David here, like Hezekiah afterward, in the pride of his heart, would exhibit his magnificence, would survey his resources.

The infatuation in which David was sunk is marked by the fact of Joab expostulating with him; for (though a man of blood and eminently one of the children of this world, as all his policy bespeaks him, yet wiser far in his generation, looking not to the ungodliness so much as to the impolicy of this purposed wickedness of the king) Joab at once discovers that which his master refuses to see.

The whole system of Israel, by this national transgression, was now defiled and tainted, and ripe for severity or judgment. This pride was the giving up of God, and God would have been dealing righteously had He at once laid Israel aside, as He did Adam in such a case— “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

7-14 “And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing but now I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done foolishly. And the Lord spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them that I

may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Choose thee either three years' famine; or three mouths to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, and there tell of Israel seventy thousand men."

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 121

Threshing-Floor of Ornan the Jebusite (Duplicate): Part 2

1 Chronicles 21

For nine long months the pride of the king's heart deceived (2 Sam. 24:8); as alas! lust had before dimmed his eye for the same time. He had too long walked in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes; but after his hardness and impenitency was but treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of the righteous judgment of God now about to be revealed. Sinners should be stopped in their course by the remembrance that God, though He suffers long, “has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.”

But David, as a child of God, might be tempted, overtaken in a fault, and thus brought to shame and grief, but could not be left impenitent (Luke 22:32). And so Israel as God's nation could not be consumed, because God's gifts and calling are without repentance (Rom. 11:29), because His compassion towards them could not fail (Lam. 3:22). Their transgressions were to be visited with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes, but the divine loving-kindness was not to be utterly taken from David and his nation (Psa. 89:33). Correction is ever in covenant love. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, and therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). To walk comfortably and without interruption as in an even path, we must walk watchfully as with the Lord. Had David walked in his integrity, and humbly with his God, he would have been spared this discipline; but now “he must bear the rod.” And he is required to choose the rod; by this, much grace might be exercised in his soul; he would by this be brought to consider well the fruit of his transgressions, and thus be more humbled and broken in spirit, and he would also have occasion to encourage himself afresh in the Lord who was slaying him, as we find he did.

But corrected he must be, and that too, just in the place of his transgression; having boasted of his thousands, his thousands must be diminished. God would now number to the sword whom David had numbered to his pride. And so the day of the Lord is to be upon every one that is proud and lifted up (Isa. 2; 12).

15. “And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it; and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite.”

In this verse we have the threshing-floor of Oman fire brought within view, a moan spot in itself, but destined of the Lord to be the joy of the whole earth; the place of the glory, the rest of God and His Israel. It presents itself to us at once, as the witness of that blessed precious truth, which is the, sure ground of all our hopes, that with our God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jam. ii. 13). The whole system of Israel had, as we have observed, exposed itself—to the severity or displacing judgment of the Lord; He might have broken it at once as a vessel wherein was no pleasure; He might have taken away His vineyard from His unthankful and wicked husbandmen. But “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” in the bosom of their God. He repents Him of the evil with which His people “because of their transgressions and because of their iniquity were now

afflicted;" and He commands the destroying angel to stay His hand by this threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Here the same mercy displays itself as that which shone out on ruined condemned Adam in the garden. He had there no plea to plead with the Lord: all that remained for him was to fly and be concealed, if that were possible, when in the bosom of the Lord mercy rises over judgment; and He decrees that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" (Gen. 3:15). Often do the scriptures, as here, present our faithful God. and Father, opening as it were His own heart, and spewing His thoughts to His people how kind they are; as He says within Himself concerning the husbandmen of His vineyard, "what shall I do? I will send my beloved son" (see also Jer. 3:19). Oh! that we may drink at this fountain of Israel, the love of the Father—the springhead of all the healing waters that visit us.

16-17. "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. Than David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces; and David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be Plagued."

David as yet was not given to read the secrets of his God and Savior: the grace that was rejoicing in the bosom of his covenant God over him, was not as yet opened to him; all that he saw was the fearful agent of death and ruin hanging over his city and people. And Oh! how often an afflicted soul is thus reduced, how often does the eye fix itself on the cloud that darkens all around, without a single glimpse of the bright and peaceful heavens that lie beyond it, not knowing or refuting to know

"The clouds they so much dread

Are big with morcy and shall break

In blessings on their head!"

18. "Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and jest to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The relief for David in this dark hour is announced by the angel of destruction. The eater himself yields meat, the strong man sweetness; the law itself prophesied of Jesus who was to displace it, as here the altar was to displace the angel who directed it.

An altar needs a priest or an accepted worshipper the Lord would not have directed the one, if he had not provided the other. "The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering" (Gen. 4:4). His person was first accepted, and then His sacrifice; and here the Lord's readiness to receive an offering at the hand of David was a pledge that David himself, through mercy rejoicing against judgment, had been received, and his iniquity put away. If the Lord had been pleased to kill him, he would not have received a burnt-offering at his hand (Mal. 1:10-13).

19-26. “And David went up at the saying of Gad which he spoke in the name of the Lord. And Ornan turned back and saw the angel: and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat, and as David came to Oman, Ornan looked and saw David and went out of the threshing-floor; and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord; thou shalt grant it me for the full price, that the plague may be stayed from the people; and Oman said unto David, Take it to thee and let my Lord the king do that which is good in his eyes; lo, I give thee the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering: I give it all. And king David said, Nay but I will verily buy it for the full price; for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight: and David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the name of the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.”

These verses present to us David's thankful believing acceptance of the mercy revealed to him. He received not the grace of God in vain. He at once went up at the saying of the prophet, while Oman and his sons hid themselves from the angel. Here we may observe, that while no flesh can stand naked, as in its own resources, before the Lord, yet that sinners may come fully up to His heavenly presence in the power of simply believing in His grace. Oman and David here illustrate this. Oman had not the grace of the Lord revealed to him, he knew nothing of the altar that was to be set up in his threshing-floor and therefore—as nakedly a creature in the sight of God, like Adam before in such a case—he hid himself. But David knew the remedy which mercy rejoicing against judgment had provided, and therefore he dares to stand, though shamed and humbled; without distraction he fulfills his appointed service, he purchases the threshing-floor, prepares the altar, offers his offering, and calls upon the Lord. The sword still unsheathed has no alarms for him now; believing, he is not ashamed or confounded; he stands to see God's salvation; his soul is brought simply to be a receiver of grace which God Himself brings nigh to him. Hence we see, in all his action, no disturbance or motion of the flesh; but all is the assurance and quietness of faith resting in the word of the Lord. And the Lord gives him his answer before he calls, and hears him while he is yet speaking (Isa. 65:24).

27. “And the Lord commanded the angel and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.”

The reconciliation was complete; being justified by faith, there was peace for David with God. As the accusings of the adversary, the demands of the law, the complaints and howlings of conscience, are all and forever silenced by the voice of the blood of sprinkling, which tells us that with our God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment;” so, as soon as David had trusted in this grace, as soon as he had built his altar in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, where mercy had thus rejoiced, the angel of destruction puts up his sword again into the sheath thereof, at the commandment of the Lord.

28-30. “At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the Lord which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the Lord.”

David was given grace to interpret the writing on the Jebusite's floor. That mystic sacred plan had brightly reflected the glory of forgiving love; there he had seen that with his God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” —the oft repeated but ever sweet and blessed truth. Close therefore by this floor he keeps. The corn which his faith had trodden down there was the finest wheat, the very fat of the kidneys of wheat; and, having tasted it, he dared not to forsake his own mercy; having fed at an altar whereon had been spread for him the dainties of a Father's love, he could not return to serve the tabernacle (Heb. 13:10). He had not feared to prepare his altar in the angel's presence, but he does fear now to return by the way of the angel's sword. “This is the house of the Lord God,” said he of Oman's floor, “and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel” (1 Chron. 22:1). His heart, by the Spirit who ever witnesses to grace, was knit to the spot; and he proceeds at once to make preparation to link the name of the God of Israel inseparably with it also. What Moses had given them should be no more remembered or sought unto: in grace the system should be set and confirmed; and Israel and their God should meet forever where mercy had rejoiced against judgment.

Here, with David we also meditate for awhile, and trace our interest, in all this precious truth. Our souls, if we are saints of God, will breathe, “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand'? but there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared” or worshipped. (Ps. 130:3, 4) All service of the name of our God comes of this; and our thankful acceptance of forgiveness, sealed as it is to all who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, is our entrance into His temple, our assumption of that character in which alone we can do service in the heavenly temple, that is, of pardoned sinners. We are to know no affection at variance with such a character. None else gives full glory to God. We stand in presence of a mercy-seat, before a throne of largest richest grace, and yet of brightest untainted righteousness, because of blood in which God smells a savor of rest is on it, through which He can be just, and yet let mercy rejoice against judgment (Gen. 8:21; Rom. 3:26; Eph. 5:2). “The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb” are the temple in our heavens.” [“ Salvation to our God” is the burthen of worship by and by; “blessing, and honor, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever,” will “every creature” say in that day.]

And as mercy through the Lord our righteousness has thus “raised us up, and made us sit in heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6), so in the day when “all Israel shall be saved” mercy shall in like manner rejoice in the lower parts of the earth. As the church is now set in grace, so will the people then be. That covenant, and that alone, which takes away sin through the Deliverer, shall establish them as it now establishes the saints; “for all are included in unbelief, that God may have mercy upon all” (Rom. xi. 2632.) Ex. 32 exhibits this truth, and most interestingly presents Israel as drawn forth, from their standing under Mount Sinai, to take their stand in the last days in and under Christ. And their last tenure of the land by grace will be the accomplishment of the promises made of old to their father Abraham; for the land and its accompanying blessings were given to him and to his seed, not as through the works of the law, but by promise or grace. The closing scenes of that lovely portion of the divine word give us the same truth in mystery. Moses veiled typifies Israel as they are now, and the flesh under law, or in blindness of heart (Isa. 6:10). Moses unveiled typifies Israel as they shall be; (Rom. 11:27; 2 Cor. 3:16) and when the heart of the Jewish people shall thus “turn to the Lord,” and the vail shall be taken away, this turning of Israel to Jesus shall be followed by the unveiling of the nations, or the life of the world (Isa. 27:6; Rom. 11:15).

This in the end shall all be established by grace, not only the children of the resurrection in the Father's house in the heavens, but Israel and the nations, “from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same,” on earth.

“Mercy shall be built up forever” (Psa. 89:2). “With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee (Zion), saith the Lord thy redeemer"; and then shall Zion's children be many, and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and the redeemer of Israel shall be called the God of the whole earth (Isa. 54:5-8). The Gentiles shall be embraced in the same mercy, for it is written, “In thee shall all nations be blessed;” and it is written again, “Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people” (Rom. 15:10). Thus shall the whole earth be the extended floor of Oman the Jebusite, and be the altar and dwelling place of Him with whom mercy has rejoiced against judgment. Thus shall our God show the rich fullness of His wisdom, providing a way whereby He can be just and the justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus—whereby He can preserve the righteousness of His throne in all its brightest glory, and yet allow mercy to rejoice against judgment, seating Himself in the earth as in His temple and kingdom. Mercy with righteousness, peace with truth, shall rear that temple, and uphold the kingdom; His shall all things be, not only by title, by creation, but by purchase— “His” “peculiar treasure,” His “purchased possession.” Thus will the Lord fully repossess Himself of the world, and walk again among the children of men; the saints, who have acknowledged Him while absent, shall be acknowledged in His glory; “the righteous shall see it, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth” (Psa. 107:42).

Chapter 122

The Passover and the Lord's Supper: Part 1

The cross is the center of the moral glory of God, the righteous foundation for the display of grace. Truly the cross is “by grace,” but the display of grace is by the cross, and grace is God's greatest moral glory. All other revealed glories are subservient to it. There is a glory of creation; but creation, “when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” was only the separation of a sphere for the display of the glory of grace, There were manifestations of glory all through from creation to the cross: the glory of judgment sometimes with warning, as the deluge, and Egypt; sometimes sudden like lightning flash, as Sodom and Gomorrah; the glories of patient long-suffering and government as in Israel. But whether we look at the glory of mercy or of judgment, the cross possesses both, and in each outshines all that went before. There was no outlet in heaven, so far as we know, for such a glory as this seen in the cross of Christ. Grace came by Him when He came into the world, then grace came and was seen in all His words and works while here, yet was He straitened till the work of atonement was wrought. “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” So that not His coming into the world but the manner of His departure is the brightest and fullest display of the glory of grace and truth. The cross removed every righteous hindrance to its shining. By the cross a rebellious creation will be reconciled to God, and believers now are made the righteousness of God. It is the greatest proof of God's love; it magnifies His truth, and exalts His majesty also.

God did not wait for the cross without giving some typical information of the grace to be revealed—only shadows, dark and partial, even illegible till the true Light shone. Now all is clear and distinct. From Abel's lamb and onward every sacrifice previous to the cross contained the idea of life forfeited; even the burnt offerings in worship embodied the fact that man was a sinner and incurred the penalty of death. Otherwise Cain's offering would have been accepted. There was neither blood nor death in his offering; therefore he and his offering were rejected. Also in the offerings with blood there was a foreshadowing of the atonement made by the blood of Christ. But it was only at the passover that the initiatory truth and starting-point of all God's gracious dealings with man was set forth.

It was a question between a righteous God and a sinful man; and the first point was—If God wills not the death of the sinner, how are the demands of the Righteous Judge to be met? Mercy pleaded for the sinner's life; but there was a preferential claim, and the Judge was inexorable and would have the uttermost farthing, before any consideration of mercy could, be entertained towards the guilty sinner. We know that the inexorability of the Judge affords the greatest proof of the infinite mercy of God. He gave the Son of His love that those who hated Him might live. And God commends His love to us (Rom. 5:8) in Christ's dying for us while yet sinners.

But it is God as Judge which is the prominent idea in the passover. Every blessing flows from it. Still on that night the word was “I will pass over:” not communion with God, but barring out judgment; God as Judge was going through the land, searching for sinners, not to save but to slay. Blood by His own appointment turns away His eye from the sinner, and the Judge passes on as if

there were no sinners in the house. “When I see the blood, I will pass over.” While the blood upon the door-post prevented the entrance of judgment, other truths were typified in the house, truth beyond the intelligence of the Israelite. But God was setting forth truth for us as well as for Israel. Eating the lamb was a symbolic owning that the blood on the door-post was a substitute for their own. In some measure this is identification with the lamb; not the truth brought out after the cross, that we have with Christ died to sin and law, which goes with assurance of life (Rom. 6 and 7); but that they as sinners were deserving of death, yet were sheltered by the blood of the typical lamb. This confession of having deserved death was not to be lightly made; there must be with it a realizing the bitterness of sin, “with bitter herbs” (that is, genuine repentance, a turning to God) to be eaten with unleavened bread. No allowance or excuse for sin; can be: those who eat the roast lamb eat it with bitter herbs and under the shelter of the blood. With all this there is no assurance of life nor sense of justification. It is the moral and necessary preparation, typically, for God righteously to lead out His chosen people from the land of bondage. As there must be a divine and adequate reason why the sinner should live—the sprinkled blood, so there must be a moral preparation of the send. The divine ground of deliverance; was outside for the eye of God, the moral preparation was inside. Therefore not only the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, but they eat in haste, standing staff in hand and their feet shod. They were thus ready and fitted by grace to be led out of the land of bondage—of sin—by the mighty hand of God who had found a ransom. This moral preparation however would have been vain, had it not been for the blood sprinkled on the door-post. For if the Avenger entered, neither the bitter herbs nor the unleavened bread could save them: God is Judge first, then is Savior.

This marks the order of God's dealings with every soul brought to Him and it is seen in the word, Repent and believe. For what is repentance if not the unfeigned judgment of self in the presence of God? The repentance which does not turn to God is like the mere remorse of Judas. He hanged himself. His real state was the terror and despair of the lost, not God-given; for when God gives repentance, He also gives faith in His mercy through Christ. Where genuine, these are never separated though distinct. But in the order of thought is repentance, then faith, and so the word—Repent and believe.

Many preach faith and put repentance in the background. No doubt the judgment of sin in our nature is far deeper after the knowledge of forgiveness; but this does not set aside repentance as faith's first step in coming to God. Faith in the Savior is impossible unless there be a sense of condemnation. Faith (so called) if preached alone may produce joyful happiness; but there will be no deepness of earth, and what appears will soon wither away. Many sad proofs we know.

The passover is the key to all God's ways with Israel. While they were simply under the blood (i.e. from Egypt to Sinai), there is not even a reproach from God for their sins. It was only after they put themselves under law that judgment appeared. But the blood of the passover, which God had seen, was still efficacious, although its full effect as to display was hindered by law. At the second giving of the law when mercy and its provisions for the involuntary transgressor are so largely blended with the requirements of righteousness, its sheltering power is seen. And its importance as the ground of forbearance and grace is such that the law, whose full effect upon the transgressor is restrained by it, nevertheless makes room for it, and enforces its observance with a penalty. Any soul not keeping it was cut off. The Israelite whether at home or on a journey was bound to keep it. Even in some cases when ceremonially unclean one could not neglect it (see

Num. 9:10).

In the passover as well as in all the sacrifices enjoined by law there was the constant remembrance of sins. The blood of bulls and of goats was ever unable to give a purged conscience (Heb. 10); God waited for the cross to bestow this. There was an outward purifying of the flesh; but rites could not purge the conscience nor make the comers thereunto perfect. These sacrifices were only types and in themselves nothing. Hence men, though keeping the passover, were always subject to bondage through fear of death. David speaks of the blessedness of forgiveness (Psa. 32), but its presence was not known till Christ died. It was a new thing when the Son of man came with power to forgive sins on the earth, to give its assurance by His death. This was unknown to the saints of old. Nor can we say that they more than hoped for the knowledge of forgiveness. The Passover gives hoped for security from judgment, but not the peace flowing from justification. “There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared” (Psa. 130:4); even this was prophetic. After the cross deeper knowledge of His love flows freely, though the fear of God be ever right.

The passover is the initiatory step for a forgiveness founded upon righteousness; it also marks the beginning of a new life. For since it is the ransom for their deliverance from judgment, they could not be left in the land where death reigned. And so God said, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you.” No more Egyptian slavery; henceforward they were free. The power of Egypt was virtually annulled, and the proof was given at the Red Sea which is the necessary complement of the passover. The Egyptian foe lay dead upon the shore never to be seen again. This full result of the passover was before the mind of God when He said, “This month shall be the beginning of months.” The passover was not a solitary act beginning and ending with self; doubtless the first and most important truth in the work of redemption was there signified, but necessarily followed by other truth, and a new start for the ransomed is the consequent truth here. “The first month of the year to you.”

This comprehensive word was given to Moses and Aaron (Ex. 12:1); to the congregation the detail is given for the first observance, and afterward as a memorial. Israel was slow to enter into the meaning of the sprinkled blood, and consequently did not apprehend the beginning of new life save in a carnal way. Believers now know it in its spiritual power; for we look not at a mere type but rejoice in the knowledge of the finished work of Christ, and therefore if any man be in Him he is a new creation. Nor does a soul when first apprehended by God learn this truth; it is after deliverance is realized and consciously out of Egypt, the Red Sea passed through—death and resurrection—that this new portion is known experimentally.

The realized efficacy of the sprinkled blood was on that night limited to their condition. How could they take in all the passover foreshadowed while yet in Egypt? All then known was that the blood upon the door-post, barred the entrance of death, and preserved their first-born alone. They were not yet delivered, though they had the pledge for every one that looked beyond that night. This partial apprehension of the truth contained in the passover is indicated by “every man according to his eating shall make your count of the lamb.”

Many who are truly born of God are as to spiritual condition and intelligence yet in Egypt, having a hope not unmingled with fear that God will pass over their sins and judge mildly. Assurance and settled peace are lacking. God as Father is unknown; and there is no communion so long as they

are in this Egypt condition. There is faith in the blood as interposing between themselves and judgment, but even this often disturbed by doubt. Much of the teaching of the present day does not go beyond this, for the teacher has not advanced farther. How can he lead others? Not that those in this condition have no seasons of joy, for God is very gracious and draws them with the cords of love; but a full redemption is not enjoyed and their peace is according to their eating.

This lack of intelligence and of faith cannot impair the intrinsic worth of Christ as set forth by the paschal lamb. If man failed to apprehend, it was all there before God; and a fitting type is chosen to express the holy nature and immaculate purity of the person of Christ: “A lamb without blemish, a male of the first year.” Israel afterward was reproached with offering the lame and that which was torn by beasts. God selected that which was in nature the purest as the emblem of Him who was absolutely without sin. The angel said to Mary, “That holy thing;” and Christ, whose holy human nature was but imperfectly shadowed by the innocent lamb, lived apart from sinners though among them, and from nature's relationships (a lamb of the first year) though in truest sympathy with those whose hearts were wrung with nature's sorrows.

Then comes the order and manner of eating the passover. But it was not enough to eat the flesh of a slain lamb: God orders how it must be eaten. “Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs and the purtenance thereof.” Fire is symbolic of the judgment of God. Christ was made sin, and as such bore the judgment of sin. Now that all is done, we know that He is more than the roast lamb. He is also the bread which came down from heaven; but first for every soul brought to God He is the lamb roast with fire. So it is not merely a slain lamb that meets the sinner's need, but also roast with fire. “Eat not of it raw or sodden at all with water.”

Yet there are those who make the incarnation of Christ of all importance rather than His death. But Christ came to die, to be—sin-bearer, and as such to glorify God: how can His life or His coming into the world be the turning-point, and not His death? Can such teachers have ever realized their condition as lost and under condemnation? Surely the words “sin” and “atonement” are to them without meaning. They would feed upon an unslain lamb. Christ in this world and not dying would only make man more guilty and hopelessly under condemnation and the law. It is the sentimentality of nature and nothing more to talk about the incarnation and life of Christ apart from the object for which He became incarnate. His life is truly the pattern, the model of holy living, obedience, and self-abnegation; but not to man until he has been under the sprinkled blood, and has “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” To die as an offering for sin was His purpose: otherwise there would have been no incarnation. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him, said our Lord with His death in view.

The preciousness of the worth of Christ is indicated by the command to burn all that remained of the lamb uneaten. On that night each fed upon it “according to his eating.” There was much more than any Israelite could then apprehend, for it was a whole Christ there typified. Was that to be vain which man in Egypt could not understand? Nay—gather up the fragments that nothing be lost. What remained until the morning was returned to God who knew its priceless worth. That lamb was God's feast, and what man could not eat went up to Him in fire. But “burnt with fire” tells too of the unsparing judgment of God; the whole lamb was roast with fire and all that remained was burnt in the morning. All that Christ was was offered to God, for nothing less than a whole Christ could bear all God's judgment.

Next comes the ordinance of the passover as a memorial. God is looking to the future; as each year rolled on, this self-same day was to be observed as a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It is called a feast to the Lord. Why is mention only made of unleavened bread for the seven days that follow? God was looking onward and beyond Israel to the church when the Israelitish branches of the olive-tree of testimony would be broken off. There is rest from the exercises represented by bitter herbs for a soul that has intelligence and faith in the already finished work of Christ. He bore our sins and judgment; this purges the conscience and there is no room for bitter herbs. And a purged conscience is so much the greater reason why we should purge ourselves from all the contamination of leaven. Our whole life here below, typified by the seven days, is characterized by unleavened bread. In Lev. 23 where wer have the feasts of the Lord, the seven days of unleavened bread are called a feast, and distinctly separated from the fourteenth day at even when the passover is eaten. From the fifteenth to the twenty-first day inclusive is the feast of unleavened bread, during which all servile work is forgotten. Ex. 12 prohibits leaven under the penalty of death. It is in keeping with the righteousness of God, that God's wrath is also revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Lev. 23:4-8, though after Israel had broken the law which they promised to obey, yet as being a feast to the Lord, omits the failure of man and its consequences. It is the Lord's passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even, and on the fifteenth the seven days' feast of unleavened bread begins.

It is to this scripture that Paul refers in 1 Cor. 5:7, 8. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast. The feast here is not the Lord's Supper, but the life-long feast of unleavened bread which begins when consciously under the shelter of the sprinkled blood, and continues to the end: the old leaven, and the leaven of malice and wickedness, all put away, and, in place thereof, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This clear reference of the apostle to Lev. 23 makes abundantly plain that God had the church in view and not a mere ordinance for Israel. The church was always in the mind of God and has its own peculiar part in the ordinances given to Israel. Separation from evil is our feast of unleavened bread and the true memorial of Christ our passover sacrificed for us. In Israel the memorial of the passover was to be observed in all their generations after the manner of its institution. This which is for Israel alone is separated from that which has its present fulfillment in the church. Accordingly in Ex. 12 where the memorial is given (and in spirit to be observed by every saint of whatever dispensation) and Israel's manner of observing it, the former is in the words of God to Moses and the latter in the words of Moses to the people. And it is according to the wisdom of God that he who was the mediator of the old covenant should be God's mouthpiece to Israel; as also when the church and its special privileges are in view, we have the words direct from God Himself.

Israel must keep the anniversary of their deliverance in the same way as they did eat the passover in Egypt, with loins girded, feet shod, staff in hand, and in haste. “And it shall come to pass when your children shall say to you, What mean you by this service, that ye shall say, It is the Lord's passover.” It was truly an unwonted way of keeping a feast, standing and eating in haste. No wonder if the children should ask the meaning. But it was God's way of bringing vividly to their remembrance their previous bondage and His most marvelous way of delivering. Type too of a far greater deliverance, it was fitting to have a perpetual memorial; which the Red Sea had not, although it was there that power was openly displayed. The nations heard of the signal judgment upon Pharaoh and his host; but did they hear of blood sprinkled upon the door-post, of the way in

which a sin-judging God interposed to save His people from judgment? The blood on the door-post is the foundation of all; the passover is God's feast, its memorial is forever.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 123

The Passover and the Lord's Supper: Part 2

Israel has not yet kept the feast of unleavened bread in the spirit of Ex. 12 or Lev. 23. They quickly fell into the condition given in Num. 9:6, of the men who were defiled by the dead body of a man. It is expressive of their condition at that very moment. They had touched sin which brings death and were defiled. Historically it was a new question for Moses, and he inquires of the Lord. God in answer meets the present case and provides for another. The man that was on a journey as well as the unclean by reason of a dead body, both shall keep the passover unto the Lord. God marks their want of care in keeping the passover while proving His mercy to them. The man who could not eat the passover at the appointed season, because he was defiled or on a journey, was to eat it on the fourteenth day of the second month. He might have to eat it alone; at all events he was not in fellowship with Israel eating it in the first month. But see 2 Chron. 30 where a nation eats the Passover in the second month. As to the particular meaning of eating the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month instead of the first month, I wait for further light, unless it be an intimation of their state as then nationally defiled. But two things are evident that sin brought in disorder, and that God in sovereign grace provides a remedy—a remedy which, while meeting the need of His failing people, declares more fully the riches of grace.

The Lord's supper contains more than the passover. As presented in the Gospels it is the continuation of the passover but under a new aspect, and the outward form of memorial changed. The broken bread is, the symbol of His body given for us, the wine of His blood which does not merely screen from judgment, but was shed for the remission of sins. The supper has two aspects which we may be permitted to distinguish as the kingdom aspect and the church aspect. In the three synoptic Gospels the Lord's supper is given in its connection with the kingdom, save that in Luke we have its character of grace beside, but not quite so fully as in 1 Cor. 11 where we have the distinctive and special church characteristics of the Lord's supper—in remembrance of the Lord, and until He come. Like the passover it is a memorial, but rather of the Lord than of His work, but unlike the passover which is an ordinance forever, as long as time endures, the supper in its church aspect ceases when the Lord comes. “Until He come.”

At the last supper, i.e. the last in its original character, the Lord instituted the new thing, and as recorded in Matt. solely in view of the gathered remnant. The Lord looked onward to this last passover when, in virtue of His atoning work on the cross,

He would set aside the old form; and He said “with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” But this in Luke (where the Lord joins the supper with the remembrance of His person) is not merely the body given and the blood, the seal of the new covenant and the sure foundation of every blessing, but His person, Himself rather than what we have through Him Nor need we wonder that He who has proved His love to us personally, when about to give a constantly recurring memorial of Himself as dying for us— “Do this in remembrance of me” —should say “with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.” As the disciples were constantly in His thoughts, so He would be ever in ours.

The linking on of the new thing to the old is evident. “As they were eating” the old passover “Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave to the disciples and said, Take, eat: this is my body.” This, not the lamb but the bread broken, is to be the symbol of His body. And now that He was come, bread (which is connected with the thought of Himself as the true bread from heaven) is the most suited symbol. Only here the bread is broken and means death, as well as the blood separate from the body. Death was prefigured in the passover, but in the supper there is more. It is communion with Him as the One that died in our stead and for us. Eating is always the expression of fellowship. Those who partook of things sacrificed to idols had fellowship with demons, and we in partaking of the bread and wine have communion with the body and the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). On the passover night the blood was to be sprinkled on the doorpost; but now under the symbol—wine—we drink it, and by faith realize its power for the remission of sins. Thus eating the bread and drinking the wine is the outward expression that we eat His flesh and drink His blood, without which none can have life.

The gathered remnant on that night were the representatives of all who have since believed in Christ. On the day of Pentecost they were formed into the church of God. This was a new thing, a new position for the believing remnant, and the Lord added daily and soon brought in Gentiles. The church was formed before Gentiles were added to it, and when they were brought in, they did not change the character of the saints as a remnant, of being the continuation of the unbroken line of grace from the beginning. So Paul in Gal. 4 does not sever the Jerusalem which is, from the Jerusalem which is in bondage, though he shows how widely distinctive they are. The first in bondage, the second free, still Jerusalem, the two being—so far identified that the promise to the first is enjoyed by the second. The prophet who has bewailed the calamities of the earthly Jerusalem looked onward to millennial blessedness (Isa. 54) But the millennial is not yet come. Meantime the apostle, that is the Spirit of God, takes the promise and endows the church with it.

Jerusalem is called the holy city, the city of solemnities, the place where God rests. This will be manifestly so in the millennium, but now for a time the earthly character of the holy city is in abeyance, and the heavenly Jerusalem, from above, is now our mother. Saints were always a remnant, and will be until the reign of peace, when the power and the rule shall be with them and not with the wicked (Dan. 7:18). As a remnant the line of saints is continuous whatever the dispensation, or the name by which God was specially known, whether El Shaddai, Jehovah or Father; and there never was a moment when God had no saint upon the earth.

The church position, unknown till Pentecost, is beyond the remnant character of saints. Not as a remnant are we joint-heirs with Christ, not as children of the Jerusalem which is from above are we the members of the body of Christ, but because we are made the church of God by the indwelling Spirit, therefore are we joint-heirs with Christ and members of His body. The characteristic and distinguishing work of the church from every other family of heaven is the being baptized into one body by the Spirit. As the Spirit is one, so is the body. This unity is not predicated of any number of saints save of the church, and it ever subsists—though we may have failed to keep it in the bond of peace. Thus, while the saints of the church have not lost one of the privileges possessed by those of the former dispensation, they have besides unspeakably greater. And the Lord's supper, which in one aspect is a continuation of the passover, is also connected with new truth and higher blessing which the passover never could convey.

The Lord's supper is not properly a type of His death as was the passover. It is truly a memorial. Types in scripture are the shadows of things to come; and when the true Lamb was come, there was no more room for the type. The eating and drinking of the bread and the wine are commemorative of the body and of the blood, and was so ordained by the Lord. For He was going away and leaves a memorial of His dying love, though in Matthew and in Mark the prominent thought is not “do this in remembrance of me,” but that the blood is shed “for the remission of sins.” This would be their joy, the time was coming when He would share it with them again— “drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” It is evident from this that Matthew does not give the church aspect of the supper, while equally plain that it is an advance upon the original passover. For the Lord's supper as enjoyed by the church will cease before we enter the Father's kingdom. But we, beside being the house of God and Christ's one body, we follow in the wake of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. We share with them in the Father's kingdom, not in the kingdom of the Son of man, i.e. the millennial earth, but as risen and in bodies of glory. Then the Lord as the risen man in His body of glory, the model after which ours shall be fashioned, will partake with all the risen saints of this new wine “which cheereth God and man.” They will rejoice in the presence of the risen Lord, and He will rejoice over and with them.

This is the Father's kingdom, which does not mean eternity but the heavenly portion of the glorified saints, during the time that man upon the earth is enjoying the blessings of Christ's millennial reign.

For the present the Lord would no more drink of the fruit of the vine. He waits to drink new wine with them in a new scene. Clearly the Lord here is not speaking of the joy of the church while here below; for the church of God is never called the Father's kingdom. Nor is the earthly remnant so called, who will again have their feast of the passover, and after a fuller sort (Ezek. 45:21). Not a lamb, but a bullock, to be followed by sacrifices on each of the following seven days. For then even the earthly remnant will know remission of sins; then will be the new covenant in contrast with the old which sealed death upon the transgressor.

Mark gives the supper from the same stand-point as Matthew, in connection with the kingdom, but with the differences characteristic of each Gospel. In Matthew we see the rejected Messiah with the gathered but despised remnant. In Mark the Lord speaks as Servant. He does not say “with you” when looking onward to the drinking wine in the kingdom. It is not His association with the disciples but His own reward as having perfectly done the will of God that sent Him. When the kingdom of God is come, then the Servant will again drink of the fruit of the vine, but then it will be new. As Servant He does not say “kingdom of my Father,” but “kingdom of God.” This change and the omission of “with you” are in harmony with the character of Mark's gospel which presents the Lord as a Servant Kingdom of God has a wider significance than “kingdom of my Father.” Wherever righteousness, peace, and joy are found, there is the kingdom of God. These marks will be found among the saints of the millennium in the kingdom of the Son of man, and therefore the kingdom of the heavens is also called the kingdom of God. But the moral marks of the kingdom of God are to be found now, and perhaps with deeper significance, for it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The present time marked by faith and patience is with these moral and spiritual characteristics preeminently the kingdom of God. And the Lord drinks of the fruit of the vine now, the new vine of the kingdom, in gathering disciples to His Name and Person. The shame and reproach of the world are joy to those who are thus gathered. The blood here as in Matthew is

shed for the remission of the sins of many, both Jews and Gentiles, the “nigh” and the “far off.” It is the supper, but not the Lord's supper with its church privileges common to all. The church as such is not in view here, but the kingdom of God which is founded upon the blood of the new covenant. This new covenant is with God's Israel and always gives them the prominent place. They had this pre-eminency during the old covenant until the middle wall of partition was broken down. They will have it again when the saints of the past, and those who now share in the Lord's rejection, drink wine with Him in the Father's kingdom. The old covenant which has vanished away will then be replaced by the new covenant. But whether old or new both are with Israel. No covenant was ever made with the Gentile. Nor is Heb. 8 a covenant with the church, but it declares that all the blessings it will bring to Israel by-and-bye are for the saints now.

In Luke as in Mark it is the “kingdom of God” and morally now as well as in the future glory. Also in Luke the far-reaching of grace is more prominent than in the previous Gospels. For Christ is in this Gospel not so much presented in His official relationship to the Jew as in Matthew, or in His service to God as in Mark, but in His connection with man whether Jew or Gentile—Christ. The MAN in the activities of grace toward all men. Chap. 15 gives the key note to Luke's Gospel, as Matt. 13 to Matthew's. As regards the disciples this grace takes the form of intense personal affection. What more expressive of His love than when He said “with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer?” This last passover was the right moment for setting aside the old observance of the passover, and instituting the new thing, but it surely tells of His love when He speaks of His intense desire for it. In Luke, as in the others, the supper is the pledge of the coming kingdom, and the Lord tells of His joy in it; and that because the true Lamb was offered to God. It was not and could not any longer remain a mere shelter from judgment but a full remission of sins through His blood. But Luke gives more and for the first time we have the Lord's supper in its special character of grace. The two other evangelists record “take eat this is my body.” Here in Luke “This is my body given for you:” also the cup after supper, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you.” The “for you” brings His love home to our hearts, and makes us recognize our interest in the blood. And what an appeal to our hearts “Do this in remembrance of me.” This personal remembrance was not in the passover. Now, all that it contained, and all presented in the kingdom aspect of the Supper is merged in that personal and loving remembrance peculiar to the church of God, where we have the enjoyment of a closer intimacy with the Lord.

How suited to this feast it may be added, is the title “the Lord's supper.” For it embodies all that He suffered, all that He is in giving Himself for us. All the shame and sorrow of the cross, all the judgment He bore is “for you.” Yea all the blessing which the shed blood bestows now, all the glory it will bring soon, all is “for you.” The cruel mockings, the bitter scorn, the being forsaken of God, and the triumphant rising, the glorious victory over death, His exaltation as Man at the right hand of God, all are “for you.” Why all this “for you?” Because it is not a question so much of our blessing and future glory as of the work of Christ to God. And the church will be God's proof to the world how highly He estimates the person and work of Him who died and rose again. The church in glory is the precious consequence of Christ on the cross. The pledge to us of the glory is the Lord's supper; a token, not for some more favored company, but “for you.” O how slow of heart to believe all that His death and resurrection pledge to us. How small our enjoyment compared with what simple faith would lead us into.

There is yet another feature of the Lord's supper which we find in 1 Cor. 11:26 “For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till He come.” Not less in connection with the kingdom, but with His coming. And when He comes, it is to take us to the many mansions in the Father's house; a higher place than the Father's kingdom. “Until He come” —this to those who look for Him is the sweetest of all; for then we shall see Him. We shall not see Him, nay, we cannot, without being like Him. But if it were possible to see Him without being like Him, or to be like Him without seeing Him, which would we desire most? Let love answer. But the counsels of grace have indissolubly joined the two. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Paul as the apostle of the church gives the Lord's supper in its full church character. He received a direct revelation from the Lord concerning it, and links together the two greatest events that were or can be: Christ's coming to die, and His coming again. The Lord's supper is the memorial of the past, and the pledge of the future.

But there is one thing said of the blood which is common to the Gospels and to the Epistle; the blood is that of the new covenant. Since the new covenant is with Israel we may inquire why it is mentioned here where the church alone is contemplated. The answer is, first, that the blood of the new covenant ensures every blessing to Israel, not on the ground of obedience but by sovereign grace, and therefore Israel and the church are so far on the same ground. Israel's covenanted blessings rest upon the blood, and the people, now down-trodden, scattered and peeled by the judgment of God, will be brought back to their own land with clean water sprinkled upon them and be made the head of the nations under the rule of their own Messiah whose blood has secured both their blessing and ours. Secondly, it is the blood of the new covenant to us because we with whom no such covenant is made, yet enter into the enjoyment of all they will have, and that long before their time of blessing comes, possessed and known in a much higher way and more blessed too. All their earthly blessings are recast for as in a heavenly mold. The Lord will create new heavens and a new earth, and Israel restored will be a part of the new creation then. Now we as being in Christ are individually n new creation; a part of the new creation before the earth feels its power. It will be said to Israel “Ye are the sons of the living God” (Hos. 1). We are now sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). So also Rom. 9:24-26 where the words of Hosea for Israel are applied to the church “even us whom He hath called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.” So we have all and more than all the blessing given to them by the new covenant. But it is through the same blood, that of the new covenant, that shed for many, which has provided for us some better thing.

If the church's position be that of joyful expectancy, it is also solemn. Showing the Lord's death till He come is not only a memorial; it is a testimony to the world that they crucified the Lord. The church partaking of the Lord's supper is a public witness of the world's sin, and of its condemnation. This solemn testimony has been going on for more than eighteen centuries, an unbroken line of witnesses maintained by the power of God; who for the purposes of righteous judgment as well as of grace has not permitted the rage of man, or the power of Satan, to destroy it. For it is no less a witness of the long-suffering of God as of the world's sin. So long as the church remains here, the remission of sins through His blood is preached. When the Lord comes, the Supper ceases, the saints are gathered up, and the judgment of the world begins. Meantime we at the Lord's table have by faith both His dying and His coming again present to our hearts, the foundation and the top-stone of grace.

Such is the feast of the Lord's supper, present blessedness and the assurance of future glory with the Lord. We do not forget what we were; we do not forget that it was our sin that brought the Lord Jesus to the cross. And if we had not a purged conscience, the Lord's supper would be the right time when to afflict our souls. It was in connection with the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread that Israel were told to eat the bread of affliction (Deut. xvi. 3). There is nothing in the Lord's supper that answers to the bread of affliction. Cleansed by the blood, we gather round His table, and in gladness of heart partake of that which reminds us of what the Lord Jesus had to suffer in order to deliver us from judgment and death; and when we look not only at the bare deliverance but at the blessing and the position which redemption gives us, then we can understand, the apostle when he said “God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin.” There is no “bread of affliction” for the new creation.

Saints now are not only heirs of the kingdom, but also the church of God. As church, their position is higher than as inheritors of the kingdom, though still possessing every kingdom privilege and honor.

The Supper in the Gospels is in connection both with the kingdom and the church, and in both aspects linked on to the original passover. Even in the Epistle, “Christ is our Passover.” In Matthew and Mark the original paschal lamb gives way to the Supper, but in connection with the kingdom. In Luke both the kingdom and the saints aspect are given. The highest joy of the kingdom aspect will be when we drink wine with Him in the kingdom of the Father. Waiting for an absent Lord is the special feature of the saintly aspect, “Until He come.” Paul writing to the church gives this alone. We shall drink with Him then, not in remembrance of an absent Lord, but new wine in the full and perfect joy of seeing Him. R. B.

Chapter 124

Peace of Conscience

The question is how far the conscience is entirely and perfectly clear before God: not if one has a doctrinal certainty by faith that God will not impute, which is quite right; but if the conscience is entirely purified as a present thing in the presence of God. If not, Satan has a handle against us. And this peace of the conscience cannot be had till we have judged our sin as God judges it; for this is the effect of the light, that is, of God's presence. It is thus that truth in the inward parts, or practical purifying, goes on with conscience-purifying. The great thing is for one to be one's self before God: for this, it is well to be assured as a doctrinal certainty that God cannot impute anything to the believer, for that is of faith; but then going to God that one's conscience may be perfectly in the light and all right with God. If this be so, there will be no need of much speaking to man.

Chapter 125

Unbroken Peace, Unclouded Favor, a Hope Never to Be Disappointed, Joyful Tribulations and Joy in God: 1

“Great and glorious promises indeed,” some may say, “but who can boast of possessing and realizing them?” Dear reader, all these promises have been accomplished long since by and in Him, in whom all the promises of God are “yea” and “amen” for the glory of God by us. Those glorious things mentioned above, for the possession and realization of which many an upright soul, in ignorance of the full truth of the gospel, has longed and sighed with prayers and tears, are the sure and present portion of every believer, who in childlike faith accepts the testimony of God's word, as to the perfect person of His Son Jesus Christ, and the eternal redemption accomplished by Him. It is thus he appropriates these precions truths.

The real impediment to such an appropriation by simple faith exists, I need scarcely say, not on the part of God and of His unchangeable word. It lies solely on our (i.e., the human) side; for we are so inclined to look at our own poor hearts and their constantly changing deceiving feelings, or to trust our unreliable experiences and our poor foolish understanding, instead of confiding in God and His word, as the sole, eternal and immoveable foundation of truth. If we look at the human side (i.e., our feelings, our experiences, or our understanding of the truth), where are we to find peace, light, hope, or joy? We might just as well look for peace in the midst of a battle, or for sunshine by night, or talk of hope in a shipwreck, when the ship is sinking and no shore nor lifeboat near, or of joy at a funeral. In looking at the human side, i.e., ourselves, all is uncertain, fluctuating, and dark. But if we look at the divine side, i.e., at God and His Son Jesus Christ the only true and possible Mediator between God and men, and simply believe the testimony of His word as to the value and virtue of His perfect atoning sacrifice and redemption work, all is sure, clear, and settled.

For the sake of such as have not been able hitherto to enjoy true solid peace with God and the blessings resulting therefrom, as mentioned at the head of this paper, I offer a few remarks, which, under God's grace, may be blessed to them.

First of all it appears necessary to be fully clear as to the true meaning of the term, “Peace with God.”

What does it mean, to have “peace with God”? To be clear about this question, let us first ask what is the meaning of the word “peace”? This word is used pretty much in the same sense in the spiritual as in the natural way.

The word “peace” has a three-fold meaning. It signifies—

1. The opposite of trouble;

2. The opposite of enmity and war, and

3. The opposite of wrath, punishment, or judgment (“Thy sins are forgiven. Go in peace.” Luke 7:50).

Through sin man has lost peace in all these three aspects. Sin has robbed him of his inward peace, and given him instead of it a troubled guilty conscience and a restless, never-satisfied heart. Sin has robbed him also of his outward peace. Our first parents before the fall had enjoyed that outward and inward peace in the paradise in a life without care and trouble. But Adam fell, and the lord of the earth, reduced to the stooping posture of a laboring bondman, had to wrest, in the sweat of his face, his food from the earth, which yielded him not only herbs for nourishment, but also thistles and thorns, as the rods of chastisement and constant mementos of his fall.

But sin has not only deprived man of his inward and outward peace, in the first of the three meanings of that word, as mentioned above. It has filled his heart with distrust and enmity against God, and thus made him an enemy of God. That enmity, which in the world is now ripening fast towards its full development to culminate, at a not very distant time, in a general war of rebellion against the “Lord of Lords,” and “King of kings” (Revelation 19), we find immediately after the fall at work in Adam’s heart (Gen. 3:12), who lays his sin, so to speak, at God's door. Thus man fallen not only became a sinner but an enemy of God (Rom. 5:8, 10), and “the way of peace he has not known” (Rom. 3:17).

God, who is “Holy, Holy, Holy,” could not leave sin unpunished. A bit of clay wanted to be like God. The creature had rebelled against His majesty, and dared to doubt His love and truth, in believing the arch-enemy and liar, who essayed to instill suspicion against God. The sentence of death, announced to man in case of disobedience, was now pronounced over Adam and Eve; and they were banished forever from the paradise of earthly happiness, the access to which and to the tree of life was henceforth barred by the flaming sword of the Cherubim. The Damocles-sword of death was suspended over man. The peace and safety of the paradise had vanished forever.

But God be praised! no sooner has He pronounced over fallen man the penalty for sin, when immediately after, in His judgment upon the serpent, within hearing of our fallen parents though not speaking to them—for God cannot make light of sin, as the cross of His dear Son proves—He announces the way of salvation in His Son, “the woman's Seed,” who was to bruise the serpent's head, abolish death, and bring to light life and incorruption by the gospel. And when Adam's first-born had become the murderer of his brother, and the earth soon began to fill with violence and corruption, and after the deluge, with idolatry; and when, after the lapse of four thousand years, man's probation terminated in the rejection, expulsion, and crucifixion of the last Adam, even the Son of God, and Satan the prince and god of this world appeared to triumph: it was then and there we know, that the promise, given in paradise, was fulfilled, and Satan's defeat accomplished. The same precious, blood of the Son of God which was the proof of man's complete guilt and irreparable ruin, was according to God's wondrous counsels of grace, the means of putting away all guilt and sin for everyone who believes in that precious blood, which “cleanseth front all sin.” But at the same time the cross, where Satan appeared to triumph, was the means of his complete defeat. For he who through Adam's fall had acquired the power of death, was brought to naught through death, by Him who being “the woman's Seed” triumphed on the cross over Satan, that old serpent, “spoiling principalities and powers, and making a shew of them openly” (Col. 2:15).

But the cross of Jesus Christ, as it procured and was the blessed accomplishment of the promise given in paradise, at the same time filled up the measure of man's sins, Therefore “the last Adam,” who is “the Lord from heaven,” before He became obedient unto the death of the cross, repeated the sentence pronounced upon the first Adam in paradise, though increased and intensified by those solemn words.: “Now is the judgment of this world.” But—blessed be His name—He did not fail, even then to add the promise of redeeming grace and love. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” And later on the Holy Ghost repeats the sentence of death pronounced in paradise, though with a terribly solemn addition, saying, “And as it is appointed unto men, once to die, but after this the judgment.” Jesus, before He was crucified, had announced the judgment upon this world, to be settled in that terrific series of judgments recorded in the closing book of Holy writ. But the same book of Revelation instructs us as to the meaning of the Spirit when adding the solemn words, “but after this the judgment” (Rev. 20:11 -15). We there find that these words, “but after this the judgment,” mean nothing less than “the second death,” which is “the lake of fire,” “where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.”

Yet even there (Heb. 9:27, 28) the wondrous grace of God does not only say, “And as it is appointed unto men, once to die, but after this the judgment,” but the Holy Spirit adds: “So Christ, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear the second time without sin for salvation to those that look for him.”

The first part of that announcement of divine grace for penitent sinners, so closely following upon the pronouncing of the sentence of divine justice, we find in the closing verse of ch. 4 of our Epistle, (Romans), as having been accomplished by the work of Christ, “Who has been delivered for our offenses and has been raised for our justification.”

Mark, believing reader. It is not said here, “Who has been delivered for our sins,” but for our “offenses.” We know that Christ died for our sins. Why then does the Spirit of God say here “for our offenses”? God intends to give us in this blessed portion of His word the clear and full assurance that the sacrifice of His Son is so precious and fully availing in His sight, that even if we look at sin in its worst aspect of “offense” or “transgression” of God's distinct and express commandments (i.e., of insubordination against His will, and rebellion against His majesty), the redemption work of His Son Jesus “Christ, whose blood cleanses from all sin, is so fully availing before His holy eye, that it has effected a full atonement and perfect clearance as to all and every debt of sin, for every one who believes.”

Let us take a case from common life. It is always wrong for children to run about in bad company in the streets at night. But suppose some careless parents had not forbidden their boy to do so, his act, wrong as it might be in itself, would not be regarded as open disobedience, or transgression of a positive commandment, and consequently contempt of parental authority. But if the boy in spite of the express prohibition of his father had been running about in the streets, at night, his act wrong and improper in itself would assume the aggravated character of positive disobedience and rebellion against the will and authority of his father. This then appears to me to be the reason why the Holy Spirit in Rom. 4:25 does not use the word “sins” but “offenses.” It is to give to the sinner repentant but believing the happy assurance, removing the last shadow of fear, that God in all the just and righteous claims of His majesty, so shamefully outraged by us, and of His holiness, righteousness, and truth, against all of which we had sinned so grievously, has been so fully met

and satisfied by the death of His Son who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that on that cross “mercy and truth are met together,” and “righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). Therefore the father could “kiss” his returning prodigal son. Reader, have you felt that “kiss of peace” of the Father? You receive it in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. In ch. 8 we get the “best garment” and the “ring” and the “shoes.”

One word more before we enter upon the fifth chap. In the last verse of ch. 4 the apostle continues, “and has been raised for our justification.” Why is it not said, “for the forgiveness of our sins”? We know that “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7), and that if Christ was not raised, we are stall in our sins (1 Cor. 15). Why then, do we find in this verse nothing of sins, but only “offenses"? and why “justification"?

The first part of this question, why “offenses” instead of sins? we have just answered. But why does the Spirit of God speak here of “justification” instead of “forgiveness of sins?” Simply for the same reason that “offenses” was said instead of “sins.” The work of Jesus Christ is so precious in the sight of God, and has so fully met and satisfied all His righteous claims, that it has not only wrought a full atonement for our sins, even when looked at in their worst aspect, but absolutely cleared away the debt of the debtor, so that he through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ is considered justified, as if he had never been a guilty sinner or a debtor! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the proof of it. He is not only the “First-born from among the dead,” but also the “Firstborn of many brethren.” How infinitely richer and greater than human grace is the grace of God! If a criminal of this world has spent some years in prison and commended himself by a penitent spirit and good conduct to the prison authorities, he is permitted in some countries to return home before the term of his penalty has expired. He then receives a “ticket of leave,” and goes to his home “on leave,” where he for the remainder of the time of his penalty is under the surveillance of the police, with the brand of shame as a “ticket-of-leave man” upon him. And should his conduct not satisfy the expectations of the authorities, he is liable to be sent back to prison. Is this the way that God pardons sinners and criminals? (and what criminals!) Does He send them into the world with Cain's mark of shame upon them? Chap. 20 of St. John's Gospel (ver. 19-21) and the fifth chapter of our precious Epistle furnish us with the answer.

Let us now pass from the last verse of chap. 4 the threshold as it were of the fifth chapter, to a closer meditation on the latter.

Chapter 126

Unbroken Peace, Unclouded Favor, a Hope Never to Be Disappointed, Joyful Tribulations and Joy in God: 2

At the very entrance of chap. 5 we find peace with God for all who have been justified by faith in the quickening power of God and in His word. This peace with God is the first result of the work of Christ mentioned in the last verse of the preceding chapter, our justification by faith being connected with the verse before (24) of that chapter. First comes justification before God, then peace with God. Both do not necessarily always take place at the same time, 1 do not mean on God's side but on the side, i.e. in the soul, of the believer. The first word of our risen Savior in the midst of His own was: “PEACE!” but not only peace, but “peace unto you!” — “And when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side,” i.e. He pointed to His wounds, to His accomplished redemption work, as the fountain and foundation of their salvation and peace with God. Thus the disciples beheld in their Risen Savior at the same time before their wondering eyes the work and person of Jesus, who had made peace by the blood of His cross, and whom God in His redeeming love had delivered for their—and our—offenses, and in divine power had raised again for their—and our—justification.

Over our Savior's empty grave arose peacefully the sun, reflecting the glory of His Father who had raised Him from the dead, gilding with its beams the dark entrance of the grave and the stone, on which the heavenly messenger of resurrection in his long white garment was seated (Mark 16:2-5). Not a single cloud on the blue sky. The last grumbling of the thunder from Sinai has died away; for the handwriting of ordinances that was against us had been nailed to the cross, where Jesus, who had magnified the law and had borne its curse, had been made a curse for us. The wrath of God, who is a consuming fire, had spent itself at the cross upon the “Son of His love,” when He who knew no sin, was made sin for us; and when He, whom none could convince of sin, “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” when He, who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him that by His stripes we might be healed. God's majesty which we had offended, His righteousness contrary to which we had acted, His holiness against which we had sinned and His truth which we had dared to belie, had been so fully met on the cross, and satisfied in all their inalienable claims, that God raised His Son from the dead, not only because this was due to Him in His threefold character, (1.) as Son of Man, (2.) as Son of David, and (3.) as Son of God (compare Acts 2:24 -28, 30-32, 34; Rom. 1:3, 4), but because He, who as our Substitute had been “delivered for our offenses,” must be raised for our justification, not only as the “first-born from among the dead,” but as the “firstborn of many brethren.” Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It was on the cross that God's “mercy and truth met together,” and “righteousness and peace kissed each other.” Therefore God could bid His sun of peace rise over the empty tomb of His Son, until the risen One Himself with His own eyes brought His mourning disciples the joyful message of peace. Conqueror in the most awful of all battles, He appeared in their midst, and

announced to them the first result of His sufferings and death: “PEACE UNTO YOU!”

From the deep waters of death that had been beneath and around Him, and from the fiery billows of Jehovah that had rolled over His head, when deep called unto deep at the noise of His water-spouts, when all His waves and His billows had gone over Him, Jesus had come up victoriously.

“Peace” was the first word of our risen Savior. Peace, “peace with God,” the Holy Ghost repeats at the very entrance of our chapter, as the first result of the work and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, mentioned at the close of the chapter preceding. “Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,” is the apostolic and heavenly greeting through the Spirit of God to the divers churches.

Grace and mercy through the Son,

Is the answer from the throne.

This “peace with God,” mark, Christian reader, does not depend upon our feelings nor our experiences, but rather produces them suitably. More than eighteen hundred years ago that “peace” was made. It rests on the work of Jesus Christ, and is inseparably connected with it. By that redemption work of His Son, accomplished on the cross, God has been fully satisfied in all His claims, and therefore we, who are justified by faith, have peace with God. When Jesus bowed His head upon the cross and said, “It is finished,” God from heaven pronounced His “yea” and “Amen,” by rending in two from the top to the bottom the veil that was in the temple, and which had hitherto been the partition between His holy presence and the sinner. A man would have rent it from the bottom to the top; God rent it from the top to the bottom, as a sign that He in all His claims of divine righteousness, holiness and truth has been so fully met and satisfied through the sacrifice of His Son, that henceforth there was no more separation wall between Him and even the vilest sinner, who has no other passport but the Name, and no other title to present to God but the blood, of His Son Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin.

I repeat, reader, that our peace with God does not rest upon our feelings, nor upon our experiences, but on the atoning sacrifice and redemption work of Jesus Christ, which has been accomplished once for all. Therefore our peace with God (not with ourselves) is just as firm and secure and as eternally founded, as is the precious foundation itself, on which it rests. If I were to found that peace upon my poor heart and its constantly changing feelings and experiences, I might just as well found it on the high and low tide of the sea. At high tide the ship enters the harbor with all sails set, and after a few hours at low tide it lies helpless on one side in the mud! How many who seek peace with themselves, i.e. with their own poor heart, instead of with God, find themselves in this lamentable condition; while there are others, who knowing well that “he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28:26), are yet seeking to make their peace with God dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit within them, and thus confound the work of the Son of God accomplished on the cross for us, with the work of the Spirit of God within us—again looking at their own hearts only in another way. They forget, that not the Holy Ghost, but Jesus Christ, is our Savior. The work of Jesus Christ is a work of salvation and redemption, which has been accomplished without, or outside us, once for all. The work of the Spirit of God is a work of sanctification, continually going on within us, who have been justified by faith in the blood of Jesus

Christ, and in the power of God who raised Him from the dead, and thus we have peace with God.

This reminds me of a Christian lady, of whom I once read, who had long tried to make her peace with God dependent upon her feelings. She was upright in all her endeavors but felt all the more miserable. But “unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness,” and their “end is peace.” One night she dreamed that she was rolling down a steep hill towards a deep precipice. In her distress she caught hold of a small projecting branch at the mouth of the pit, and cried, “Lord Jesus, save me!” A voice from the deep answered her, “Let go the twig.” “Why, it is my only support to keep me from falling.” Again she cried with a louder voice, “Lord Jesus, save me!” The same voice again answered, “Let go the twig.” “Impossible!” she thought, “I cannot let go the twig: it would be certain destruction.” For the third time she cried in extreme agony, “Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me; save me.” And again the same voice replied, “Unless you let go the twig, you cannot be saved!” She then let go the twig, and fell down—right into the arms of her Savior. She awoke; and it did not cost her much trouble to understand and realize the truth conveyed to her by that dream. The little twig to which she had clung, and which she had made her refuge, was her own heart with its changing and unreliable feelings, which she had trusted rather than her Lord and Savior, and His ever perfect valid redemption work. She had built her peace upon sand; but now she rested it on Christ, who has made peace and is our peace.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 127

Unbroken Peace, Unclouded Favor, a Hope Never to Be Disappointed, Joyful Tribulations and Joy in God: 3

We have seen how firm and immovable (because divine) is the foundation on which our peace with God rests, and how vain every attempt to obtain it in our own (i.e., human) way, instead of that ordained by God. That peace with God we acquire by faith, which does not look at our poor heart, but at God and His Son Jesus Christ, and His written word and testimony as to the complete and all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ, and finds rest and peace there, where God Himself rests, forever satisfied in all His claims.

God then by His Spirit fills the heart, of one who has been justified by faith and become a child of God, “with joy and peace in believing;” so that in the quiet assurance of faith we may enjoy that peace procured by Jesus Christ. Every believer, who has peace with God, knows this from God's own word (Rom. 15:13) and from his own experience, which is very different from making that peace with God dependent upon our experience and feelings.

True peace is deep and lasting and something far more solid than mere joy, which often is of a transitory and superficial nature. Peace with God, on the contrary, rests on that which has been settled for evermore. In Matt. 13 the Lord refers to a class of souls who receive the word with joy, yet wither and fall away when the heat of tribulation and persecution arises. Where the grace of God is perceived, and self for a moment lost sight of, there may be much joy, without the conscience being purged, and therefore there is no peace. The eye of faith looks. at God and His Son Jesus Christ; unbelief looks at self and our own heart.

I have dwelt more explicitly on this first part of our blessed relationship to God, which forms the subject of our meditations, because it is the foundation for all that follows; true enjoyment and realization would be impossible without a clear perception, by faith, of this foundation. Thus it will be possible to deal more concisely with the following, though no less blessed, privileges of grace, they being the natural result, as has just been said, of an unbroken peace with God, and closely connected with it. Concerning then,

1. Our past, we have peace with God. All our past) that is, everything connected with the old man, not only the sins, committed by us, but also sin, which is in us, that is, all that we are by nature) has been dealt with, put away and settled as to every believer. The result of it is: Perfect unbroken peace with God.

2. As to the present: Jesus Christ, through whom we have peace with God, has also, as being our living way, opened up for us an access to God's blessed presence in the unclouded sunshine of His favor. As that dying believer triumphantly exclaimed,

“Not a spot within,

Not a cloud above.”

“Yes, such cases there are indeed,” I hear some readers of the old school say, “on the death-bed of some pious Christians, where God in His mercy grants them such a peaceful cloudless sunset after many struggles and earnest wrestling in prayer. But as to me, I have not yet attained to being able to say, 'Not a spot within, not a cloud above.' “To such I can only say: The difference between us, dear friend, is just this: you are speaking of the sunset, and I of the sunrise. You have been taught to look at that unbroken peace with God and the unclouded sunshine connected therewith, as being the goal of a Christian's course of life, whilst I, and I trust many of the Christian readers of these pages, have learned, through the grace of God and from His own word, to look at it as the starting post of our Christian race. In the very first verse of our chapter (v.) of the Epistle to the Romans we find this unbroken peace with God. Every one who simply believes what is written in the word of God, that “the blood of His Son Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin,” and that those who thus worship God have no more conscience of sins, and therefore, liberty to enter into the holiest through the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated through the vail, that is to say, His flesh, is enabled already now to chime in with the triumphal strain of that dying Christian man.

“Not a spot within,

Not a cloud above.”

Many souls confound “no more conscience of sins” with consciousness of sins, and thus are kept in a constant state of uncertainty. Only the true Christian worshipper can draw nigh into God's thrice holy presence with a perfect conscience, i.e. a conscience which has been thoroughly purged through the blood of Jesus Christ. How could we otherwise dare as worshippers to approach Him before Whom even His holy angels cover their faces? It would be nothing less than the most daring and unholy boldness, to approach God as worshippers even with one single spot on our conscience; just as it would be a gross affront to the majesty of a king, if anyone would dare to appear in his presence in an unclean attire, or even with one spot upon it. The brilliancy of the light surrounding the person of the King would at once expose the spot, and the irreverent intruder expelled into the darkness without.

What then does it mean to have “no more conscience of sins”? (Heb. 10:2.) It simply means that the conscience of the worshipper who approaches God has been so thoroughly purged, that is, made perfect through the precious blood of Jesus Christ Which “cleanseth from all sin,” that the worshipper, in drawing nigh, can appear there without any consciousness of guilt upon him—yea, justified (Rom. 5:1), fearless, nay, with holy boldness and perfect confidence and liberty. For he knows that the perfect light of God's holy presence, which would expose the smallest speck or stain, makes manifest the precious blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat and before it, which has cleansed him from every sin. The blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat in the sight of God, who looks at the blood, and not at the sin that has been put away by the blood. It was sprinkled before the mercy-seat in the sight of the approaching worshipper, as a proof that God will “no more remember his sins and transgressions.” Thus the worshipper can appear and stand before God with a purged conscience without any sense of guilt, that is, with a perfect conscience.

But it is not only with a perfect conscience that the Christian worshipper—one who has peace with God, appears before Him, but also with perfect (though holy) liberty and confidence of heart. If God (in Heb. 10:17) had only said, “I will pardon your sins and transgressions” (not bring you into

judgment for them), it would give peace to the conscience, but not to the heart. It would be similar to a child who having offended its father, but repented of and confessed its sin, had obtained pardon and freedom from punishment. The child then would appear without fear in the presence of its father, having no longer an evil conscience before him. But suppose he saw in the face of his father—no cloud indeed, but—sadness at the offense that had been committed, what would be the effect? The conscience of the child would be at peace and free before his father, but his heart would not feel free and at liberty in his presence, he would be shy and would keep at a distance. But if on the contrary the child perceived by the smiling face of the father, that he had not only forgiven the offense, but did not longer think of it, he would approach his father with a free and confident heart and with a grateful and joyful face, and enjoy, as hitherto, the father's love and favor without hindrance, though with a humbled and chastened joy, which would not in the least impede his liberty, and only give it its proper subdued and reverential character.

Chapter 128

Unbroken Peace; Unclouded Favor; A Hope Never to Be Disappointed; Joyful Tribulations, and Perfect Joy. 4

Only we must not, as I have said already, confound “consciousness of sins” with “conscience of sins.” The worshipper once purged, has no more conscience of sins in the presence of God. He knows, that if God would impute to him even one single sin, this would involve nothing less than judgment and condemnation. “Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant.” But he knows also that God has imputed all his sins to Jesus in the judgment executed on the cross, and that He therefore neither can nor will impute them again to us. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” He has therefore no more conscience i. e. consciousness of guilt before God as Judge. He no longer dreads the light of His holy presence, which penetrates and lays bare everything; but he loves it (if he walks in sincerity, though in conscious weakness before God), and desires that this light, formerly so dreaded, and rightly so, should shine into every corner of his inner man and discover there everything contrary to that light of God's holiness and grace, in order that he may not only discover, but at once judge it in God's presence.

It is just because such a worshipper, “once purged,” has peace with God and “no more conscience of sins,” and no longer dreads the light of His presence when approaching Him, that he has an all the more humbling deeper consciousness of his own sinfulness, and of every sin, by which he might have been overtaken at an unguarded moment from want of watchfulness and prayer. For the same light, which instead of fearing it, he now invites to shine into every secret recess, or may be idol-closet, of his heart (perhaps unknown to himself), and there to lay bare everything inconsistent with it, that it may be judged and put away—the same light, I say, in all searching and manifesting power, keeps him constantly in the humbling consciousness of his own sinfulness and weakness and entire dependence upon the abundant grace of God in Christ Jesus, without whom “we can do nothing,” but through whom we “can do all things.” At the same time the consciousness of that grace strengthens his heart and fills it with joyful gratitude towards God.

Thus our being conscious of our sinfulness and failures has nothing to do with a perfect conscience once for all purged in the presence of God by the blood of Jesus Christ; nor with our relationship to God, which rests upon the divinely solid basis of the work of Christ; nor with our position before God, which is inseparably connected with the power of Christ, although it is the necessary consequence of it in every upright Christian.

I have thought it necessary, more closely to enter upon this difference between consciousness of sin in ourselves and conscience of sins before God, as the confounding these two truths tends to keep so many dear souls of God's children at a fearful distance from God, instead of following His gracious invitation to “draw near to Him with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

A believer, who as a worshipper once purged has peace with God, has therefore not to wait till he comes to die (if he does not wait for the fulfillment of a better hope) to be able to say

“Not a spot within,”

for he knows it is his blessed privilege to say this from the moment he has found peace with God. But he is also able to add

“Not a cloud above.”

Even the smallest shadow of a cloud of judgment has disappeared, and the sun of God's grace and favor now shines on us with full splendor. As we have found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Him, (as our living way,) we have also access to God, to His God and our God, to His Father and our Father—unimpeded access to the divine favor of His and our Father. By Christ we are just as welcome in His presence as His own beloved Son Himself, for we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). But as the Epistle to the Romans rather deals with what we are through Christ in our relationship and access to God, and not with what we are in Christ as to our position before God in glory (of which the apostle speaks in his Epistle to the Ephesians and other Epistles), we will not enter here upon the truth of our position before God in Christ. We hope to do so later, if the Lord will. Suffice it, for the present, to know that through Jesus Christ we have an ever open access to the unclouded sunshine of the divine favor, in which we stand.

“Unclouded!” we again hear some or other of our readers exclaiming: “this, at all events, is not my experience. I must confess, that clouds often appear to come between God and me, and hide His gracious face from me.” But whence, dear reader, come those clouds that hide the sun? Do they come from the sun or from the earth? From the earth of course. And whence comes those clouds of doubt and unbelief, that appear to hide God's face from you? Do they come from God or from you? Certainly, you would not dare to say, they come from God. For it would be nothing less than charging God with that which is the work of the tempter and of the natural evil heart, or of ignorance of our salvation in Christ Jesus. “But,” said a lady once to me, “Does not every believer make the experience of such cloudy hours of doubts and uncertainty? And is it not constantly with us a going up and down, as it were? Nay, do not those very doubts and fears prove the existence of spiritual life in us? For if we were unconverted, i.e. spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, we should have no such doubts at all. As our good man said the other day: If you never doubt, I doubt of you.'“ I answered her in the words of another “good man:” “You might just as well say, If someone has rheumatism or the ague, it is a sign that he is alive: for if he were dead, he would have neither rheumatism nor the ague. But you might just as well live, and much better too, without suffering from those diseases.”

All this is but the sad effect of that Jewish-Christian religious system, which is a mixture of law and grace, under whose yoke so many of God's blessed children are sighing in an uncertain disconsolate twilight, groping their way between darkness and light, instead of enjoying with the unanswerable assurance of faith the bright and warm sunshine of our God and Father's favor, “in which we stand,” and to which we have constant access through our Lord Jesus Christ. May He, who is “the Son, who maketh truly free,” have pity on such, and make them free through the power of His word.

High above those fogs and clouds of doubts and fears for so many hearts, sincere but misguided through false religious teaching, the cloudless sun of divine grace and favor shines on all His beloved children. How sad, that so many of them should exclude from themselves the light and

warmth of that glorious Sun of divine love and grace, through such clouds of doubt and unbelief, arising from the poor natural heart! May God grant them light, simplicity of faith, unbroken peace and thus the enjoyment of the unclouded sunlight of His favor, according to His abundant grace in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 129

Unbroken Peace, Unclouded Favor, a Hope Never to Be Disappointed, Joyful Tribulations and Joy in God: 5

We now come to the believer's next privilege of grace, concerning our future—

3. “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” How different from the hopes of the world is this hope! It does not, like human hopes, end on this side of the grave in painful disappointment, but reaches beyond death and the grave up to the glory of God, where faith will be changed into sight, and hope into possession, and love “abide forever.” Whilst the natural man, even if he, like Saul of Tarsus, had reached the highest round of the religious ladder of human attainments, “comes short of the glory of God,” in that “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23), the youngest child of God, who to-day for the first time has learned to stammer, “Abba, Father,” and justified by faith, has found peace with God, is able to say with a heavenward look of joyful gratitude:

“To what glory and bliss,

Blessed God, I am come!

In a world like this

Thy child to become!

As fading as an autumn leaf,

Poor dust—of many sinners chief—

And yet so highly honored!

In Christ I am view'd

With a Father's smile;

With raiment endued,

Like bridal attire.

In Christ, my Righteousness, I'm clothed,

To Him, Thine own dear Son, betrothed,

And call Thee, “Abba, Father.”

Come want, grief, or pain?

I take them to Thee;

Then nothing can pain,

When coming from Thee.

I am Thy child, O blissful thought!

And as Thine heir, to glory brought,

Shall reign with Christ in glory.'

Man's path of life from the cradle to the grave, is strewn with dead hopes. The natural man rejoices and glories in his worldly hopes, which are set on the vain glories and perishable beauties of this world. But his joy is turned into bitterness, and his glorying into shame. When he believes he has reached the desired object of his hope, behold, it is, as everything under the sun, “vanity and vexation of spirit.” But Christian hope, like Christian faith, begins there where the world's faith and hope cease, i.e. beyond and above the sun, where the glories of God and the Lamb do dwell. And as sure as is the Christian's faith, as sure is his hope. Neither of them can ever be disappointed. The man of this world says, “I see, therefore I believe.” The Christian says, “I believe, therefore I see.” This world's faith does not go beyond the range of its telescopes and microscopes. Christian faith says, “Where your telescopes and microscopes cease, there my faith begins.” The child of this age says, “I have the best prospect of soon reaching the object of my hope, for I possess all the means for doing so.” The child of God replies, “What, if God should say to you, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?' Whose will it all be? Thank God, I can say, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.”

The hopes of this world resemble those fabled “apples of Sodom,” that were said to grow on the shores of the “Dead Sea,” once the site of voluptuous and libidinous Sodom. They were of an enticing appearance; but when the thirsty traveler greedily stretched out his hand to the lovely fruit and seized it to quench his thirst, it crumbled into little fragments under his grasp. The attractive fruit was nothing but a thin hollow shell, containing nothing but a little dust and ashes! It was “vanity and vexation of spirit.” What a picture of this world's deceptive hopes! What a contrast to the Christian's never-deceiving hope, and to Christ Himself, “Who is our hope” and has procured for us through His cross and victorious resurrection that “living hope,” even our incorruptible, undefiled and unfading inheritance reserved in heaven.

“The heavens now we open see,

O Christ, since Thine ascension;

Thou art our living Way, and we

Draw nigh to God. Those mansions

Will soon receive us, faith knows well,

Where we'll forever with Thee dwell,

Who hast our place prepared.

And if our Head in heaven we see,

Thy members, Lord, we know it,

Can ne'er from heaven excluded be,

Thou'lt leave not one below it:

Where Thou art now, we soon shall be,

And, glorified, Thy beauty see

With joy and praise unceasing.

Thou radiant Light in heaven above,

Our hope and joy and treasure!

Beyond earth's richest treasure throve

Beyond all price and measure.

Our way is open to the throne—

What heavenly wealth, what glorious home

Are ours through grace in Jesus!”

Chapter 130

Unbroken Peace, Unclouded Favor, a Hope Never to Be Disappointed, Joyful Tribulations and Joy in God: 6

Yes, beloved, our blessed Lord and Savior is our Head in glory, Who has promised, “In my Father's house are many mansions.....I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” He will soon (and oh, how soon!) come again to accomplish His blessed promise.

This world with all its vanities, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, will, like a rare apple of Sodom, one day collapse into dust and ashes in the fire of God's true and righteous judgment. But long—more than a thousand years—before that awful day arrives, our Savior will come for us, Whom we expect from heaven, where our conversation or citizenship is. “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” At His quickening word of command, His sleeping saints of all ages will arise from the dust of their graves in glorious bodies, in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye. At the same moment these corruptible “bodies of humiliation” of ours will be transformed into the likeness of His own glorious body, and He will lead us to the mansions in His Father's house. “Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.”

His great “new name,” that glorious name of JESUS, which is above every Name; that name at which every knee shall bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth—that precious Name will then in the blaze of glory be written on the foreheads of His servants.

And when the day shall appear, when the Lord will “make up His jewels” (Mal. 3:17), every tear wept for His sake will then shine like a diamond in the sunlight of His face, “when He will come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed.” Then the countless hosts of His saints will fitly reflect His beauty, as the dewdrops in the field at the rising of the sun; like precious jewels, in variegated colors reflecting the glory of the heavenly orb.

And what is it, beloved, that enables those tiny dewdrops to reflect the light of that glorious orb, the splendor of which blinds the human eye? Is it not because those little drops are pure and free of earthly alloy? They come from heaven, and therefore are able to reflect heavenly glory. Thus it will be with the saints, the Lord's servants, when they shall appear with Him in glory, each “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,” in glorified bodies—the livery of glory, the “gala-uniform,” as it were, of the servants and soldiers of Christ. Then there will be no more impediment in their bodies, no earthly nor fleshly alloy, no intrusion of vain-glorious self in our poor little service, to impede our reflecting the glories of the once-despised Jesus of Nazareth, when He, Whose “visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,” shall appear from heaven with all His saints, to “sprinkle many nations;” and “His face as the sun shineth in his strength,” yet “with healing in his wings,” for His earthly people. Oh, what a radiant reflex of His glory and beauty will His servants then be! How different from what we are now! Would to God, we were now more like dewdrops—little, pure and empty, i.e. clear of alloy! What

different lights we then should be, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and in what different ways should we now reflect the beauties and perfections of Christ in such a world and in days like these! May we learn, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit (that “Spirit of glory, which rests upon us” and is “the earnest of our inheritance"), more truly to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” I pray the kind indulgence of my Christian reader and fellow-heir of glory, for having introduced some hymns in this part of our meditations. Hymns are not scripture, it is true; but they often serve to convey the precious truths of Holy Writ with renewed freshness to the heart, carrying it on the wings of joyful praise, heavenward, Godward, Christ ward. When spring comes, the jubilant lark rises heavenward And should not we sing when He, Who is our hope, is so near? The weary wanderer, on sighting the battlements of his native town, forgets his weariness, and with song and winged steps hastens towards the goal of his desire and hope.

“Jerusalem on high,

.....

The grace that made me Thine”

We thus have Peace, Grace, Hope, expressing the believer's past, present, and future: as to the past unbroken peace with God; as to the present, the unclouded sunshine of His favor; as to the future, the never-to-be-disappointed hope of the glory of God. May that calm and secure peace, that blessed and establishing grace, and that cheering hope, shine out more and more in our walk and daily life! We now proceed to the fourth part of the subject of our meditations: “Joyful tribulations.”

Chapter 131

Unbroken Peace, Unclouded Favor, a Hope Never to Be Disappointed, Joyful Tribulations and Joy in God: 7

We now come to a very different part in the spiritual life of a child of God, I mean the school of tribulations, so distasteful to the natural heart.

The same wondrous love and grace of God, which has secured for us above an inalienably safe portion, and infinite blessings through and in Jesus Christ, and on the unchangeable foundation of His finished work of eternal redemption—blessings ordained from eternity and secured for eternity, have also to carry on a work within us, and whilst here below, in the school of tribulations, to enable us, during our journey through this barren wilderness, to realize those blessings, and to put away everything around or within us that would prevent our enjoyment of them, and our corresponding faithful witness and godly walk.

Many might be inclined to think, “Perfect peace with God with regard to the past, and unchanging divine favor as to the present, and a secure hope of glory as to the future, for all eternity—what do I want more?” Stop, there is something more. God, in His unsearchable wisdom, grace and love, has something else in store for you and me, Christian reader, not up there, but down here in the wilderness.

“And not only so, but we rejoice also in tribulations.” Certainly, it is something beautiful to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. But to rejoice in tribulations is a very different thing. The Israelites sang a lofty song of praise to Jehovah, when God had led His people dry shod through the Red Sea to the shore of safety and deliverance, after they had seen the returning waves covering Pharaoh and his numberless chariots, horses and horsemen. But what do we find at the end of the same chapter? Scarcely had the last note of that high triumphant song of redemption died away, when close upon its heels followed the murmuring, for “they came to Marah,” and “they could not drink of the waters of Mandl, for they were bitter.” So did Israel, the earthly people of God. And what about us, His heavenly people, dear Christian reader? “These things are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.” How much nearer, than that of Israel, is our relationship to God! How much higher and more perfect our position, our vocation, our hope; and how incomparably greater are our blessings than those of Israel! The difference is just as wide as that between heaven and earth. And have we, when coming to “Marah,” murmured like Israel? Or have we, perhaps, after having sung a hymn of praise at the Lord's table, on the resurrection-day of our Lord, murmured the next hour, when coming to some bitter water? It is well to sing

Jesus Christ, the Lord, is risen;

He has made the sea dry land;

Our pursuer is drowned, defeated,

All his power in vain was spent.

Free, unfetter'd,

Joyfully gather'd,

We on safety's shore now stand.

Egypt's mighty legions slain!

Even death's become our gain.

Death, whose fear did once enslave us,

Death, the slayer of every one—

Who from his dread power could save us?

He, in whom Life's light here shone.

Watchmen prostrate,

Seal and stone-gate,

Grave's securing bolts withdrawn!

Lo! death's jaws are empty now:

Triumph crowns the Victor's brow.

But there are some other no less happy songs in the wilderness, the singing of which requires some practical training in God's school of tribulations; for instance,

Dost Thou, my God, through deserts lead me?

I follow, leaning on Thy hand.

From clouds the bread comes down to feed me,

And waters from the rock descend.

Thy ways I trust, whilst onward pressing;

I know they end in peace and blessing.

Thou with me art: this is enough!

Thou leadest downward, humblest, bendest

Those whom to honor Thou intendest

Beyond the sun and stars above.

It is a fine thing to rise above the pressure of circumstances in the power of faith; it is quite another thing, to bend in patience under them and learn that Christian endurance, which can only be made our own in the school of God. Flesh and nature do not relish the crucible, and to those who have not peace with God, the tempter often whispers: “God is against you. He deals as Judge with you for your sins, which proves that your sins are unforgiven and that you are none of His children.

This is only a foretaste of the eternal judgment awaiting you, if you should die with this disease, or if your heart should break under this crushing blow God has inflicted upon you."

"Not at all," says the child of God that enjoys peace with Him. "God is for me, and for this very reason He has sent me these trials, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth...for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? God is dealing with me as a Father, not as a Judge."

Take a case from common life, to make this clear. Suppose a judge has had to sentence some one for theft to some years' penal servitude; when coming home he finds that one of his sons has robbed him of a sum of money. How does he meet the sad case? Does he send for a policeman? Or does he put on his judicial gown, ascend the tribunal and sentence him to penal servitude? No, but he takes the rod and punishes the evildoer, for it is his son, and at home in his family he is not a judge, but a father. This makes all the difference.

And in answer to the suggestions of the adversary who always is busy to make us suspect God, or to accuse us before Him, the child of God continues: "Should I resist the rod of His chastening love, which in divine justice fell as the rod of divine wrath upon the Son of His love for me, a "child of wrath," when "Jehovah laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him?" Should I murmur and complain against God, whose Son, when He was oppressed and afflicted for my sake, "opened not His mouth?" Should I resist the rod of His love, when the Son of man, was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and opened not His mouth, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb? God forbid! No, indeed, I not only yield to His rod, but I kiss it; for my divine Father's hand is as tender as it is mighty, and He knows so to make me feel the sweetness of His love in the bitter rod, that even the bitterness produces the sweet fruits of thanksgiving and of "rejoicing in tribulations," not to speak of the "peaceable fruit of righteousness."

But we must not anticipate the order of the Spirit in our chapter, by speaking of experience, instead of commencing at "patience." The word does not mean here that natural patience, implanted by a merciful Creator in many of His creatures, subject to burdens, that they may better be able to bear them. It is to be feared, there are not a few who try to make a merit out of their natural patience, and bring it with them as a dowry, so to speak, into the school of tribulations, instead of learning it there. Such are inclined to rejoice in their patience, which often ends in impatience and shame, and is a very different thing from "rejoicing in tribulations." Christian patience and natural patience are quite distinct things. The latter is like a silvered copper coin, which does not stand the test of the refining process of the crucible, where natural patience often becomes red hot, and the silvery tinge disappears.

Christian patience is the opposite of our own will. What is the first spot that appears in every newborn child? Is it not that old inherited sin, our own will, i.e. the spirit of disobedience? To break our natural self-will and the idolatrous heart, both will and heart perverted and corrupted through disobedience, is God's gracious intention in His school of tribulations. His will alone is good and right; ours, bad and perverse. It was God's will that we should not die and perish in our sins; our will was bent on our own sinful way. Should it, therefore, not be our heart's desire to learn in everything, what is God's wise and good and perfect will? Certainly. But our own natural will, being constantly opposed to the divine will, and our natural God-alienated heart preventing us from knowing God's perfect and gracious will and His perfect heart full of divine love to us, He uses the tribulations to bridle the stubborn will and to break the idolatrous heart. Only in the same measure

as our will has been broken in His school of discipline, can God reveal His will unto as; and only in the same measure as our rebellious and idolatrous natural heart practically has been broken, can Jesus manifest to us His heart—Himself, in all His love and grace and tender sympathy. First comes the plow, then the seed, then the harrow, to break the hard clods, that would impede the springing up and the growth of the young seed. Such is the order in God's (as man's) husbandry. The tribulations are the harrow.

The world sometimes says of a new convert: “What a sad change has come over him! Formerly he used to be full of life and activity amongst us, taking interest in everything; and when his mind was once set on something, he was sure to carry it out. Now he appears to be dead, apathetic and spoiled for everything useful, and can hardly be said to have a will of his own!” Poor world—! It knows not that God has turned a bondman of Satan into a freedman, i.e. a bondman of Christ, Whose service is true liberty, and Whose yoke is easy and His burden light. In the world it is said: This one or that one “died of a broken heart.” God teaches us to live with a broken heart, and not only to live, but to be very happy with it too!

For Jacob it required a whole life time to learn what the three things mean which we find in Psa. 51—i.e. 1. broken bones (the bones being the seat of our natural strength); 2. a broken spirit (being the seat of our natural prudence and wisdom); and 3. a broken heart (being the seat of our natural idolatrous propensities). Jacob did not glorify God much in his life, but in his death, when the dying patriarch, leaning upon the top of his staff, worshipped Him and blessed the sons of Joseph. The staff, which he held in his hands, reminded him of all his own ways and strayings, and was at the same time a memorial of that wondrous grace, patience and mercy of the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. And leaning upon the top of that staff he worshipped God. What a glorious halo shone around Jacob's deathbed! God makes the bones rejoice, which He has broken (Psa. 51:8).

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (ver. 17).

The first effect, then, of tribulations is patience or endurance. (The Greek word, ■πομον■, seems to imply both the patient bearing up under the present evil, and the enduring unto the end.) But patience and endurance work experience or being approved. The word in the original (δοκιμ■) appears to indicate both. While being impatient in tribulations we only make human experiences, which, though necessary, are humbling and apt to weigh us down, and ought to be so. But if we learn in God's school to be still and patient under His hand and to listen to His voice, we make divine, that is, elevating experiences, learning what God is. The former kind of experiences, humbling though they be, impart no strength, and often lead to a sort of sham humility, as will often appear in meetings of legal Christians for so-called “edification.” They often seem to have met solely for the purpose of talking of their human experiences instead of speaking of God and His Son, the ground of our “most holy faith” and of all true edification, and of the experiences which they have made of Him. If we cannot say anything good of ourselves, we like to say something bad of ourselves. But it is always self instead of Christ. This is not building up but pulling down one another and often leads to something worse: sham humility, a kind of emulation which of them has made the most experiences of self, and thus one learns to boast in that which ought to be our shame, instead of “rejoicing in tribulations,” that is boasting in God, and “rejoicing in Christ.”

Many of the wise men of this world, from Socrates and Plato down to our times, could boast of a great deal of human experiences, i.e. about self and our own heart, without ever having had to do with God about it. The French sage, in a treatise on vanity, wrote, “vanity is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that I, the writer of this treatise on 'vanity,' am not sure, whether I am not vain and proud to have written on 'vanity.'“

A witty and, in a natural way, honest and true remark about sin! But had the writer ever learned and realized the truth of it in the holy light of God's presence? God knows; but the very style of the writer gives just cause to doubt it.

I have remarked already, that the Greek word for “patience” used by the Spirit, expresses at the same time “endurance,” or “patience to end” (compare James 1:4), and further, that the original word for “experience” also implies “being approved.” There appears to be a deep and beautiful meaning in this. Each of these two words thus appears to have a subjective and at the same time an objective, meaning, i.e. an inward and outward. That is to say, the inward patience, wrought within us by means of tribulations, manifests itself outwardly, or before men, by endurance, or patience unto the end. And, further, the inward experience, wrought by both, will manifest itself outwardly by our being approved before God and men (in a similar sense as the works of faith in James 2). Where the inward patience is genuine, Christian patience, the outward patience, or endurance, will not fail to appear. And where the fruit of true patience, or inward experience is of the right kind, the outward experience of us on the part of others (by their taking knowledge of us), that is, our being approved before God and men, will not be wanting. So it was with the apostle of the church. May God in His rich grace grant us such experiences, for His own and His dear Son's glory and honor. Amen.

This kind of experience and approbation then produces in us that subjective (or inward) hope which answers to the objective (or outward) hope of the glory of God in Rom. 5:2. I need scarcely say, that this is not the same as “Christ in us, the hope of glory.” It corresponds in us, as we have seen, with the heavenly hope of the glory of God, set before us in ver. 2, as the Spirit of Christ in us, “Christ in us, the hope of glory,” corresponds with Jesus Himself, “Who is our hope,” “The bright and Morning Star.”

Also in Israel, His earthly people, now in their exile scattered through the world, God will at the time of “Jacob's trouble,” in the school of the greatest of all tribulations, work that patience and endurance, that experience and approbation, and that hope (though merely as to millennial glory and kingdom), which He, in a higher and more blessed way, is now working in us.

A few remarks as to the ways of God's grace, for working that hope in Israel, as He does in us, must be reserved for the next number, D.V.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 132

Peter's Denial of the Lord

Flesh in the saint is no better than in any other man. Peter did not know this more than most do now. He did not believe our Lord's warning: if he had, he had not entered into temptation, but would have watched, prayed, and been kept through faith. He must therefore by bitter experience learn what the flesh is, as the word was not mixed with faith in his soul when the Lord warned him so solemnly. He was confident in himself. It was not the vulgar confidence of an unbeliever, no doubt; but still it was confidence built on his own estimate of what his love for Jesus would enable him to do or bear. And this it was which, as it is an illusive and mischievous egoism, grace must expose, as it does pardon, and would turn to profit and blessing, not only to Peter, but to his brethren through him. For now and thus he was humbled and had learned what man is on the one hand, and what God is on the other. If Peter was to be used of the Lord more than all, it was meet that he should more than any learn experimentally his more than nothingness.

The other disciples forsook the Lord and fled. John slipped in, as an acquaintance of the high priest's. Peter followed afar off. Wherefore this? Asleep when called to watch and pray, he awoke to draw the sword and strike, all-through out of communion with the adorable Master. If, bolder than the rest, he ventured into the circle of those who smote the Lord, it was only to sink lower than any and to dishonor Him by a denial which a few hours before seemed to him impossible, by a repeated denial with imprecations and oaths. Only Judas went farther in iniquity. Jesus alone shone in perfection; yet never was His shame and humiliation more complete, save when He hang on the cross, rejected of Bits people, despised of men, and forsaken of God. It was sin on man's part, and for sin on God's: what a climax of reality for both, as the believer knows, in Christ the Lord!

There and then it was that Peter heard a cock crow twice immediately after he denied his Master thrice. How insignificant such a sound ordinarily!!Then how pregnant with the deepest consequence, not to the penitent apostle only, but to his brethren whom he soon began to strengthen, and to the multitudes whom he was honored of God in bringing by the word he preached, out of darkness into His marvelous light! But it was the Lord's look upon Peter, and the remembrance of His words, which gave it all the force that wrought in conscience and heart, the look and words of the Savior brought home by the Holy Spirit where there was life God-ward. But alas! flesh had shrouded all and the believer; having slept, had cursed and sworn as if he never knew the Master! Now in bitter grief he learns himself humiliatingly, and what the world is in its highest religious pretensions; yet what would all else have been, had he not learned the grace of Christ and His moral glory, and God Himself in the cross of Christ and the purpose and ways of redeeming love?

But in that light grace gave Peter to discern the worthlessness of the flesh alike in its weakness and in its energy, in its unbounded self-confidence and in its dastardly fear and falsehood. Yet was he a saint, thoroughly sincere and most truly loving the Lord; but a saint not yet broken before God, with self but little judged, who slighted really if unwillingly His word and neglected prayer and

so entered into temptation, instead of being upheld in the dependence of conscious weakness and the power of faith by grace. But Peter (brought down in self-judgment to own that, far from boasting of his love for Christ more than any, only omniscience could know that he dearly loved Him) is then fully re-instated in what might otherwise have seemed forfeited forever, and hears the blessed Lord in the presence of the brethren committing to His care His beloved sheep and lambs, mid promising that he should in very deed be enabled at length to go to prison and death, yea the cross itself, for Christ's sake. Grace thus ensured to him when old and weak all that which in his natural vigor he, a saint withal, had failed in so foully, and with every possible aggravation of dishonor to his Lord.

Now we are told that the accounts exhibit discrepancies, but these, it is said apologetically, owing to the disciples' perturbation of mind! Let us read them: here they are—

Mark 14

“And Peter from afar off followed him, even within, into the court of the high priest, and was sitting with the officials and warming himself at the [fire] light” (St). “And as Peter was below in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked on him and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, Jesus. But he denied, saying, I know not [him], nor understand what thou sayest. And he went out into the fore-court, and a cock crew. And the maid seeing him again began to say to the bystanders, This is [one] of them. And he again kept denying. And after a little again the bystanders were saying to Peter, Truly thou art [one] of them, for also thou art a Galilean. But he began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom you speak. And immediately a second time a cock crew. And Peter recalled to mind the word, how Jesus said to him, Before a cock crow twice, thou wilt thrice deny me. And as he thought thereon he kept weeping” (66-72).

John 18

“But Simon Peter followed Jesus, and the other disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door without. The other disciple therefore, that was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the portress, and brought in Peter. The maid, the portress, saith therefore to Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. Now the bond-men and the officials, having made a fire of charcoal (for it was cold), were standing and warming themselves; and Peter was standing with them and warming himself” (15-18). “Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, Art thou also [one] of his disciples? He denied and said, I am not. One of the bondmen of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Again therefore Peter denied, and immediately a cock crew” (25-27).

Matthew 26

“But Peter followed him from afar off unto the court of the high priest, and entering in was sitting with the officials to see the end” (58) “Now Peter was sitting without in the court, and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he went out into the porch, another [maid] saw him and saith to those there, This [man] also was with Jesus the Nazarene. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. And after a little those that stood came up and said to Peter, Truly thou

also art [one] of them, for thy speech too maketh thee manifest. Then he began to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And immediately a cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus as having said, Before a cock crow, thou wilt thrice deny me. And going forth without he wept bitterly" (69-75).

Luke 22

"But Peter followed afar off. And when they lit a fire in the midst of the court, and sat down together, Peter sat amid them. And a certain maid, having seen him sitting at the [fire] light, and looking steadily at him, said, This [man also was with him. But he denied, saying, I know him not, woman. And after a short [while] another saw him and said, Thou also art [one] of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. And after the lapse of about one hour, another affirmed strongly, saying, Of a truth, this [man] also was with him, for also he is a Galilean. But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he was yet speaking, a cock crew, and the Lord turned and looked on Peter; and Peter called to mind the word of the Lord, how he said to him, Before a cock crow this day, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth without he wept bitterly" (54-62).

1. It will be noticed in this corrected version of the accounts that it is a question of the high priest's "court," not palace, which more properly applies to the governor's residence or Pretorium (Matt. 27; John 18), which no doubt had its court also, as is also intimated in Mark 15:16. In Luke 22:54 the "house" of the high priest is distinguished from the "court" or open yard. Confusion on this head has obscured the truth; for Peter was not where the preliminary inquiry was held, but "without" and "below" in the court-yard. There at the light of the fire the maid that kept the door (John) taxed him with being a disciple of the Nazarene (Matt., Mark). It has been assumed by some that John puts the first denial in the porch or forecourt; but this is quite to overrule the import of ver. 18, which seems to me appended for the special purpose of guarding against such an error, and adds a correction in the characteristic manner of our Evangelist; just as ver. 24 is meant parenthetically to correct the hasty assumption that the first general interrogatory was before Annas to whom Christ was led first; whereas it really was before Caiaphas to whom Annas sent him "bound," though it may probably have been only across the same court. Luke adds the distinct shade that the maid spoke of him, and not only to him.

2. Unbelief, if it cannot torture an additional fact in the first denial into a discrepancy, thinks that there is a plain contradiction in the second denial. For Matthew speaks of another maid, Mark of the same maid as before (the portress of John), Luke of "another" but a "man." To all this however John gives the key with moral certainty by his use of the plural— "they said therefore." For thus he clearly shows, even to a doubter, that what each of the three Synoptists says may be all and equally authentic; as the believer is entitled to accept unreservedly without any such demonstration. The two maids and a man may have taken part in what the fourth Gospel thus sums up. It is plain from Matthew and Mark that the second charge was in presence of several bystanders on the spot, probably the porch or forecourt whither Peter had gone out, and that Peter's denial was then repeated (■ρνε■το), and not a single act like the first. (■ρν■σατο). Is it not then humiliating to find a scholar like Grotius saying, παιδισκ■ τις. quomodo articulum interdum sumi certum est? And J. Piscator one of the most learned of the early Protestant commentators had said (ed. III. iii. 143) pretty much the same thing before, as others since down to J. G. Rosenmuller, to avoid naming more. But the Greek article is never even pleonastic, neither

can it interchange with the indefinite pronoun. The only natural if not necessary reference is to the same maid as before, though we know from Matthew of another maid also, who joined in the same second charge. Prof. Michaelis is represented in Bowyer's Conjectures on the New Testament (Ed. iv. 176) as asking, Is there no MS. where the article ■ is wanting?" To this Dr. H. Owen answers, "No MS. yet known omits the article, nor is it necessary that any should. It is apparent, from their own mode of expression compared with that of John's, that the three first Evangelists never attended to the order; their point being only to assure us, that Peter denies our Savior thrice.

Hence it appears to me that the maid here meant is not the same with her that is mentioned in ver. 67, but the principal maid;" &c. No statement can be more rash and baseless as to the neglect of order here in any one of the Gospels, nor had John any superiority over the rest. And as to MSS. the fact is, that out of the vast sum of N. T. Gr. copies, Lambeth 1179, a cursive of the tenth century, is the only manuscript known to omit the article here. But the object is as plain as the misrendering in the Memphitic of Wilkins and the Diez cod. as well as in some of the old Latin copies. The omission therefore must be regarded as a mere slip or, if intended, a fraud; for no sane mind of competent knowledge can question that it is inserted in the genuine readings of the Gospel. Dr. Owen's alternative is even less sound; for there is not the smallest reason to doubt that every one of the Synoptists tallies in the order, and that the points of difference do not clash with the perfect accuracy of each. Fresh facts are in no way an inconsistency.

Not less must one deplore the misguided efforts of Grotius, Wetstein, as to force Luke into a reluctant repetition of the same thing with Matthew, instead of believing what each says. No scholar doubts that not only in poetry but in prose the masc. is used where one might expect fem., if an indefinite expression be desired as in Acts 9:37. The object seems rhetorical. What has such a principle to do with the case before us? Nobody would think of any but a male in 58, were it not taken for granted that the third Gospel states afresh what is in the first; but as we have seen, the second differs, and why not the third also? And to conceive that to the maid Peter says γ■ναι (57), and to "another" or different person he says Ανθρωπε, and yet means as before a woman is surely a harsh interpretation for most, if not in ambiguous eyes. The true answer is that the language of John describing the second appeal to Peter is such as admits of all three taking part to the same effect.

How painful then to think of sentiments so disparaging to scripture from one who so sincerely sought to understand, explain, and defend it, as Dean Alford in his Commentary (i. 283, ed. 5)— "It would appear to me that, for some reason, John was not so accurately informed of this [the third] as of the other denials." What notions of inspiration a man must have formed to allow himself the use of such language! God is excluded from the schema, or at least inspiration does not mean His conveying the truth perfectly through chosen instruments. The Holy Spirit who empowered John to write could not but be cognizant of all; and if He undertook to reveal the things of God in words taught of Him, was it left to the precarious will and uncertain mind of the writers employed, or carried out according to His own wisdom? An imperfect standard misleads, so much the more because a standard from God cannot but be accepted and applied with the assurance that it is perfect. That an enemy should impugn the truth of God's word is natural; but if its friends unconsciously yet really undermine its character and authority, by misusing the human channel so as to ignore and deny its exemption from error and the divine purpose which makes it what it is, what can one do but mourn as well as warn? The statement here (and alas! how common it is in

our day) assumes that the differences in the Gospels are the effects of man's weakness and want of accurate information, instead of their variety being the fruit of the Spirit's wisdom in each contributing to a fullness of truth the more wonderful in result.

Even if one only considers the accounts of bare facts, it is John who alone tells us of the leading of the Lord before Annas. It is from him we learn that the maid who first charged the apostle was the portress, and that it was through the other disciple that Peter was let in to the scene of his fail. It is to him we owe the remarkable link which reconciles at one stroke in the simplest and surest way the diverging accounts of the three Synoptists as to the second denial. And he alone lets us know the interesting connection of the slave, wounded of Peter and healed of Christ, with him who was the most pointed of those who drew out the third and most aggravated denial. And this, even on human grounds, is the one who “was not so accurately informed!” Never were accounts so evidently above the just imputation of one copying another; never was harmony demonstrably more perfect, without hiding or diminishing but fully unfolding the difference, of each succeeding account. Nor can any fact be more triumphantly apparent, notwithstanding discrepancies to the superficial glance, than their really consenting testimony, the more minutely investigated the better, to the full truth of the story as a whole.

Matthew and Mark alone name Peter's going out into the porch or fore-court. How weak and absurd, not to say irreverent, is the reasoning that John does not seem possessed of this detail, which Luke mentions no more than he! Mark speaks twice of Peter's “warming himself,” as John twice of his “standing and warming himself;” but how does it demonstrate that Matthew and Luke knew not this detail?

II. But let me now proceed to draw out the indications that the characteristic manner, in which each of these inspired accounts differs from the rest, has its peculiarity impressed on it by God to serve His distinctive aim, no less than as a whole, without which, it may be added, we could not have the truth as now.

1. In the first Gospel the Spirit traces the Lord as Emmanuel, Jehovah-Messiah, but rejected of the Jew; and consequently the change of dispensation, which brings in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and the assembly, but associates the rejected Messiah meanwhile with the despised poor of the flock in Galilee, the pledge of resumed associations with such in the latter day, before the Son of man comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Conformably with this, the unquestionable design of the Gospel, we may notice that the account of the denial here brings into prominence Jesus “the Galilean” (69) and “the Nazarene” (71), in the first and second denials, as is implied also of Peter in the third (73). Nor do the other Gospels (save Mark for another reason) so bring out the Messiah disowned by His own disciple before the feeble lips of women, or with such aggravation when others pressed it on the third occasion. Was this coincidence an accident on Matthew's part? or the fruit of the inspiring Spirit's purpose? The last without doubt, the peculiarities of form being due to divine wisdom and truth.

Every one at home in the second Gospel knows how devoted Mark is to unfolding the service of the Son of God here below, and the effect of this governing design on all that is omitted as well as inserted from first to last, inclusive of the closing verses which N B do not exhibit (to the serious detriment of the true conclusion of the book). The total failure of Peter as a servant is drawn out minutely, as Christ's grace toward him shines on to the end so much the more brightly. Here we

see as in John his selfishness and his “evil communications” or “company,” and the effect on “good manners.” Here as well as in Luke is mentioned the taunt of his Galilean dialect as fixing an unwelcome association on Peter. Here his failure repeated under the pressure first drew out his shame and fear of confessing Jesus the Nazarene. Here only is noticed the warning of the Lord in its most specific form (14:30), and here too its no less specific fulfillment (68, 72). How gracious of the Master! how base in the servant, only to find His goodness still more abundant! Truly, where sin abounded, grace over-abounded! What a contrast the terms of the third denial with his public preaching shortly, to such as these bystanders, of Jesus as a known Savior and Lord! So is he a self-confident servant to learn of the only Perfect Servant, and by grace become faithful at length. Is all this defect and chance? Or is it divinely purposed? If it can be only of God, learn and cavil not.

In Luke we see the Son of man who is Son of God. Perfectly a man He is, the Man in whom the Father delighted, whose delights were with the sons of men. He is the Mediator between God and man, who came into the world to save sinners, Himself the Pattern not only of all that pleased God in dependence and obedience, but of all grace toward all men, Gentiles no less than Jews. Hence, in approaching the case before us, this Gospel alone tells us of Jesus touching the wounded slave's ear and healing him, though all set forth the disciple's misguided zeal. Luke also finishes the account of Peter's fall before he speaks of the preliminary indignities put on the Lord by the priests and elders with their servants, hastens to the council when it was day, and while fully speaking of Pilate, as the rest do, alone lets us know Herod's part in these scenes of cruel impiety.

A maid's steady look and charge sufficed to scare the bold man who failed to believe the word and watch unto prayer. A man takes up the second charge, leaving John alone, it would seem, and setting on Peter, “Thou also art one of them,” as indeed began the maid who certainly knew John; for we may reject utterly the assumption that the high priest was too great a personage to have the son of Zebedee for an acquaintance. “A mean fisherman” John was not, though Calvin says it (ignobilis erat piscator, Opp. vii. 161, col. i); and even had it been so, how strange to ignore that the proudest may have intimate relations with the lowly for reasons too numerous and patent for a word more to be needed! This notion might justly be called “levis conjecture;” and Heumann's hypothesis of Judas Iscariot is, as Alford remarks, too absurd to deserve confutation. But Luke, as all the rest, only supposes this; John alone tells his own tale of shame, as often without naming but the very reverse of concealing himself. Lastly, another unnamed man taxes Peter stoutly (which only receives its explanation in John's gospel), and, the third denial follows in terms peculiar to Luke and characteristic of him only, who makes “man” so prominent. “While he was yet speaking,” says Luke (another touch of his), “a cock crew.” But there is added a fresh trait, which could be nowhere else so appropriately as in the Gospel which preeminently gives us grace dealing with the heart: “the Lord turned” (for He was in an elevated hall facing His accusers and His back toward Peter in the courtyard), “and looked on Peter, and Peter called” &c. The mind that could conceive these differences to be mistakes, or even thrown by hazard into the Gospels where they are, might consistently imagine the world to be the result of a concourse of atoms And yet Dean Alford is but one of a class of well-meaning men who have so little faith in scripture as to say, without the least thought of impropriety, that “the trial he (Luke) omits altogether, having found no report of it!” What “report” had he of the agony in Gethsemane, though he alone tells us of an angel appearing to strengthen Him, when His sweat became as great drops of blood? He might have had Matthew's

Gospel and Mark's long enough before Him without that of which there could be no reporter; for who of men was there to see or hear? Oh! how grievous is the unbelief of believers.

4. But surely believers are not blind to the divine character of John's presentation of things here as everywhere. Alas! it is not only Dean Alford who, we saw, apologizes for John's lack of accurate information; nor is it only men like Olshansen, Wieseler, Tischendorf, speak of a contradiction! between the Synoptists and John as to the locality of the denial. Living writers of eminence hint at a confusion in our Evangelist's account owing to “the excitement of a popular ferment. Happily inspiration, though it may use, is independent of, sight or hearing as well as report and information. And what evidence of divinely impressed design can be plainer or more conclusive, than that John, nearer to the Lord than any of the Synoptists during His agony, does not relate it; and that, none of these, not even Matthew, tells us how the band all went backward and fell to the ground before Him who was the Son, as surely as Jesus the Nazarene.

It is a pleasure to cite Calvin here, more right than he is sometimes on the difficulties of unbelief: even here one might wish a stronger faith and a deeper reverence. He says (ibid.) that John was not too eager ("curiosus” which Mr. Pringle, in the Edinburgh. Translation Series, was not justified in rendering “very exact") in drawing up the history; because he is satisfied with framing a brief summary. “For after relating that Peter once denied Christ, he intermingles other matters, and then returns to the other two denials. Hence inattentive readers inferred that the first denial took place in Annas' house. No such thing however do the words convey, which rather state clearly that it was the high priest's maid who drove Peter to deny Christ.” And Calvin reads ver. 24 as a parenthesis, correcting the idea that the narrative in 19-23 was of what took place at Annas', and explaining that it was before the high priest, Caiaphas. This is the inattention that led Dean Alford after others to deny the bearing of ■π■στειλεν “sent” in 24; for its quasi-pluperfect force is contextual simply, and is quite notorious in temporal subordinate sentences, and not only in relative but independent sentences if they contain some supplementary notice, which is exactly the fact here.

Annas, the ex-high priest, soon high priest again (for all was out of course), is very briefly introduced to mark how completely the Son of God was rejected. Before, Caiaphas was the interrogator while Peter denied his Master; and the tone is here no more different as compared with the other three Gospels than is always found. There is no solid ground for imagining the portress to have charged Peter immediately after entry. It was really at the fire, as in other Gospels. All is open and general in the account of John And the second denial, so far from being a difficulty, we have seen to be the solution of the difficulties which hasty minds found in the Synoptists; as the third sheds an important light on Luke and indeed all the rest, in the keen asseveration of Malchus kinsman, who with the rest might yet more alarm the guilty apostle's mind. Oh! the sad spectacle of Peter, and even John drawn by his own hand in the power of the Spirit, where Jesus stands alone in the majesty of grace and truth, immeasurably superior to all who presumed to judge Him, where His own who ought to have received Him are manifestly and immensely worse than the most hardened of Gentiles, and seal God's judgment on their infidel declaration that “We have no King but Caesar.” Now which of the Evangelists has the function of bringing this out habitually? John, who here does so above all.

Unbelief then is as inexcusable as it is blind. “By faith we understand.”

Chapter 133

Remarks on the Present Times

This is a time of trial for the beloved brethren who are gathered to the name and for the name of the Lord Jesus, because the pretensions and the energy of man are highly manifested. It is not an easy thing to be content with being simply what we are in reality before God. Times of “revival” reveal the thoughts of many hearts; but to learn in a day of grace to abide in peace, and know that God is God, is completely above the education of the flesh.

The spirit of the age affects many Christians, who labor to restore the “old things” for the service of God, instead of being broken before Him by the feeling of their own fall. I do not at all doubt their sincerity—but I fear that they have not judged themselves, that they know not the actual state of the ruin that surrounds them; so that they cannot have an adequate confidence only in the living God, as in the God of all resources in the midst of this scene where man has failed in everything.

We ought never to be afraid of the whole truth. To confess openly what we are in presence of what God is, such is always the path of peace and of blessing. If it be thus when even two or three only are found before God, there will not be disappointments, nor fallen hopes. If the wells dug in the days of Abraham have been filled and stopped up with earth, we have nevertheless to do with a God who can make water issue out of the rock, even when struck, and cause it to flow in the parched desert to refresh His people, thirsty and fatigued.

I do not envy the labor of those who dig canals in the sand for the streams which after all may take another course.

The active ways of God, in all times of blessing, consist in reproducing the glories of the work of the Lord Jesus. The darker the long night of apostasy becomes, the more distinctly the light of life shines. The word of the remnant is, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” He is the only gathering point. Men make among themselves confederations, having many things in view; but the communion of saints cannot be known unless every line converge on this living center.

The Holy Spirit does not gather the saints around simple views, true as they may be, on what the church is, on what it has been, or on what it may be on the earth. He gathers them always around this blessed person who is the same yesterday and to-day, and forever. “Where two or three are gathered together unto m name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 20). We are certain that Satan and the flesh will seek to resist this work and this way of the Lord, or to overthrow them.

We have need to be guarded from boasting, as is the case in these days; we need to be kept peaceful in the presence of God: there is so much independence and self-will almost everywhere. “We shall do great things” is the most unbecoming cry that can be heard at this time, when the light has made evident how little has been done.

God has made us know His truth as that which delivers us. “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” This liberty is not that of the flesh, because it penetrates our hearts with all the reality of a separation well known to God who is holy. Thus one gets straight into His position

with one's heart broken and humbled. If anyone talks of separation from evil without being humbled about it, let him beware lest his position be simply that which at all times has formed sects, and has also produced heterodoxy in doctrine.

As to our service, we have seen our precious Lord and Master in profound abasement wash the feet of His disciples, giving Himself as an example—to whom? To us assuredly. Now I know no service at the present time which is worthy of Him and agreeable to Him, if not done in humiliation. This is not the time to speak of a place for ourselves. If the church of God so dear to Christ is in this world dishonored, dispersed, ignorant and afflicted, he who has the mind of Christ will always take the lowest place. The true service of love will seek to give according to the wants of, and will never think to put shame on, the objects of the Master's love because of their necessity.

The men taught of God for His service come forth from a place of strength where they have learned their own weakness and their own nothingness. They find that Jesus is everything in the presence of God; and Jesus is everything for them in all and through all. Such persons in the hand of the Holy Spirit are real helps for the children of God; they will not contend for a place of distinction, or authority among the scattered flock. Communion of man with God with respect to the church is shown by a frank disposition to be nothing in it, and thus one will be happy in one's heart in spending and being spent.

In our personal remembrances we have lessons to learn with fear and trembling. May the thoughts of power never occupy our hearts too much. “Power belongeth unto God.” For about twenty years there has been a time of excitement, men seeking power everywhere and crossing seas to find it. Many thought of the church; but it was rather the church in power. They have felt and said that the power was lost; how regain it? From that time, they became occupied anew with earthly things, as if they could work deliverance here below.

Many recollect how at that time Satan could put man forward and the result has been the same everywhere. Whatever the form that such efforts adopted in those days of confusion and excitement, they were invariably agreed to let all go on perceiving their deception (for all failed in their objects, and the results were only sects). There were mortal marks of hostility against the Lord Jesus; or if His name were left untarnished, they prepared nevertheless the way for the terrible result of annulling the presence of the Holy Spirit who alone can glorify Jesus.

The Great Shepherd will not forget the labor done in His name with a happy heart for His dear sheep, poor and necessitous. An unfading crown of glory and abundant praise in the day of His appearing, will be the portion of those who meanwhile act thus. God will own all that He can own and none will lose His recompense. I am not surprised at the disappointments which have followed all the efforts men have made in the church to introduce some formal system of ministry, authority, or government. God cannot allow men to come and arrange the ground on which in these days He is pleased to find and bless His saints. We know very well what is the path of the flesh, which is completely indifferent about the fall of the church; it is to occupy a place among men where God has not granted it.

There is great instruction in the conduct of Zerubbabel related in the book of Ezra (3). The son and heir of David takes his place with a remnant returning from captivity. He is content to labor in Jerusalem without a throne, without a crown. In building the altar of the Lord and the house of

God, he simply served God in his own generation. Heir of the place that Solomon had formerly occupied in the days of prosperity and glory, he speaks neither of his birth nor of his own rights; yet is he faithful in all the path of separation, grief, and the struggles he is obliged to pass through. May the Lord render us more and more peaceful and confiding in Himself in these days of trial. “When I am weak, then am I strong,” is a lesson Paul had to learn by a very humiliating process. If we speak of our testimony on the earth, it will soon be evident that it is all nothing but weakness, and, like the seed which is lost by the wayside, the testimony will end all the same for our shame. But if the living God has by us on the earth a testimony to His own glory, then the feeling of weakness will only draw us more directly to the place of power. An apostle with a thorn in his flesh learns the sufficiency of the grace of Christ. A little remnant is gathered and assembled, having nothing in which it can boast in the flesh; but it is thus that it is suited to remain faithful to the name of Jesus when that which seemed to be something before men has failed.

Neither anger nor prudence nor pretensions of man can do anything in the state of confusion in which the church is now. I freely confess that I have no hope in the efforts that some are making to insure themselves an ecclesiastical position. In an earthquake when the house is undermined from its foundations, it matters little for a man to see how he can make his dwelling agreeable. We shall find it better for us to remain where we are set by the first discovery of the ruin of things in the hands of men, and with our faces in the dust. Such is the place that belongs to us if right, and after all it is the place of blessing. In the Apocalypse John learns the actual state of the churches, falling at the feet of Christ. He was afterward taken to heaven in order that thence he might later on see the judgments on the earth; but evil in the church can never be well known save when one is humbled at the feet of Jesus.

I have read of a time when several gathered together in such a grief of spirit that for a long time they could not utter a single word; but the floor of the meeting room was moistened with their tears, Were the Lord to grant us still such meetings it would be wise to frequent these houses of tears. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psa. 126:5). It is not only for an earthly remnant that that is true, but it is also written for us. I should willingly make a long journey to join persons thus afflicted, but I should not take a single step with a view of receiving, at the hands of the most excellent of men, power to overthrow all to-day, and to reconstitute tomorrow.

All that we can do is to walk with vigilance, but peacefully, thinking of the interests of the Lord Jesus; as to ourselves having nothing to gain and nothing to lose. The path of peace, the place of testimony, is to seek to please God. We need to be very watchful over ourselves, lest, after having been preserved from the corruptions of the age by very precious truths made known to us in our weakness, we should be caught in the net of presumption, or launch out into insubordination—a thing that God never can own or tolerate. “Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.” The word of God is the same to-day as ever. All that has happened has not changed His purpose which is to glorify the Lord Jesus. If we are humbled before Him, all that belongs to the glory of Christ will be to us of great moment. And what do we wish more? J. N. D.

Chapter 134

Redemption and Responsibility

Redemption is a work of God and complete. There is as to this no responsibility on our part who believe. Yet they are constantly mixed up together; and so uncertainty is introduced where all is perfect, and confusion where all is clear. A condition is never connected with redemption, but with our walk through the wilderness, where the redeemed have to be proved and humbled, and to know what is in their hearts. J. N. D.

Chapter 135

Revised New Testament: American Corrections 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

1 Timothy

The Americans have little to suggest on the R.V. of this Pastoral Epistle, and that little of but dubious value. They have nothing to say about the best way of dealing with the anacoluthon or absence of the ordinary consequent clause after i. 3, 4. Nor do they notice the feebleness of “a” dispensation of God in the latter of these verses. They are right of course in accepting with the Revisers “charge,” as against the “commandment” of the A.V. which confounds the thing meant, either with the “commandment” in ver. 1, or still more fatally with the law treated of in ver. 7-10; as did the late Dean Alford in the amazing error of talking about “the law of God in the gospel!!” as the true force of T. v. in 5 even contradicting the true connection with v. in 3, taken up again in 18. There is no effort to express better than the A. and R.Vv., the anarthrous construction in 9; and sorely the margin of the R.V. (“smiter”) might have well displaced the text ("murderers"). It can scarcely have been forgotten by classical students that Demosthenes uses the term in the broader application of ill-usage, and that Plato in a dialog so well known as the Plaedo expressly distinguishes man-beaters and man-slayers. The more comprehensive force seems therefore decidedly preferable. Again, they have nothing to say to the strange insertion of the English article because the Greek one is requisite in the ■γ S. in 10, a not infrequent fault in the R.V. Nor do they remark on the R.V., worse than the A.V. in unduly defining the general expression with which ver. 12 concludes. Undoubtedly it was to His service that our Lord appointed Paul, but what is said is appointing me to ministry (or service), though I was beforetime a blasphemer, &c. Instead of these, which have importance more or less, they say on 16 for “hereafter” read “thereafter,” where in truth neither is called for, T. p.. “those that should.” And in 18 they would substitute the margin for the A. and R.Vv. which seem both wrong in directly connecting προαγ. instead of προφ. with ■π■δ■. The sense is “the foregoing or preceding prophecies as to thee.”

On 2:4 they observe “Read who would have all men to be saved,” instead of the Revised “who willeth that all men should be saved.” It is the expression of desire, not of counsel. In the rest of the chapter they only refer to 15, and would have margin to exchange place with the text. Here again both Revisers and correctors seem at fault, and the A.V. is more accurate; for though the thing child-bearing is well rendered “in childbearing,” without “her” which is not intended, still less “the” as if pointing to the virgin Mary's which is wholly foreign to the passage, pace Ellicott after Hammond.

Not a word have they on the weighty chapter iv. In v. they only suggest as to 12 to read “pledge” (with margin Gr. faith) for “faith,” a questionable rendering indeed. In vi. 2 they would read “are minded” for “desire.”

2 Timothy

They would reverse the Revised “incorruption” and restore A V “immortality” as the rendering of ■φθαρσ■αυ. Very probably they were misled by Drs. Alford and Ellicott, or by others who misdirected them. For it is an error that the body is not in question here. Life refers to the soul, as incorruptibility to the body, both brought to light by Christ through the gospel. His resurrection was victory over death, which annulled its power; as the gospel brings us even now by faith into that which will be finally displayed in full at His appearing in glory. “Immortality” is a fatal step backwards.

The only other American suggestion is as to the last verse of n. They, as in the A.V., prefer it all to refer to Satan, “having been taken captive by him unto his will,” with the margin slightly modified. The manifest objection to the A.V. lies in the reference of the two different pronouns to God. Hence Beza led the way in taking α■τ. of the devil, ■κ. of God. Bengel's notion of spiritual captive by the Lord's servant, adopted by the committee, appears highly unnatural. G. Wakefield has the extraordinary turn “after being rescued alive,” and so far differs from the Revisers; but this was to forget the perfect and give an aoristic sense rather to the participles, besides the etymological force. To wake up to God's will after having been captive to Satan is simple enough.

TITUS

affords scope for three notes; 1, 2, the strangely loose “long ages ago” for margin to “before times eternal,” the singular rendering of the Revisers. But it is easier to disapprove than to do well. The meaning is before the ages of time, though it seems not very satisfactory as a version.

In 2:13 they would make the text and the margin of the Revision exchange places. Either way the person of Christ shines in glory. The context seems here to favor the text as better than the margin.

As to 3:10, “factious” is certainly less equivocal than “heretical,” which is apt to be taken as heterodox; whereas a leader of a sect or party outside is meant in contra-distinction from a schismatic within. The true meaning is of moment, as in other ways, so in utterly overthrowing De Wette's unbelieving effort to deny the apostolic and inspired claim of the Epistle by assuming the later ecclesiastical usage for this word. In reality it rather proves the contrary, and thus its true Pauline sense here confirms the fact that he who wrote 1 Corinthians and Galatians wrote this letter to Titus. 2 Peter 2 allows of debate as to the precise shade of meaning, but there can be no just doubt of the same sense in the epistles of Paul; and it is not the later or ecclesiastical sense.

Chapter 136

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—Hebrews

Hebrews

The opening of this great epistle suggests grave questions in abundance, which the American committee slip in silence. They say nothing of the Revisers' departure from their rule as to the rendering of the aorist in 1:2, or the remarkable expression ■ν υ■■, where “in His Son” gives the idea inadequately, though it is difficult to represent it well in our tongue. For “as Son” is too vague, and “in the person of the Son,” or “in the Son,” would answer to ■ν τπω υ■■, as in the contrasted phrase ■ν το■ς πρ., the meaning is that God spoke to us in One so nearly related to Him as Son. Very poor is Chrysostom's comment, ■δο■ π■λν τ■, ■ν υι■ δι■ το■ φησι, πρ■ς το■ς λ■γοντας τ■ πνε■ματι το■το ■ρμ■ζειν. ■ρ■ς ■τι κα■ τ■, ■ν, δι■ ■στι; (Interpr. Epp. Paul. vii. 9. Field, Oxon. 1862.) So among the Latins Primasius, followed by a crowd down to our day, though not without a numerous and weighty protest. Again, in the dynamic sense of personal agency in π. is unnoticed, if the reading of the three oldest copies prevail against the mass in the omission of “by Himself” It is curious to see how Ebrard over and over discusses π. as if it were active, and the Vulgate renders it as a present, instead of a past and completed act. Nor is there a word on the questionable place of “again” in 6; but their first counsel is to omit marginal ("spirits"), which seem to be on just ground; for why “make” angels “spirits,” seeing that they are all assumed so to be in 14? The parallelism also points to “winds” here. The notion of making the winds His angels, and a flame of fire His servants, is ungrammatical and inadmissible in both Hebrew and Greek. The Lord really causes His angels to assume the shapes He sees fit. In 9 they would add to the first “God” marg. “or, O God.” Certainly many have so supposed, though Ps. 50:7 proves the analogy to the A. V., and the context (to my mind) is consistent with this alone. It is as man, not as God, that the Lord could be said with any propriety to be anointed. Compare Acts 10 and the very title of Messiah everywhere. In the aspect of divine glory we should not hear of “Thy fellows.” The Authorized and Revised Versions, were right as they are.

In 2 we have no remark till 16, where they propose for the text, “doth he give help to,” instead of “take hold,” which they would relegate to the margin. It comes really to the same sense, the one being the literal meaning, the other derivative. It is not angels that Christ takes up, but Abraham's seed. The assumption of humanity was taught previously in 14, and is in no way alluded to here, though no doubt His interest in the seed of promise is a consequence. The Authorized Version was a huge blunder—physically, grammatically, contextually, and dogmatically. Christ was Himself the woman's Seed; but to take on Him as a nature Abraham's seed is unintelligible. Besides, the present tense was therefore changed into the past to give it an appearance, but in vain. There is no contrast with the nature of angels; and if there were, the seed of Abraham would be a strange opposition. So that Chrysostom who made a similar mistake had to desert the text, and puts it as the nature not of angels but of men that He took up; just as King James' translators got farther away from the truth than the versions which preceded theirs.

It will be observed that they do not comment on the concatenation of 9, where the Revisers join some of the moderns against the ancients, nor on its close where an interesting question arises, excluded by all the English Versions; though it is well-known that the Greek fathers take it as neuter, which enlarges the scope and is in keeping with what has gone before, whereas we hear of “many sons” in what follows, not of all mankind.

Their only other reference is to 17, where they with Alford, Green, the Rhemish, &c. prefer “become” to “be” a merciful &c. Those who adhere to “be” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions, do not differ in sense, believing that our Lord only entered on His proper priestly functions when He ascended on high. If He were on earth, He would not even be a priest, there being those who offered the gifts according to the law. His is a heavenly priesthood.

In 3 the points noticed are of the slightest, “where” for “wherewith (9) as in margin,” and the “so” of the Authorized Version (as an alternative in the margin), in 11 where the Revisers have “as” —in 4:3 also. It is curious that all the older English Versions were right and had “where” till the Authorized Version. Had they remarked on the too common dilution of the Revisers which re-appears in 6, there would have been true ground of exception; for surely “as Son” is the sense, not “as a son.” They might have well pointed out also the loss of connection in 14 with 1:9, which all the old English Versions fail to keep up; not to speak of marking in the best way the links of the closing verses.

In 4:2 they are right about the singular text of the critics, adopted indeed on most ample diplomatic authority but with the strangest resulting sense, in the face of the great corroboration of the common text lent by the Sinaitic copy to the three known cursives, backed by the Vulgate and other Latin MSS., the Pesch. Syr. &c. But they do not object to the unfounded emphasis given to “that” rest in 3, nor to the enfeebling of 10, by withholding “own” at the end. They only would read in 7, “To day, saying in David, so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before), Today if ye,” etc. Not even the serious error of “yet” in 15, imported from the Authorized Version into the Revised, draws out a word of remonstrance. “But yet” in Tyndale was a slight guard; the Rhemish is the best, for it has no supplement, as none is needed, and any such as is here insinuates the heterodoxy of its merely meaning that He did not sin. The statement however goes farther incalculably, and teaches that He was tempted, or tried, in all things in like manner, or according to our similitude, sin excepted—not sinning merely but “sin” excepted. In Him was no sin: it is that not only He did not sin, but there was nothing of the kind in Him He knew no sin. They are silent as to the last verse where “to help us in time of need” is freer even than the Authorized Version which omits the “us:” “for seasonable help” is surely better than Alford's “for help in time.” To limit it to “to-day” is not warranted.

On 5 they have nothing to offer. Yet we have again in 8 the worse than needless “a:” Son after the quotation in 5, and “first principles” instead of simply “beginning.” We may and ought to go on to full growth or “perfection,” but should never leave first principles.

Hence in 6:1 they fail to put the case in its full force, though quite justified in rejecting the strange paraphrase of the Revised text. The margin is preferable; and “full growth,” or margin, should have displaced “perfection” in what follows, for it is equivocal if not misleading, and v. 14 should have prevailed with the Revisers as to our verse. But was it not worth their notice that, it is “land,” not “the” land? They are warranted (9) in somewhat more than marg. “near to” and preferring “belong

to” perhaps.

On 7 not a word, not even on the interesting difference of ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς, here and in 10:1 rendered “continually,” in 10:12, “forever,” as compared with ε■ς τ■ν α■■να, “forever,” Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 28. It means without interruption or break, continuously, or in perpetuity whether relative or absolute; a precision of the utmost moment both as to Christ and as to the Christian, as may appear farther on. The difficulty raised by Commentators as to eternity has no real ground in the phrase.

8:8 has little to recommend it; for among the ancients it was expressly noticed that the apostle spoke of blaming, not it, but them; and it seems the natural construction to take α■το■ς with μ. rather than λ. But was there reason to say more in 1 than “a” chief point? So in 8 “days” are coming. Nor is there an effort even to express the different words for “knowing” in 11.

On 9 they have more to say, and first would have the margin of 4 change place with the text; that is, they would read in the text “altar of incense,” and in the margin censer. The ancient Versions, including the Memphitic of Wilkins, save the Latin of the Clermont MS. (avrevm habens altarem) and the Aethiopic which is here nil in its vagueness, are decidedly in favor of the Revised text, not of the margin. The word as in Philo and Josephus might express either; but the connection of the censer with the high priest's action on the Day of Atonement obviously strengthens its case against the golden altar; is plain that in 2 Chron. 26:19 θυμιατ■ριον “censer” in the king's hand is distinguished from θυσιαστ■ριον τ■ν θ. “the altar of incense.” Compare also Ezek. 13:11 in the LXX with Luke 1:11; Rev. 8:3; 9:13, which seem conclusive against the identification, and sustain the Authorized Version against Smith's Diet. of the Bible, i. 58, 288. For “parable” in 9 they would render π. “figure” and so in 11:19, as in the Authorized Version for both. This seems no great matter, and rather a question of linguistic taste than of substantial exactitude. It is agreed that “now” present is needless, as “then” in Authorized Version is erroneous. Much more important is δι■ in 12, which the Authorized Version renders “by,” the Revised Version “through,” probably in the same sense. It is a total mistake to limit the preposition oven with a genitive to the instrument or means, for it also expresses time or state; as here how Christ entered heaven, not whereby. “With,” as in Rom. 2:27, is the more correct, intelligent, and reverent sense, as there the Revisers properly say in contrast with the Authorized Version which has no just meaning, in Heb. 9:12 a possibly improper one. It was the way of atoning efficacy in which He entered, not the medium. Compare 1 Tim. 2:15 for another shade of thought, “through” or “in,” not “by.” In 14 they would add as a margin “Or, his et. sp.,” I presume, to exclude the Holy Ghost from this offering, or at least to predicate it of His own spirit, as Alford &c. understand without “his.” But this is to miss the great truth on which Christians even from the most ancient times fell so soon away to their great loss; they failed to see His perfection as man in thus ever acting in the Spirit even to the closing and crowning fact that by the Spirit He offered Himself spotless to God. And if called here “eternal,” it is in exact keeping with the character of this Epistle where the Christian Hebrews are taught to view all their blessings thus, in contrast with the temporal standing, privileges and hopes of the earthly. people in its best estate, salvation, redemption, inheritance, and covenant. Their last point is merely to substitute the categorical for the interrogative form in 17 by substituting margin for the text. It is possible, though unnecessary: the sense amounts to the same.

In 10:1 it is a pleasure to agree heartily with the Americans in refusing “they” can (■ A B D CORR P and some 30 or more cursives) against the rest of the uncials and cursives, confirmed by the ancient versions, which connect “can” with the law. “They” cannot be said to be in analogy with the Epistle: if defensible, it must be by making it in sense impersonal. And then follows the Lachmannic oddity of a period after πραγμ■των, and beginning a new sentence “They can never by the same sacrifice,” etc. Therefore it is here proposed to read margin “many ancient authorities read they can.” But not a syllable of protest do they utter against the error of the Authorized Version repeated in the Revised Version which takes vr. 12 ε■ς τ■ δ., continuously, with Christ's having offered one sacrifice fox sins, whereas its true connection is with His session at God's right hand. Wiclif alone exhibits the same mistake, not Tyndale nor Cranmer nor the Geneva V. nor the Rhemish, strange to say. If it were indeed a participle present, it might go to prove the theory of the mass as a continual offering from the cross for the sins of living and dead. But the wrist falls in naturally with the contextual argument on the unity of the sacrifice because of its perfect efficacy; and the “continuously” goes with the utmost propriety and characterizes Christ's seat on high, though only stated as a fact. There He took His seat, not precisely “forever,” but “uninterruptedly” in witness of His completed and accepted sacrifice, instead of standing day by day to renew the same ineffectual offerings—not “forever” but henceforth expecting till His enemies be set a footstool of His feet. It may be of interest to note that the same phrase is used just after, in 14: by one offering Christ has perfected uninterruptedly the sanctified. His saints have been perfected without a break to disturb their acceptance, as freed from their sins by His blood. Their communion may be interrupted and is by every sin allowed: their clearance from guilt is as perfect as His work can effect. Out of communion we are powerless and fail to enjoy; and His advocacy restores our souls by the washing of water by the word which gives self-judgment. But the standing of the believer is in Christ and according to the value of a work which has so purged the worshipper that they have, as 10:2 says, no more conscience of sins. The conscience is so purged as to know that all one's sins are gone before God.

In 22, 23 the Americans prefer margin to the Revised text, but without sound reason, it seems to me; for the three verbs of call in the three verses are connected in due order, the approach being as simply strengthened by the two perfect participles which follow, as the holding fast the confession of our hope is sustained by the faithful promise of God, and the considering one another to provoke to love and good works, carried out especially in this habitual gathering together and by exhortation in view of the day approaching. Why sever “our body washed with pure water” from the foregoing? and why connect it particularly with what follows? Each of the subjunctives introduces a new scope, and has its own supports adjoining, and in no case preceding. The superiority of “our own assembling together” is not obvious. As to 34 it is a question between “ye yourselves have” ■ A H, some cursives, ancient Vv., &c)—or “ye have for yourselves” (D E K L, the mass of cursives, &c). Margin seems to me to be a mere blunder; and I could not say that any ancient authority countenances it, or if so, what matter? There are foolish enough things beyond doubt in the fathers.

The suggestion on 11:1 is unobjectionable. Here is the sense— “Now faith is confidence (3:14) in [things] hoped for, conviction of things not seen.” The rendering proposed for the text in 5 seems a mere twist without adequate ground. If no more than this could be questioned, the Revisers had small reason to fear criticism.

In 12 they draw attention to the strange, want of judgment in the Revised text of 3. There are a few ancient and excellent authorities which read the plural in one form or another; but the singular “himself” or “him” is the reading of Afford and Lachmann, of Tischendorf and Tregelles, none of whom lacked boldness in acting on a few old copies. The learned editors of Cambridge adopt it in their Gr. N. T. and were probably the chief influence in bearing down the opposition of others in the Committee. In 17 it is important to observe that what Esau sought diligently to obtain with tears was the coveted blessing. To have sought repentance with tears yields no good sense. This may show that an intervening parenthesis is desirable to help the unintelligent reader. It was not however a change of his father's mind but of his own for which he found no place. There was no real looking to God about his sins.

It is to be regretted that the Americans seem as far as the Revisers from correcting the vicious arrangement in 22, 23, where they all failed to see that κα■, defines each new clause after the first in the sentence from 22-24. Mount Zion is the first; then comes the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; next myriads of angels, the general assembly; after that the church of the first-born, enrolled as they are in heaven; then God Judge of all; next spirits of just men made perfect; then Jesus mediator of a fresh (ν. not κ.) covenant; and lastly blood of sprinkling speaking better than Abel. It is confusion to mix up the church of first-born ones or heirs with theπανηγ. which really is in apposition with μυρ. ■γγ. “To the general assembly and church” &c. is a muddle, the first term of which should end the previous object enumerated; the second begins a new one with the conjunction prefixed.

In 13:18 “honorably” or “rightly” is better than “honestly” as now limited in English. But in 20 “an” eternal is very much to be doubted. They did not suggest “an” eternal Spirit in ch. 9. Our tongue does not always admit of the characterizing power of the anarthrous Greek construction, as may be seen in almost every salutation of the Epistles and often elsewhere. Hence we are forced sometimes to use our definite article where Greek has none. More noteworthy far than any of these three is the true bearing of h, in 20, where the Revisers do not improve on the Authorized Version rendering. of “through” by theirs of “with,” for which they add the margin, “or, by Gr. in.” It is to be feared that our American friends with the Committee at home hold Calvin's strange idea, which Bleek of late defends though one hardly likes to put it on paper, of Christ's taking the blood with Him to heaven. It is really and simply in virtue, or in the power, of His blood. In 24 it seems needless to add the margin, “or, the brethren from.” It was implied, though Wiclif and the Rhemish have supplied it, following the Vulgate as usual slavishly.

Chapter 137

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—James

James

It seems surprising that the Americans, less bound as they are by traditional bias than most in the old world, should heed the title given in the Authorized Version where it is clearly opposed to truth like this of our Epistle. Had “General” been applied only to the First of John and to that of Jude, every thoughtful person would have seen it to be true in fact. For the title is no part of the original text and differs in the ancient copies. The δωδεκ■φυλον, or whole nationality, of Israel was before the inspired writer's mind, not the church at large as the term Catholic or General supposes. If any were disposed to the notion of a spiritual Israel, “that are in the dispersion” ought to dispel it. One has only to examine or think of the extra-Pauline Epistles to see how absurdly they are designated the Seven Catholic Epistles, though they were from a date early enough to satisfy those who prefer post-apostolic antiquity to scripture.

The Americans are not wrong in preferring “proving” to “proof” in 1:3, as Dean Alford also felt. They do not question the arrangement of 6-8; but is it not simpler and truer to take verse 7 as parenthetical, and 8 as a description of the doubter figuratively set forth in 6, rather than in apposition with “that man” in 7? Did they not feel the importance of the plural form relegated from the text of 13 to margin? God tries faith and patience, He never tempts to lusts, which are from within. So 17 has no notice beyond a return from the Revised Version “boon” to the Authorized Version “gift.” Now we all know that the first of the two words, though properly expressive of the act of giving may be and often is used for a gift or present; but, is it conceivable that we should have the two terms without a distinction other than brought together and differently qualified? Ought we not to allow that “every good giving” is here distinguished from “every perfect gift?” The character of the act good, the result in the thing given perfect, the Father of lights is the source, in contrast with evil in act and result flowing; from self. We need not repeat other remarks on the Revised Version made in April 1882, which do not appear to have presented themselves to our friends.

On 2 we have nothing suggested. It is agreed that they rightly cleave to the Authorized and Revised Versions of 1, and reject the unsatisfactory alternative of Bengel, Calvin, Gataker, or others. So, also, the bringing in of “synagogue” for the more general “assembly” as in the Authorized Version is a sound correction for reasons which may not have occurred to the Committee on either side of the Atlantic. One can understand also the text and margin of 4, though it be questionable if either side be the best rendering of the word 8. But ought they to have passed by the needless introduction of the English indefinite in 12? Nor is “hath” called for in 13. It is more surprising they should consent to “that” faith of the Revisers in 14. Even Dean Alford would regard the Greek article as only that of previous mention. Its emphatic force is quite unnecessary. In 18 the literal sense seen in the Revised margin seems better than their text and as in the Authorized Version, which is substantially Tyndale's. It appears to me that “the” is more forcible than “thy” with “works” and “faith” at the close: “Show me thy faith apart from the works [i.e., produced by it], and I

will shew thee by [or from] my works, the faith" [i.e. which produces them], neither carrying the English article without some such paraphrase. See the Revisers' own rendering in 26. The article here means the works proper to faith, the works one has a right to expect from faith. It seems extraordinary that the English Versions at 19 should have deserted the text before their various translators and given what answers only to the Cambridge Greek Test of 1881, as well as the Revisers' margin, no doubt greatly due to the learned Editors' influence. For though the uncials and cursives in general differ greatly in the order of the words, the sense is the same as is represented in the Revised text; and so the mass of ancient versions. The margin has only the Vatican, backed up by Scrivener's a c l m and Theophyl. All other critics justly insert the article, which makes the textual rendering imperative. Very likely ■ργ■ "barren" in 20 has a claim of superiority over νεκρ■ dead (which may well have slipped in from the context); but was it not in cautious to support the Revised Version in ignoring even in the margin what cannot be denied to have the great preponderance of ancient evidence? In 23 "friend" of God is much more expressive, as well as more strictly correct, than "the friend." Again in 24 why be parties to severing μ. "only" from "faith?" The connection with substantives is common and well known. And why "the" Spirit, when our idiom here admits of close adherence to the Greek? The last clause illustrates on the other hand that in Greek the article may be with "faith" if not with "works," where the Revisers properly enough have it not in English. Indeed with "works" the witnesses very generally insert it, save two great uncials and two cursives. Origen can scarcely be reckoned in; for he makes both "faith" and "works" here to be anarthrous.

3:1 appears to be encumbered rather than helped by the proposed supply "many of you," as G. Wakefield had suggested long ago; it is sufficiently implied in the phrase itself. This is the sole suggestion from the west. Yet there are delicate questions, especially in 6, while there is little doubt of the critical readings in 3, 6, and 9. Elsewhere the cumbrous rendering of the Committee in 15 has been noticed, which we do not repeat; and it is a grave question whether "in peace" should not be connected with "fruit of righteousness" rather than with "sown" as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. G. Wakefield made it qualify "fruit," as if equivalent to Heb. 12:11.

In 4:4 there is but a marginal explanation suggested of "adulteresses," "That is, who break your marriage vow to God," without a word on ch. v. There is no sufficient reason to doubt the soundness of the critical change, which all accept save that Tischendorf strangely connects the word pt. with the sentence before (3), not with 4. But the feminine only and fully expresses the corruption of all who tamper with the world, instead of keeping themselves unspotted from it. In 5 the Americans rightly endorse the double query that divides the verse; but is it by any means sure that the Revisers are right in adopting the transitive form of the verb according to ■ A B 101. 104. in the latter half? It is precisely a case where the most ancient MSS. are least reliable; for they often interchange η with ι, ο with ω, when the self-same thing is really meant. Of course the resulting difference of sense amounts to little; for according to the great mass of copies, versions, and early citations, it attributes to the Spirit Himself His dwelling in us; according to the favorites of the critics, it means God's causing Him so to dwell, which certainly agrees well with the words that follow. It is of interest to notice the aorists in 7-10, as compared with the presents in 2-6 (excepting of course God's gift of the Spirit), though difficult to express in English. Then in 11 we return to the present, where continuance is meant to be laid down, rather than the urgency of having it done, duration being merged. Strange it seems that the Americans had not a word of question on the

omission of the first γαρ “for” in 14. Even Tregelles only brackets the word. On rather less evidence Lachmann omits the second, the presence of which, I presume, led the copyists of ■pm B &c. to omit the former. B omits the article before ζ. also, as well as (with P its companion) in the second clause. In 14 the readings from itacism are confusing enough. Nevertheless, in spite of B P &c. θελ■ση “shall have willed” is better than θελ■ or ει, and if we are to read ο (not ω), the balance inclines to taking κα■ ζ. κ. π. together. In 16 “every” rather than “all.” In 17 is there to be no difference caused by the anarthrous form? “To one therefore knowing how to do right, and doing [it] not, to him it is sin.”

5:1 gives the aorist with the present participle, so as to combine instant weeping with habitual howling, because of their sins and the Lord's speedy judgment. But nobody is blamed for what is so hard to express suitably. Why, however, is the last clause of 3 “have” laid up? “Ye laid up” &c. seems more concentrated and graphic. The Americans might have recalled the British Committee to their own rule; but it is hard to rid the mind of habit and prejudice; and the true form sounds somewhat harsh to an English ear. The perfects are used with such propriety in 2, 3, and 4, that it is idle to suppose the aorist is used in vain between them. So in 5 it should be “Luxuriously ye lived on the earth and indulged yourselves; ye nourished...condemned...killed,” &c. All is summed up conclusively in the view of the writer; who nevertheless guards against possible misuse by his transition to the present in the closing words, “he doth not resist you.” (Compare also ver. 7-10). Bentley's conjecture (Philippians Lips I. 34) of ο κς, or ■ Κ■ριος, for ο■κ was as unworthy as needless. In 16 “A righteous man's supplication” is sufficient and exact. In 20 it seems arbitrary to omit in the margin a notice of “his” soul, supported as it is by ■ A P more than half a dozen cursives, and all the ancient versions save Sah. Arm. of Zohrab, and adopted by, and two such editors as Lachmann, and Tischendorf in his last and eighth edition. Neither Erasmus nor Alford nor Compl., neither Stephens nor Beza nor the Elzevirs read the pronoun, but Colimeus does.

Chapter 138

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—1 Peter

1 Peter

As regards this fervent Epistle of Peter so full of that which is calculated to “strengthen his brethren,” the western Committee appear to be well pleased with the work of the British Revisers. At any rate they themselves have nothing but two at best questionable remarks to offer, which we shall examine in their places, one on 2:2, the other on 5:2.

1:1, 2, in the Revised Version, may be given in a form that suits English readers; but the strict force is, “Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to pilgrims (or sojourners) of dispersion, of (or in) Pontus &c. elect according to foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.” The absence of the article is intended, though no doubt our tongue does not admit of the omission so uniformly as the Greek. These are the Israel of God, not Gentiles (to correct a frequently perverted scripture), however truly the latter may partake in the same blessing; but Gentiles are not addressed in the greeting, only the Christian remnant of Jews in the designated quarter of Asia Minor. Further ■ν assuredly does not mean “through;” but “by” may sometimes represent it better than “in,” which of course. is the common equivalent in English. To assume that it should always be “in” is ignorance of or inattention to the usage: see 5 for the difference of “by” and “through.” Some, again, would limit “of Jesus Christ” at the close to the blood sprinkling; but this is unfounded and obscures the great truth that the Christian is set apart to Christ's obedience as truly as to the application of His blood. The anarthrous form quite falls in with this: had the article been there, it would have pointed to Him personally; as it is, we have Him giving character to obedience and blood sprinkling, in contrast with law-obedience and blood of victims which confirmed the old covenant as a penal sanction. The idea is neither obedience of faith (or believing with the heart the gospel), nor obeying what our Lord enjoined; but as He obeyed in the dependence and loving confidence of sonship, so we now practically as under grace and possession of eternal life in Him. The strange mistranslation through misunderstanding of the latter words is even more striking among some of the Reformed than in older translations or comments; but it need not occupy us now, as it has been already dealt with in this review.—6 “in” here also is very doubtful in the “manifold temptations” or “trials,” though quite right at the beginning of the verse. 6, in such cases expresses way and character, which “by” suits English; not the instrument identified with the agent like the simple dative, still less the means distinct from that agent like δι■. I do not see how talking about “the element and material” helps intelligence.—In 7, as in 13, the Revisers rightly translate, like the Authorized Version ■ν “at” the revelation. What is the use of following the foreign fashion, and saying “in” the element, in time, in which it shall be manifested? It is to lose English in a childish literality of Greek. But is 8 in the Revised Version as accurate as in the Authorized Version? The Americans have not observed, more than the British Revisers, that theirs would answer to μ■, not to ο■κ. It should be “having not seen.” In the same verse the Revisers rightly correct “in” to “on,” for the connection of ε■ς ■ν is not with ■γ. but with one or both participles; but, if with both, the Revised Version fails by supplying an object to the first and so connecting the words with π. only. Translate therefore, “on

whom though now not looking but believing ye exult” &c. Were the connection with the verb as in the Authorized Version, ■ν ■ would be the construction required. The ancient versions appear to be for the most part singularly loose and unsatisfactory, as the Pesh. Syriac and Vulgate, which omit and add wildly. The Philoxenian Syriac is correct. The older English are inexact, Wiclif and Rhemish being the worst. In 9 Mr. T. S. Green rightly adheres to “salvation of souls,” or in a general, form soul-salvation. In 11 it is hard to convey some little intimation of the phrase, which marginal (Gr. unto) scarcely meets, “the sufferings [that came] unto Christ,” or “of Christ” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. Whether ■ν be or be not read in 12, the right version is “by” (hardly “with” as in the Authorized Version alone of English versions), the Rhemish treating the dative as a genitive absolute! in collision with all grammar, doubtless in subserviency to the Vulgate. I am disposed to take ■ν, on full external evidence backed up by the usus loquendi already explained, notwithstanding A B and three cursives, meaning “in virtue of [the] Holy Spirit,” who is looked at, not as a distinct personal abject as in 11, but as a characteristic power for preaching the gospel. Only ignorance of the truth would therefore deny His presence personally in those who thus preached. The anarthrous form is the only correct one for expressing character, as here intended. But why pass over the mistaken text of the Revisers, following the Authorized Version in 15? The marginal is more right, ■γ. being not a predicate but the virtual substantive of the phrase, “after the pattern of,” or according to, “the Holy one that called you.” It seems peculiar that 20 should have passed muster with its uncalled for, not to say incorrect, “who was,” as if the article were there. The force is rather, if we must supply anything for English ears, “foreknown as He was,” and omitting “was” before “manifested.”

In 2:1 is not “malice” (marg.) better than the Revised text “wickedness"? It is allowed that the latter more general term may be well in such texts as Acts 8:22. What has been said before in reviewing the Revision need not be repeated now; but it seems to me that λογ. is one of those words which the Christian revelation wanted and modified for its own purpose, elevating it from “reasonable” as in margin or “belonging to the reason,” as the Americans suggest, to “of the word.” Compare Rom. 12:1. In 5 is it not loose to render the text, “ye also... are built,” as in Authorized and Revised Versions? Read “yourselves also...are being built” &c. In 7 why not say, “A stone which the builders rejected, this was made head corner-stone"? In 9 it ought to be more general, “a people for a possession,” though doubtless God's possession is meant. In 10 “God's people” suffices: and at the end “obtained” without “have,” the fact now simply, in contrast with the previous state of Lo-ruhamah. In 13 “to king” is best. In 16 “having freedom,” —the thing freedom as a cover of the thing malice. Even the Revisers do not say “your” wickedness; nor should they with freedom. The article is with both in Greek, not as a possessive, but because contrast makes the two objects, or in a measure personifies them. The difference of aor. and pres. in 17 it is difficult to convey tersely in English. The Americans rightly reject the supply of “them” (with Alford) or “things” (with Huther, &c.), and adhere with the Revisers to the Authorized Version with Wiclif and Rhemish. Tyndale gave here “the cause” (Pesh. Syr.), Cranmer “the vengeance.” Geneva “the punishment.”

3:1 shows a rendering similar to 2:18, and slightly different from 2:13, where it is the aorist, expressive of once-for-all action, as the need presented itself; here it is the present as expressing continuance or habit. In 2 it is remarkable that those who contend for “in” almost to nausea abandon it here, where it might be, for the freer version of “coupled with fear,” which has descended and prevailed since Tyndale. In 3, 4, complication might be avoided by “On whose part

let there be, not the outward ornament of" &c..."of the meek" &c. In 12 it is "Jehovah's eyes," and "Jehovah's face." It is not in 15 "Lord Christ," but Christ as Lord as in the Revised Version. In 17 "to suffer doing well than doing ill," i.e. for the one rather than the other. Is it not strange, first, that the Revisers should have perpetuated the error of the Authorized Version in 20, "Which... were," as if the Greek had been roc, and next, that the Americans should be insensible to the mistake? The absence of the article proves the participle to be part of the predicate and assigns the reason of their present imprisonment, "disobedient as heretofore they were when" &c. In 21, "not putting away of filth of flesh, but demand" &c.

4:1, 2, the anarthrous construction is little heeded here by the Revisers or the Americans; see also 5, 6. Nor is the plural unintentional which has been relegated to the margin." In 11 there is need of little, if any, supply: "Let it be" would make the sense plain to the dullest. In 12 "count not as strange the burning [i.e. of persecution] taking place among us for trial, as though" &c. It is not "has taken place" nor "which is to." The Revised Version is fairly good.

5:1. As the Revisers adopt ο■ν "therefore," they have no right to "the" elders. It would be general in that case. In 2 the weight of authorities is rather equally divided for and against the words "according to God," in the Revised Version but not in the Authorized Version. The Rhemish has the phrase following the Vulgate, and so Wiclif ("bi God") and Cranmer "(after a Godly sorte)" in a parenthesis of italics. The Complutensian editors have it not, any more than the Vatican MS. and others; the Sin., Alex., and Porph. uncials give it. But there need be no hesitation in rejecting the American preference of the error of the Authorized, Version in Rom. 8:27, which our translators never ventured to repeat as to the same phrase in 2 Cor. 7:9, 10, 11, Eph. 4:24, or 1 Peter 4:6, which is in contrast with κατ ■νθρωπον and really is a far different idea from and far larger than κατ■ τ■ θ■λημα το■ θεο■ with which they would identify it. Beza influenced the Authorized Version, and Wetstein sought vainly to defend it; but the heathen, who are so unwisely quoted in that defense, could hardly be expected to understand "after a divine sort" or "character," in contrast with what suits a man. It is nature and mind rather than "will." Other points may be left at present.

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—2 Peter

2 Peter

On the Second Epistle the American Committee have a little more to say, but not much. In 1:1, they prefer marg. to the text, and therefore would have them exchange places. Is not this a singular choice? Even G. Wakefield, heterodox as he was, translated as the Revisers. No scholar who has adequately weighed the construction contests that the omission of the second article admits of two persons strictly united in joint agency, where the phrase does not describe a single person. Contextual scope must, decide which is intended; but even where it is a unity of two before the mind rather than one person, which is expressed by the one common article, the phrase seems impossible unless both stood on precisely the same platform of nature or position. Now I am disposed to believe that in the Epistles of Peter, as in that to the Hebrews, the inspired writer meant to strengthen those addressed in the great truth that Jesus was the Jehovah of Israel, the true God, no less than the Father. The righteousness in question was His faithfulness to promise in bestowing faith on them; for it could be said to the Jews, beyond any other people under heaven, “To you is the promise and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Him.” Of them only, since Abram, is there at all times a remnant according to the election of grace. Again no notice is taken of that common fault in the Revisers, the needless enfeebling indefinite article of ours twice over. Our tongue does not require “a” before “servant” or “bondman"; yet it seems harsh to omit in English “the” before “righteousness,” though Mr. Green does so. “In” the righteousness might mislead, because here it would tend to convey the idea of righteousness as the object of faith, according to a favorite dream of Calvinistic theology, which is in no way meant, as even the Puritan Dr. John Owen candidly acknowledges. God was righteous in giving them faith no less precious than the apostles' according to His promise to the fathers. “By” in the Geneva V. is legitimate, or even “through,” though this last might be taken as the mere means (δι■); whereas it is their God and Savior's fidelity to His word, in virtue of which He secured their believing. If “in” were thus understood, it would be all right, as in ver. 2, where the form of the phrase is not quite the same as in 1 and is correctly given in almost all versions. The reading in 3 is not altogether sure, B K L and the great majority sustaining the common text, Erasmus and the Compl. edd., Stephens, Beza, Elzevirs &c. whilst ■ A C P, a decent little corps of cursives (at least 12), and a very weighty portion of Vv. support ■δ■α ("by His own"). The difference in result is however much less than it might seem at first; for what after all is the dogmatic distinction between “through glory and virtue,” and “by His own glory and virtue?” Little or nothing beyond emphatic appropriation of glory to God, in order to enhance its bearing on the believer's call by it. But how came the Authorized Translators to make so stupendous a blunder as to render δι■ δ. “to” glory? They were misled by the Geneva V., as it was by Beza, who knew the reading approved of by most modern, critics, yet rejected not it only but the unequivocal meaning of his own text in deference to his theological idol. Hence he sets Rom. 9:23; 15:7; 1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Thess. 2:12, &c. against δι■ here in its regular sense, and will have it used for ε■ς! as in Rom. 6:4! both, it need scarce be added, baseless and very reprehensible blunders, to

the ruin of the truth conveyed by the Holy Spirit. But he is right in taking ■ρ. of man (as in 5), and not of God, the plural in 1 Peter 2 having quite a different force, whatever Dean Alford may have urged. We are not like Adam who had to abide in his first estate, but sinned. Neither are we like Israel under the government of the law given by Moses to control and condemn. We are called out of our evil and ruin by God's own glory in hope, which demands meanwhile virtue, i.e. energy in refusing our own will or ease. Ben-gel did not understand the passage. The “your” is uncalled for six times in 5-7, while the small point is noticed of changing “love of the brethren” into “brotherly kindness” as in the Authorized Version, and the former is relegated to the margin. Of still less significance seem the suggestions as to 17, 18, of “was borne” and “borne” for “came” and “come,” though of course the literal meaning, with the omission of the marg.” “. Without doubt the Authorized Version is less accurate than all its predecessors in 18. This voice we (emphatically) heard come, “borne,” “uttered,” from heaven, not “which came” merely. It is better it should be, as the Americans suggest, “by the Majestic glory"; so Winer had long ago remarked (Moulton's ed. 462), “all other explanations being arbitrary.” Luke 1:26 means “by” or “of” God, not “from,” if the reading were certainly ■π■. In 20 no remark is made on the vagueness of “private” interpretation, any more than on the dubious text of 21.

In 2:13 they would for “love-feasts” read “deceivings” and say, in marg.” “Some ancient authorities read love feasts.” Assuredly it is strong, in a New Testament that aspires to universal use (dislodging the Authorized Version) to adopt a reading on the very slender testimony of Acorr B and a cursive, with perhaps the Vulgate and some other ancient versions, vague enough in all conscience, as against all other authority, and hence adopted only by Lachmann, Tregelles, and the recent Cambridge editors. There seems in fact little to detain in this chapter. But one might have expected that the anarthrous form of the Greek in the last verse might have had a notice, “A dog” returned, &c. and “A sow” when washed &c.

On 3 they are wholly silent. Yet the first verse seems to invite correction. “This [is] now, beloved, a second letter I am writing to you.” As the first was written to the Christian Jews in Asia Minor, so was the second for the same parties: a fact which has no small bearing on der. 15 and the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews. God would give the simple a divinely formed conviction without going beyond the bounds of scripture. Paul's epistles too, including that written to the Christian Jews, were scripture.

Chapter 140

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—1 John

1 John

Our friends have yet less to remark on the profoundly interesting and momentous Epistle before us. The Revisers have indeed corrected serious errors in the Authorized Version, and in general done well. But was there nothing to notice till near the end of ch. 3? Why" declare" in 1: 2 and again in 3? The Revisers had already given like the Authorized Version "declared" to ■ξηγ in John 1:18. They are quite right in discriminating ■παγγ—from ■γγ. But why not adhere to its strict sense "report"? They correctly cleave to "message" for the uncompounded substantive in 5. "Report" for ■παγγ in 2, 3 is just as suitable as in its ordinary usage. The Revisers have shown undue deference to the Authorized Version in contenting themselves from the beginning of the New Testament with "tell" or "show," "bring word" or "report" being better in the first occurrence (Matt. 2:8). There are cases where the context makes "report" harsh; but here, so far is this from being so, that no word appears so appropriate to my mind. It admirably suits the peculiar relation of the apostle to Christ on the one hand and to the saints addressed on the other. It imports the authority that sent the message, or at least the source whence it was brought. Again, is it not peculiar to give here only "the life, the eternal life?" Though the precisely same structure occurs in 2:25 they are content with "the life eternal." One need not adduce other phrases to show how little it was called for. In 4 it is well known what conflict there is in the readings and the editions, and this in a twofold question. Should it be ■με■ς or ■μ■ν? and again ■μ■ν or■μ■ν? If apparent difficulty will have weight, as goes the familiar maxim of all textual critics, the first person must be allowed to be the less obvious; a corrector's hand would probably bring in the second. Even Stephens and Elzevir do not agree as to the last pair, the Compl. edition joining the former, as did Beza in his first edition, but not in those subsequent. So Tischendorf wavered in both clauses, his eighth edition adopting the first personal pronoun. Both MSS. and Vv. of the highest character have additions unmeaning or worse. In 5, as has been already stated, the true word is ■γελ■α "message," which all critics endorse, though excellent authority sustains the unquestionable error of ■παγγ. imported here from ch. 2:25 where it is certainly right. That this is so finds confirmation in ch. 3:11, where ■παγγ. occurs again in some first-rate authorities, though it really is nonsense. This is one, of the cases where Colinaeus alone presents the true reading. Did the Authorized translators know this? It is curious that they should give the true sense from the false text of all the other old editions. In 6 we see as elsewhere, "the" darkness. Perhaps the abstract use of the article was forgotten. It is a question of specific darkness in contrast with "the" light, which would give the article. In 7 "Christ" has not only many suffrages but some authorities of weight; yet there can be little doubt that the Revisers have rightly dropt it. In the same verse it is surely open to question at least whether "every" sin be not more exact than "all." To this may be opposed "all" unrighteousness in 9; but there is meant "every" kind of act, though it be less easy to say so in English of these moral ideas where "all" is on the whole best. To the repentant believers God is faithful and just, not only in remitting their sins as a whole but in cleansing them from every shade of unrighteousness. It is the principle in all its absoluteness, as John loves to speak. See again the force of the present in 7, not

mere historic actuality, but the abstract truth, which from the first abides true for the believer. Even in 10 the aorist is avoided, as being the tense of narrative; it is the question of our being no sinners, the denial of our being in that position, which gives God the lie. This is a bolder evil and more flatly opposes His word than saying we have no sin, bad as this self-deception is. The perfect presents the general truth of a continuous state resulting from past acts.

In 2:1 the Americans should have observed the need of discriminating τεκν■α from παιδ■α in this Epistle. The former term beyond doubt includes the family of God as a whole, the latter designates only the youngest portion. Hence, if we adopt “little children” for the one, “babes” might well express the other; if for T. we are content with “children,” we might add “little” children for π. in 13,18 where alone it occurs here. It is confusing and misleads to express no difference as in the Authorized and Revised Vv. Again, none would gather that “righteous” at the end is anarthrous. Bp. Middleton need not excuse the writer; who means to draw attention especially to that quality “as righteous.” The general sense, however, of 1,2, is accurately given in the Revised Version where the Authorized translation had greatly failed. So it is in 8, where the Authorized Version exaggerates while it is also feeble. The darkness is not “past,” but passing away. Why the Revisers say “hath” blinded in 11 does not appear. The fact was enough for the Spirit of God. In 12 there is no doubt that the weight of external evidence is greatly in favor of ■γρσψα, but there is sufficient testimony in support of γρ■φω. This, in my judgment, is demanded by internal considerations, easily mistaken by superficial scribes who in all probability changed the form of the verb to suit their perversion through ignorance. The complications of commentators are as helpless as those of the critics. Hence Dr. Wordsworth joins with those whom he often opposes. The truth intended is perfectly clear, though ancients and moderns agree in missing it. There is first the γραφω, “I write,” to the little children or entire family; the apostle writes to all because their sins are forgiven them for His name's sake. Then follows to each section, fathers, young men, and babes, thrice γρ■φω, “I write.” But next is thrice repeated the form ■γραψα, “I wrote,” which goes over the ground again, with increasing enlargement to the “young men” (14-17) and to the “babes” (18-27), after which the comprehensive τ. “little children” is resumed in the Epistle, as it had preceded. I presume that the scribes did not observe this, and imagined the threefold connection lay in the end of 13 with 14, and so assimilated the form of the verb. They ought to have seen the threefold exhortation of 13, taken up again and expanded in 14-27. The version in 19 is literally correct (not margin); but is it a good idiomatic rendering? It is not the universality that is denied, but its predicate: “none are of us;” or “all are not of us.” The Authorized version or the margin' is not sense. Compare the end of ver. 21 and the points may be left.

On the whole the Revised Version of ch.3 is good; so that criticism is justly disarmed. Important errors in the Authorized Version are corrected in 1, 2, 3, and 4. It is in 19, 20 that the Americans would read and punctuate “him: because if our heart condemn us, God” &c. (with the present text in the margin). It appears to me that neither is right, and that God being greater than our heart, and knowing all things, is brought in, not for consolation where our heart condemns us, but to deepen self-judgment. It is state, not standing, that is in question. The construction is peculiar from the double ■τι, which is not without example in the New Testament without construing it as “because,” but referring to the opening words.

Ch. 4 does not furnish matter for the correction of the American Committee. Yet they might have noticed failure in reflecting the force of the text of 2, 3, which, it appears to me, would not prove a

barrier insuperable to an evil spirit animating a false prophet. Nay, some of these insist with great force on the Lord's coming in flesh, as Irvingites, &c. Wherein then lies the ground? It is the confession of the person, not of the bare fact. It should be therefore: “every spirit which confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God.” It is the divine One come in flesh that is confessed or not. The evil spirit might urge that He came in flesh, to deny His deity or to insinuate the fallen character of His humanity, which last in effect denies His Godhead and makes the atonement impossible. Indeed this is the great root-lie of Satan against the truth among nominal Christians. Passing hence to 9, “in us” of the text is liable to misunderstanding, margin being for better; so in 16 also. In 17 is an important correction, we may say by the way.

So, as all know, in 5:7, 8, not to speak of 6, as in 13, the true text is correctly represented in the Revised Version. There remains in 18 the American preference of margin himself (for “him” in the text on the slender witness of Apm B 105. as opposed to all other authority). Dean Alford went so far indeed as to translate “it keepeth him” i.e. the divine birth pointed at in the aor. part. γεννηθε■ς, “he that was begotten.” Mere theory, it seems to me, would deny the reflexive pronoun here.

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—2 John

2 John

All the notice taken of the Revisers' work is to say “1 (and 5) “lady” add marg. Or, Cyria.” Either the British Committee have been remarkably successful, or the American company have not been clear-sighted, or some one else is disposed to be fastidious, which in any unfair sense I abhor. For there seem to be graver questions than of Cyria for “lady,” though so understood from Athanasius (not to speak of Syrr.) down to Bengel, Griesbach, De Wette, Lachmann and Tischendorf. Wetstein, Grotius, Bp. Middleton, like R. Stephens in his third edition of 1550 (not in those of 1546 and 1549); decided for Electa as the proper name. This however seems disproved by the last verse of the Epistle, where it would be equally harsh to consider that her sister bore the same name, or that the epithet should be used so equivocally, if it be a proper name in the first verse. There remains the more generally accepted sense given in the Authorized and Revised Versions and all the older English, save the Rhemish; whereas the Vulg. and Aethiopp. (if not the Sah. and Memph., which seem ambiguous) support “elect lady,” which Jerome took as symbolic of the catholic church, an alternative meaning in Cramer's Cat. Pat. Gr. viii. 146, as it was held by other ancients. It was an error no doubt, as was the application to Corinth, Philadelphia, Jerusalem; no less than the tradition which gave it to Drusia, Martha; or the Virgin Mary, each of whom has had a defender. But one sees not why in this case the anarthrous construction in 1 should be unheeded, “to an elect lady” dye. Where the sense requires the article as in 13, it is duly inserted. Some for another purpose have reasoned on the greeting, not of the elect sister, but only of her children, forgetting that she might be deceased or absent from the place whence John wrote, and in either case could not be included in the salutation sent. But the entire phrase, as it forbids the symbolical interpretation, general or particular, corroborates most simply the ordinary view, only with our indefinite article; which phrase may have been employed to veil the name of the lady, while the fact and duty are carefully recorded. In 3 no notice is taken of John's peculiar phrase παρ■, “on the part of God,” not ■π■, “from God” as in the Pauline Epistles. It is more intimate (cf. 4). That Cod. Sin.pm and more than ten cursives here read the more distant preposition ■π■ cannot shake the ordinary text, either here or, in some of them, the omission of the secondπαρ■. It is a much more doubtful question whetherκυρ■ου “Lord” should be inserted in the same verse. High authorities plead for and against. It would be the solitary case, if genuine, of so designating Christ in John's Epistles; but then it is the solitary case of a full and solemn salutation. Still I cannot but regard it as no less questionable than other assimilations to the style of the apostle Paul. But had our American friends no compunction at the introduction into the version of the epistolary aorist or English present in 4, without even an intimation in the margin? In 3 John 3 they on the contrary give the proper aoristic sense to the text but the epistolary in the marg.! which involves the rest of the verse rather harshly in the same form. The perfect ε■ρ. “I have found” does not prove it even in. this Second Epistle. He only intimates the permanence of the discovery, while he does not go, beyond the expression of a definite time of joy. On the question of ε■χαμεν or ε■χομεν in 5 we need not enter now, nor the true connection of ■να. The Revisers did well in abandoning the Text.

Rec. and Authorized Version in 7; for “entered” (ε■ο■λθον), though supported by K L P and many cursives, &c. has no just sense, but ■ξ■λθον “went,” or are gone, “forth.” Compare 1 John 4:1, where there is no various reading in the corresponding word. On the other hand the same objection applies here as in 1 John 4:2, 3. It is not the bare fact that Jesus was to come in flesh, but His person as so coming, which the deceivers do not confess. The participle, it will be noticed, is abstract or, as Alford says, altogether timeless. And very energetic is the statement, that “the” deceiver and “the” antichrist meet in him who thus dishonors the incarnate Son of God, though there is one full and final person according to prophecy to sum up and close the dismal category in his own time, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy in person. In 8 reigns great confusion of copyists, who did not like the first person here, as being unusual and tampered with more or less from early times. The common text appears to be right. But the Text. Rec. of 9 is utterly wrong in παραβα■νων, “transgressing,” which flowed from prevalent feeling and ignorance, instead of προ■γων, going forward or taking the lead, the contrast of abiding in the teaching or doctrine of Christ—the truth of His person. “Going before [you],” as Alford suggests, like John 10:4, is ridiculously poor and wrong. It is rather development, so characteristic of the school of tradition which deifies the church, or the yet more irrelevant invention of heresiarchs impatient to advance beyond the limits of revelation. Neither prizes the truth and nothing but the truth, both go outside the truth to its destruction, utterly ignorant of the whole truth, which Christ is at least as much as what He taught. The repetition of τ. χ. “of Christ,” in the latter half of the verse is superfluous. The oldest and best authorities not only omit this, but adhere to the order of “the Father and the Son,” contrary to A and Latin copies. In 10 “your” is uncalled for. Had more definiteness been intended it was open to the writer to have said rip or even to have added the pronoun: ε■ς ο■κ■αν is intentionally characteristic, or as we say “at home,” and all the more forcible in certain cases. The antichristian teacher, coming to set forth Christ, was neither to be received, nor even greeted. It is the most extreme case, because it is no question of intelligence or privilege like church matters, nor merely discipline, but of foundations: the Christ of God was at stake; and woe be to the man who betrays Him To confound this with other things; grave indeed in their measure, as some do who boast, is dense ignorance, and shows a lie in the right hand, which will work ruin. Here uncompromising rejection is but due to the injured Son of God. Even to greet is spurious sympathy and real sin. In 12 our “I was not minded” fairly meets ο■κ ■β. (better than ■β.) It is surprising that ■μ■ν “our” should not be preferred to ■μ■ν, “your.” If A B, a good many cursives, and most ancient Vv. sustain the latter, ■ K L P, many cursives, and ancient Vv. support the former, as the critics are rather evenly divided, Griesbach, Scholz, Tischendorf, and Wordsworth for ■. as Alford, Lachmann, Tregelles, and the Cambridge Editors for ■. But the first person couples the apostle with those he is writing to, a weighty element in the joy of those concerned, which the second person leaves out, in my judgment to the weakening of the truth here conveyed.

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—3 John

3 John

The American Committee would blot out marg. to 4 and in 8 give “for” (like the Authorized Version “to") rather than “with” as in the Revised Version. On both a word may be said in each place.

In 1 (and 3) the exclusion of the article is exact and not without its importance in this as in the previous Epistle, character, and not objectiveness, being intended. Compare this with the end of 4 where in “the” truth is right, though the article is omitted by ■ Ccorr K L P. There is no loving or walking in truth, if we have not “the” truth to walk in. In 2 the poetic sense of περ■ π.is quite untenable here, though adopted by Beza and in. the Geneva Bible before the Authorized Version. It is contrary to all sound doctrine that John prayed “in primis” or “above all things” for Caius' prosperity. As to, about, or in all things he prays that he may prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospers—this last the hinge on which he could pray that he might fare well in circumstances and bodily health. To make either or both his especial prayer is not unscriptural only but unreasonable, and below a Jew if not a heathen. Is it not startling that so flagrant a fault should have got in, and since the Reformation too? Certainly Wiclif is loose ("of all things I make preier that thou enter and fare wilfulli?” &c.), as he overlooked apparently the first “prospere” of the Vulgate, to speak of no other flaw. Tyndale, though right in his version of π. π., strangely deals with■γ as “faredest well” which would answer better to ε■οδ., and so the Rhemish. Erasmus, though right where Beza led the way in error, extinguished all the touching grace of the verse by his impersonal vagueness, de omnibus opto, ut prospere agant et recte valeant, sicut” &c. Had our Transatlantic friends nothing to say of the marg. to 3? To take it as present was in no way due to the participles following the verse; and less, if possible, to the purposely general statement in 4. In 4 the marg. seems extravagantly wrong, even though B 7.35. Vulg. in its best copies (save Tol. &c.) Memph. favor it. Wiclif ("I have not more grace of these things than that” &c.) and the Rhemish ("Greater thanks have I not of them than that” &c). help to expose its hopeless unsoundness: The error for a scribe was easy, but hard for a sober and intelligent believer. Some have a morbid partiality for a singular variation; but none as yet had the hardihood to adopt it save the learned editors of Cambridge in their recent work. Is not the rendering of the Revised Version in 5 likely to support Lachmann's reading ■ργ■ζη rather than the unquestionable ■ργ■ση, not to speak of failing to distinguish ■ργ. and ποι.? Otherwise there is good service rendered in most that follows, where the Authorized Version has serious mistakes or shortcomings. In 6 let me say that, though we cannot well express the anarthrous ■ν. ■κκλ. as here meant, Winer has no better reason than elsewhere to account for the omission by any peculiar property in the word—or any license in its usage. Such explanations spring from mere defect of analysis. Nor is the sense before “a” church, as translates Mr. T. S. Green; though grammatically possible, the sense is unsuitable. The absence of the article is to express character; they witnessed of Caius's love before (the) assembly, not man nor yet God only, but ecclesiastically as such. Compare Acts ix. 15; xix. 19; xxviii. 35; Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Tim. 5:20; 6:12. It is rigidly accurate, though English does not appear capable of well expressing the nice shade. In 7 one might say “for on

behalf of the Name, they went forth," rather than "because that for the sake of" &c. ■π■ρ τ. ■ν. here hardly imports the same as δι■ τ[ο ■ν. α■τοο■ in 1 John 2:12. "Welcome" in 8 is a reading differing from the Received Text and should be noted. The word means to "take up" or "sustain" and should be distinguished from "receive" in 9, 10, the first use of which seems not recognizing the apostle's authority in what he wrote, or rejecting him virtually, the second not admitting, to fellowship rather than hospitality, the visiting brethren, but casting out of the church those who would do so. "For" was Dean Al-ford's notion; but "with" as in the Revised Version and others seems more forcible. In 9 there is a short but weighty omission in the common text in which the Revisers reinstate τι "somewhat" on the strong authority of ■ A B C 7.68. Sah. Memph. & Arm. ■ corr with more than ten cursives &e. join K L P and most cursives in omitting the indef-pronoun, but the former add, ■ν which gives to the verb the force of "I should have written to" &c. And this appears to be the ground of the Vulgate's extraordinary "forsitan," the "peradventure" of Wiclif, and the "perhaps" of the Rhemish; which any Christians should are felt and known to be out of harmony with divine truth, and simply impossible: I mean, not the reading ■ν, but the Latin rendering followed by its English reproducers. It would seem from the context in 10, that the subject, matter communicated was the apostle's commendation of the evangelizing brethren, dear to him, but offensive in the eyes of Diotrephes. He stood on assumed authority and resisted the apostle, the highest authority then on earth, who stood for the truth and loved those who walked in it and preached it on behalf of Christ's name.

Chapter 143

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—Jude

The Americans in 1 would (like the Geneva, Rhemish, and Authorized Versions) read “Jude” for “Judas,” adding in marg. Gr. Judas: a remarkable note, especially from those who do not value current customs like the old world. Yet they adopt “Judas,” not Jude, in Matt. 10:4, &c. passim xiii. 55; Mark 6:3; Acts 5:37; 9:11; 15:22, &c. In Matt. 1 &c. they do not object to “Judah” for the same word. Such variety in English seems undesirable. The Revisers, with Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, seem to me fully justified in giving “Judas,” save in citations from the Old Testament where they perpetuate the Hebrew form. As usual we have no notice of the Revisers failure to deal with anarthrous description, which they have represented aright in the second member, not in the first. Was it not as easy to have said, “servant of Jesus Christ,” as “brother of James"? “A” was uncalled for in either case. It has also been remarked (in B. T. Aug. 1882, p. 127) that το■ς κλ. should not be confounded with τ. κεκλ. as the Revisers do, whereas the Holy Spirit pointedly employs the perf. part. in the two included words of predication, but the verbal adj. with the more direct address. There need be no hesitation in dismissing “sanctified” for “beloved” on the authority of the best MSS. and almost all the ancient versions as well as distinct citation in early times. But it is questionable whether “for” is right with “kept.” That the saints are and were both beloved and kept has great force in so solemn a sketch of imminent apostasy as is here portrayed. But the mischief was by these destroyers getting in, not by erring men going out in outward separation, as is generally and unintelligently assumed. It would have been a great mercy, if they had gone out as in 1 John 2 Ver. 19 is no real difficulty for this view; for the rest of the Epistle proves they were within, intent on their evil purpose or blinded instruments of a worse; and therefore their divisive way was within, not without, so far like the Pharisees among the Jews. In 4 the Americans would have “written of beforehand,” and put “set forth” into the margin: a doubtful Interpretation, as it assigns but a secondary place to the well-known technical force of προγ. They overlook also the old inaccuracy of taking κρ■μα as “condemnation” which is rather κατ■κρ. In effect, it becomes this; but we ought always to translate correctly. In 5 they have allowed to pass the feeble rendering of the Authorized and Revised Versions, “afterward;” whereas its force seems to be to mark “the second time” of divine action: first, He saved a people out of Egypt; in the second place, He destroyed them. Still wider of the mark were Tyndale and Cranmer who connected τ■ δ. with “those that believed not.” The Rhemish follows the Vulgate in the true sense; and if some wonder at “Jesus” there, let them remember that excellent authority supports this word, though κ■ριος, Jehovah, (or ■ κ. “the Lord,” in the Text. Rec.) has perhaps stronger claims on our acceptance. In 6 they do not notice the scarcely English phrase “hath kept unto,” though one may shrink from G. Wakefield's “keepeth” as hardly a right rendering of the perf. But “hath in keeping” might suffice. And why in 7 should not “the” have been avoided with δ■κ as well as “a"? So in 8 too. It is not spiritual defilement, but fleshly. “The” makes it too concrete, as in all the old English versions. And had they no question about the rendering of ■α υτ ποι. in 12, even if ■θ. be severed from the preceding and connected with the following, as the Revisers prefer, with the Authorized Translation after Erasmus and Beza? “Shepherds that.....feed” is a fertile if legitimate rendering of ποι., if “deluding” is a wild suggestion of Wakefield, though he sends us for confirmation to a

lengthy note on Luke 17:7, 8, in his Sava Grit. ii. 85-90. Elsewhere has been a full comment in these pages on the odd rendering of 14 “to” these, so that there is the less need to enlarge now. “For,” “of,” “as to,” are legitimate renderings here. But “themselves” as in the Elzevirian text of 19 is an addition to that which is attested by the most reliable witnesses, and looks as if meant to clench the ecclesiastical meaning given to ■πoδ. which means separatism, but of a definite kind within rather than without. To treat it as schism, or rather “heresy” in its scriptural force of a party gone outside, is quite at issue with the intimations of this Epistle. On 22 the Americans would add a not very important marg. note.

Chapter 144

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—Revelation 1-7

Having discussed the details of the Revised New Testament in this closing book with comparative minuteness, I may be allowed to notice more rapidly what little the American Committee have to say.

They merely propose the omission of two marg. notes, in 8 of marg., and in 13 of marg. There are insertions of less account than the former; and few of greater moment than the latter. For though the text ("a son of man") seems literally faithful, John 5:27 ought to have made not only the Revisers hesitate as to their text but our Transatlantic friends still more doubt the wisdom of their rejecting the marg. note. The Greek, like the Chaldee of Dan. 7, has not the article as is notorious, because the aim is to describe the human character of the glorious person that was seen, rather than to point to Him as a known object. Our language fails to reflect this characterizing force of the anarthrous phrase; for if we say “the,” it makes the person as such more prominent than the original warrants; if we say “a,” it excludes Him who was well understood to be seen in the character of Son of man, which we can express better in the Gospel than here. The Father Faye Him authority to execute judgment, because He IS Son of man, though He is also Son of God and as such gives life to every one that believes. Here, in John's great prophecy, it is more difficult to set it out adequately in English, and one can hardly avoid saying “the” Son of man, though in Italics or brackets or some such expedient, to show that it is not in Greek but due to the exigencies of our tongue. But as “a son of man” in the Revised text falls short of the truth, so the omission of the marg.” in 13 by the Americans is a bolder departure still as giving up a truer alternative. The insertion of the article in Greek would have spoiled the real bearing of both passages. How to give the best possible English equivalent may be questionable; but “a son of man” is not the sense meant either in Dan. 7 or in Rev. 1 any more than in John 5.

In 3:2 they for the Revisers, “fulfilled” read “perfected.” But is not the true version “complete” rather than either? “Perfected” is appropriated by the Revisers, and without objection on the part of the Americans, to another word and for another thought, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In 4:6 what they mean by “'of the throne' add marg. Or, before” seems unintelligible. I can only conjecture that they propose “before” as an alternative for “in the midst of.” If so, it is plainly untenable; for in the same verse, and distinguished from ■ν■πιον τ. θρ., is ■ν μ■σω τ. θρ. which can only be rendered “in the midst of the throne,” an idea quite different from “before.” The proposal is still more mystified by referring us to the comparison of 5:6, and 7:17, where we have the Lamb, not “before,” but “in the midst of the throne.”

So in 5:6 their marg. addition seems quite unfounded and apparently due to Dean Alford's strange note, probably misled by the Germans, one of whom is so ignorant of the elements of Apocalyptic imagery as to conceive the Lamb on the sea of glass! Perhaps the American Committee may have slipped into this notion. Certainly that sea was “before” the throne. How dangerous is this guess work!

To 6:6 they would append an explanatory note in the margin, instead of the more vague words of the Revisers. In 11 “completed” appears once more to be best; or, “complete” their course, if the active form is to prevail as in many, and some ancient, authorities.

Of 7:17 it is unnecessary to say more.

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—Revelation 8-22

Not a word have the Americans to say of ch. 8:3, though they might have seen the technical force of δ. admitted in the Authorized Version of ch. 11:3, which the Revisers have now blotted out everywhere in the book—i.e. give power, or render effectual. All the previous versions differ, and all are as wrong, it appears to me.

In 10:6 they rightly prefer the marg. alternative “delay” to the textual “time,” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. “Time” in fact only misleads; as, according to the book itself, more than a thousand years elapse from the seventh angel's beginning to sound, before eternity is come; whereas every one would infer from these versions that eternity must at once follow the sounding of that trumpet. But χρ■νος in the Apocalypse as elsewhere is regularly used for “a while or space,” a “lapse of time that intervenes” i.e. a delay: see Rev. 2:21; 6:11; 20:3. So it is for example in Acts 14:3, 28; 15:23; 18:20, 23; 19:22, &c. There is really no excuse for the mistake of the Revisers. It is a mere perpetuation of traditional ignorance. Indeed it would be hard for any one to produce a single instance in the New Testament of the abstract force of “time,” in contrast with “eternity,” which is so arbitrarily conceived to occur here. Mr. E. B. Elliott's addition of “prolonged” or “extended” is quite uncalled for.

In 12:4 there is no doubt that the Americans are justified in giving a present force to the principal verb ("standeth"), and hence to the correction that follows. The truth is that here as in the Old Testament prophecy the Seer was expressly inspired to intermingle the past with the present and future. All was thus felt the more vividly to be before God who made His word known. This has led to a little swerving from a literal rendering.

In 13:1 (or end of ch. 12) the Americans rightly contend for at least a marg. addition to “he stood” thus— “Some ancient authorities read I stood etc., connecting the clause with what follows.” Why, it is the reading of B P, all the known cursives save two, more than one ancient version and the Greek commentators Andreas and Arethas. Tischendorf retains it, ■ notwithstanding, in his eighth or last edition. Was this beneath a marginal notice? In my opinion they are no less right in suggesting that marg. and the text, ver. 8 should exchange places. (Comp. 17:8)

In 14:6 they would for “an eternal gospel” read “eternal good tidings.” Would not “everlasting” be more correct? There is a shade of difference in our tongue. I do not find that the Americans contend for “good” or “glad tidings” elsewhere: why here only? But ■ξηρ■νθη in 15 does not mean “ripe” but perhaps “over-ripe” or simply and literally “dried up.” Why should this be departed from?

15:2 seems to be in the Revised Version as strongly rendered as the Greek can fairly bear.

16:9 does not stand happily in the Revised Version though expressing the Greek article in English—at least so it seems to the Americans and to me. It is another case with 11, as all agree. The margin might have been added in 16.

In 19:15 there is no good reason why those who said “God, the Almighty” (or some equivalent) in 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 14, 19:6, should say, “Almighty God” without the English def. article in this verse.

In 22:3 is a needless departure from the almost invariable rendering of the Revised Version no less than of the Authorized Version in “do service” for the simpler “serve.” The only approach to it elsewhere is in their version of Heb. 12:28 where they have “offer service “; but they might plead ε■αρ■στως as modifying the sentence and inducing them to prefer “offer service well-pleasing to God,” instead of the dignified simplicity of our old “serve God acceptably.” However this be, in the Apocalypse it is hard to imagine why they should depart from their own well-nigh uniform practice, to give us a more cumbrous form in accordance with none of their predecessors.

Chapter 146

Righteousness for the Earth

Righteousness characterizes the saint, as well as love, and has its place where there are adversaries to that love and to the blessing of the loved people. It is the Spirit of prophecy, not the gospel, no doubt; because prophecy is connected with the government of God, not with His present dealings in sovereign grace. Hence in the Revelation vengeance is called for by the saints.

Chapter 147

Righteousness Without Grace

The whip and the scourge may be righteous; but there is no winning the heart of man with these. Nor is it righteousness which reigns among the saints of God, but grace through righteousness unto eternal life. Alas how many sins that might have been washed away (John 13) have been restained! How many brethren alienated for all time, who might have been won back to God and to us, because we have hammered at the conscience merely, with the heart ungained—with the heart, I may say, almost unsought! We have not overcome evil, because we have not overcome it with good. We have taken readily the judge's chair and have got back judgment; but the Master's lowly work we have little done.

But how little yet do we understand that mere righteous dealing—absolutely righteous, as it may be—will not work the restoration of souls; that judgment, however temperate and true, will not touch and soften and subdue hearts to receive instruction, which, by the very facts of the case, are shown not to be in their true place before God. Man is not all conscience; and conscience reached, with the heart away, will do what it did with the first sinner among men—drive him out among the trees of the garden to escape the unwelcome voice. J. N. D.

Chapter 148

Ruth

The days of grace and of faith, and the warrant on which they each act, get very beautiful illustrations in this little book.

Faith has two special characteristics; and so has grace. Faith overcomes the world, and returns fully—intimately—to God; or, in language known in Scripture, it takes a place “outside the camp” and “within the veil.” Grace encourages the soul (inspiring confidence), and then answers it. These are two of its shining ways; and faith illustrates the two properties, of which I have spoken above, in the actings of Ruth.

Ruth at the beginning casts in her lot with Naomi in the hour of her widowhood, her strangership, and her poverty. For Naomi's sake she will, like a daughter of Abraham, leave country, kindred, and father's house; and all that may be said to daunt her avails nothing. Go she will across the unknown world; and Israel's people shall be her people, their God shall be her God. And this is a faith that takes its place outside the camp, or gains victory over the world.

But faith, that leaves the world, returns to God; and so in Ruth. The great things of Boaz are not too great for her. As far as estate and condition in life went, she was as distant from him as she well could be, a gleaner in his field behind his reapers, not fit to be put among his handmaids. But she aims at himself. It is not a small measure that she seeks, but the very richest and highest. The gleaner would be the wife.

And this is also the way of faith. It goes outside the camp, but it comes within the veil. It leaves the world, but returns to the full presence of God; and then it takes a place the very opposite to that in when the fall has set man. By the fall man is estranged from God and finds his place in this world. We see this in Cain. He went out from the presence of the Lord; but there he built a city and filled it in with all manner of profit and of pleasure, with pastime and with traffic. Faith returns by the same road, making the opposite journey. It takes leave of the world, and gets fully, intimately, and forever back to God. And this way and power of faith are shown in Ruth, first joining herself with the poverty of Naomi, and then getting for herself the wealth and dignity of Boaz.

And grace has its greatness and excellency in its day and generation, as surely as faith. It first encourages, as I said, inspiring confidence; and then it rewards the confidence it has awakened.

What was the Lord doing with Gideon in Judges 6? What was He doing with Moses in Ex. 3? What was He doing with Jeremiah when first calling him into his office? (See chap. 1) He found slow reluctant hearts there; but He got them ready for the blessing which His grace had proposed for them. And what in the days of His ministry was the way of the Lord Jesus, but this of the God of Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah? How did He sit at the well of Sychar, inviting the confidence of a poor distant Samaritan? How did He again and again rebuke that “little faith,” which did not know and could not tell whether it might look to Him or not? And how did He at once knock off from the poor leprous heart the one doubt that hung there, oppressing and clouding it?

And this is also the way of the Spirit in the apostles. How much of the teaching of the Epistles, how much of the Spirit's energy there, is occupied in strengthening the faith and encouraging the hearts of the saints! Arguments of divine persuasiveness, rebuke of fine earnest temper, and yearnings of love, are all employed to knit the feeble heart with the grace and gospel of God.

And Boaz is made to express this. The delicacy and yet the sincerity with which he encourages Ruth in the second chapter is beautiful to admiration. And then he is ready to answer all the demands which the confidence he had thus awakened makes upon him. He had not trained her heart for disappointment; as the Lord's hand is ready to fill the hand of the sinner which His Spirit has already opened to receive from Him.

And here, I might say, it was a blessed moment in the soul of Naomi when she awakened to the recollection or to the knowledge of this simple fact, that Boaz was a kinsman 20). “Blessed,” she says, “be the Lord, who hath not left off His kindness to the living and to the dead.” It was so when a soul is brought to the discovery not only of the grace that is in God, but of a sinner's title to that grace, because of Jesus the kinsman.

And then, on the discovery of the fact, Naomi at once charges Ruth to abide fast by his maidens, and not to be found in any other field. For this is the way of faith on the full discovery of Christ. It takes a long farewell, a farewell forever, of all other confidences.

Boaz was a kinsman; and a kinsman has his duties and obligations according to the law and ordinances of Israel. Naomi knew this; and she instructs Ruth the stranger in these choice and wondrous secrets; and she is bold and emboldens Ruth. Such is faith still; it counts on the greatest things, pardon, acceptance, adoption, inheritance, glory. But, though bold, it is warranted. The customs and ordinances of the place to which faith is introduced, the counsels of the God of Israel, the secrets of abounding grace, are faith's warrant. It aims high; but its aim is guided by the Spirit of God; for God has of old counseled these things for faith.

And when Ruth has followed Naomi's word, and laid herself at the kinsman's feet, and claimed him for a lord and husband, Naomi on her return says in beautiful language to her, “Who art thou, my daughter?”

16.) That is, she was perfectly beautiful. Naomi looked on Ruth as the bride elect. She knew what the faithful kinsman would make her. She shone in her full dignity and joy in Naomi's eyes at that moment; just as we should survey ourselves and one another in the like power of faith, and say “Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”

What follows is the experience of a soul when the kinsman is discovered by faith. The grace of the kinsman is a great sight to see to likewise.

There were hindrances in the way. A nearer kinsman had to own and answer them. Just so, in the great original, for sin withstands the purposes of love: the guilt of man stands in the way of his blessing from One who is holy as He is gracious. But He has found a way to vindicate righteousness, and set aside sin, while He gratifies His own love and answers all the claims which faith makes upon grace.

Boaz goes to “the gate,” the place of judgment, and there meets “the elders,” who were the guardians and vindicators of righteousness. And there, in their presence and to their full satisfaction, he sets aside the nearer kinsman, and then gets out of the way the hindrance that stood in the way of his taking Ruth and all her burdens on himself. Faith had counted on this, that the man would not be at rest till he had finished the thing (3:32) and so it came to pass. Boaz settles the whole affair: Ruth has but to “sit still,” as Naomi had instructed her; and her kinsman is faithful, and her redeemer is mighty.

A kinsman in Israel was one that did not, as Naomi had told Ruth, forget his kindness to the dead or to the living (2:20), nay to the poor and to the oppressed, we may add. He would ransom the inheritance, the whole inheritance, of his poor brother; he was to avenge the blood of his murdered brother; he was to raise up the name of the dead and childless brother. Beautiful service, showing forth grace in its richness, its depth, and its variety.

And Boaz is made to represent this. He acted in taking Ruth, and in blessing her with the richest blessing he could bestow, on the warrant of the laws of Israel. He was acting righteously while bountifully honoring the claims of the throne of judgment, when taking a gleaner from the field to set her at his side. Beautiful shadow of One who is Just while a Justifier.

Faith may aim high and count on great things; but the grace of God and the counsels of God, and the law of the kinsman and the faithfulness of the Redeemer warrant it all. Faith's boldness will not exceed faith's title. The heart that encourages itself in God shall be blest: blessed to say it!

And grace has as clear a warrant to gratify itself as faith has to encourage itself. The cross has been, so to speak, erected at “the gate,” or in the place of judgment. God is never more holy than when forgiving sins upon the warrant of the cross of Christ. There God's glory in the highest is again proclaimed, as is peace on earth. His righteousness is there set forth as brightly as His love. It is enthroned mercy we lean upon—a mercy-seat and the ark of the covenant where the tables of the testimony are found. If the blood of sprinkling be there, it is kept and honored and magnified, as law is also. God's righteousness is declared there, that He “might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” It is glory to God in the highest, while it is peace on earth, goodwill to men, which will still be snug by every soul that learns the fruit of the mission of the Son who is in the bosom of the Father to a world of sinners.

One further beautiful point in the instructions of Naomi to Ruth 1 would still notice. She tells her, in the earlier stage while she was still a suitor, to wash herself, to anoint her, to put her raiment upon her, and then to get herself down to the floor, where Boaz was to be. But as soon as Boaz has accepted her, then Naomi changes her voice and tells her to sit still (3:3, 18).

So is it in the journey of the soul. We are occupied with ourselves at the first. We have many thoughts, as of our uncleanness and nakedness, our condition as sinners convicted and in our shame. But when we get to know the great secret of grace, that our Redeemer is making our cause His own, then silence, stillness, abstraction from self, and occupation with Christ, become us. We have then to stand by and to see the salvation of God. We have then like Joshua in Zech. 3 to be silent while the Lord is doing His business with us and for us. We have to let Him answer our accuser, and not open our own lips, like the woman in John 8. We may, beforehand or while on the road like the prodigal, be thinking of ourselves; but as soon as the home is entered, and we

see that the Father has made our blessing His care, then, like the prodigal, we have only to sit and eat.

And, let me further say, Naomi standing between Boaz and Ruth, the witness of Boaz to Ruth, is as Scripture between God and us. It witnesses God to us. It even pledges Him; and the business of faith is to listen, to receive, and to enjoy with confidence. So did Ruth. The modest gleaner becomes the assured and (if you please) bold suitor under the word of Naomi. It was enough for Ruth, quite enough, that Naomi had instructed her. She asked no more, nor did she hesitate,

And very blessed it is to add that Naomi's word was enough for Boaz, as it had been for Ruth. Whatever Naomi had pledged for Boaz to the gleaner, Boaz made good to her. It was for Boaz that Naomi had pledged him. And so, blessed to tell it, it is enough that Scripture has spoken, and made promises in the name of the Lord to sinners. All shall be made good: not a jot shall fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away ere that could be. Jesus was fulfilling scripture all through His ministry here; and He will not rest till He has finished it all in all its rich and wondrous pledges of grace and glory.

Chapter 149

Scripture Imagery: 1. Symbolical Language

The very abundant use which is made of symbolical language and actions in the sacred records is evidently for the purposes, (1) of compelling attention, for attention is more easily attracted to types and physical actions than to abstract statements: (2) of explanations, for scriptural subjects are so much above the ordinary power of human minds as to be only, or best, explained by figures; and (3) for riveting to the memory, because an illustration is like a nail to hold a subject in the mind which otherwise would soon slip out. These three considerations, attractive, elucidative and mnemonic, I consider to be among the main purposes of the use of scripture figures; but obviously there is the further important consideration, that their use adds to language much picturesque beauty. This last characteristic may be regarded rather as an effect than as a purpose.

It was not Herr Fr■bel who first used the Kindergarten system, Germany adapts rather than invents. God had used symbol-teaching to “children of a larger growth” for thousands of years before. The Old Testament is one larger and divine Kindergarten, where, though all is historically true, the varied and dramatic figures of kings, shepherds, priests, worshippers, sacrifices, hosts, wanderers, pomps, miseries, triumphs, defeats, mercies, judgments, sufferings and glories are symbols Wand types of spiritual events. (1 Cor. 10:11) The mightiest woes of the material realm are but as “Kriegspiel” to the gigantic conflicts of the spiritual; and its brightest glories are as the scintillating stars, presently to be flooded out by the majesty of the full-orbed day when the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

In this way the new dispensation interprets the old. But we find that the reality is the spiritual; the material things serve as shadows, This is the formula: seen-temporal; unseen-eternal. (2 Cor. 4:18) Thus interpreting the first chapter of Genesis by the first chapter of John, a correspondency will be seen, which reveals the operation of the same Mind in each case, and which suggests that the great spiritual truth of John 1 was present in that august Mind when it arranged the material operations of Gen. 1, Genesis giving simply the shadow, and John the substance. In each case the soul is guided back to survey “in the beginning” God triune, sole, absolute, whose transcendent power and capacious wisdom was pleased to originate and develop all things. In Genesis then we see first the order of heaven and the earth (1) before the horror of darkness and chaos, over which wide desolation the billowing Spirit broods (2). At length came the days, in the first of which “light was” (not said to be then created) fighting with the darkness—never blending, ever hostile and divided from it (3). Then heaven, the expanse, was with a separating power and effect (6-8); dry land appears on the third day, the earth apart from the sea, with herbage and fruit to be produced (9-12); the sun is appointed (not now made but for the first time disclosed to the Adamic earth, having been hidden not merely during convulsive changes, but by the vast vapors and clouds that must in the previous glacial, marshy, or heated periods have existed). For light had been here from the first day; but now the great light-bearer of our system is disclosed to rule the day; the moon and subordinate lights also (14-19); then the sea is productive for man, and fowls are to fly in the expanse (20-23) the beasts too next day, and the race, man, to rule and be blessed (24-31). “This universal frame began, from harmony to harmony. Through all the compass

of the notes it ran, the diapason closing full in man," made in God's image, after His likeness.

Now when the new creation is to be described, again, after the relation of the Word in His eternal glory, we see the darkness run amidst which the Spirit moves imparting life, (John 1:13), light shining in hostile darkness—rejected and separated from it. (10-12). Light is the Word or Son who in the bosom of the Father reveals Him. It reveals as a word reveals a thought, and is therefore called the Word disclosing heavenly things (14-18-51), always with a separating effect (37-39); it is only by death and resurrection that solid ground and fruit appears. There had been light (instruction) in the world from the first day, the Adamic dispensation, and through the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations following; but now in the fourth epoch the light, the Son, is disclosed and appointed the regnant expression of all truth—subordinate lights also to reflect His ways during His absence, whether corporately (moon) or individually (planets). In John 1:35-51 are passing shadows, as frequently pointed out, of the two great dispensations of Gentile and Jewish salvation; that is to say, the time comes when the sea—the Gentiles, and the land—the Jews, shall both in their day be prolific. And then finally the veil is drawn aside to show us "greater things than these" to— "see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man." Thus again, "From harmony to harmony, Through all the compass of its notes it ran, The diapason closing full in man." But this time it is the Second man, the last Adam. "What is man that Then art mindful of him; and the Son of man that Thou visitest Him.....hast crowned Him with glory and honor.....to have dominion over the works of Thy hands." As a ship-builder makes first a model of his projected ship, and then builds the real vessel, so God as wrought first in model in the physical creation, then in the spiritual. A child looks on the toy-ship in the owner's office and sees no further; but the owner explains, from its symmetrical miniature, suggestions of the gigantic lines of some world-renowned craft. So do the glories of the spiritual realm and its phenomena surpass those of the physical.

Chapter 150

Scripture Imagery: 2. Figures, Similes, Metaphor, Symbol, Type

Of the numerous kinds of figures used in Scripture there are four most frequent, of which the characteristics should be remembered. The simile is any case where a resemblance is drawn between two objects; as “the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” The metaphor is the putting of one thing, because of its analogy, to express another, as “Ephraim is a cake not turned.” The symbol is the designed use of one object to represent some other object or thought to which it has an affinity, as baptism to represent death and resurrection. And the type is the same as the symbol, except that the type relates to some future thing (called the antitype), whereas the symbol relates to something past or present. There are about a dozen others figures: but I think most of them explain themselves, and the distinction between them (metonymy, synecdoche, and so forth) are chiefly of interest to grammarians and rhetoricians.

It will therefore be apparent that we have no right to call a thing a type or symbol, unless there be some evidence of a divine intention that it should be so regarded, since the design is what characterizes these two figures.

It is consequently oftentimes accurate to say such and such a thing is a figure, simile, or illustration, where it would not be safe to call it a type or symbol. It is well to be careful in such matters; but we may be sure there is a “via media” of truth lying somewhere between the extremes of mysticism and hard literalism. If God uses figures, He wishes to teach us something by them. We should consider them attentively and reverently, desiring to discover what His meaning is. This meaning generally consists of some broad primal truth connected with the most striking features of each figure; and then subordinate features of more or less interest will be found to reveal themselves as details are examined.

To apply this to the figures referred to in a former paper—what does “Light” signify? The broad grand truth in 1 John 1:5 is “God is light;” and the symbolism of creation discloses how that, as light shone into the chaotic darkness of a world-ruin physically, so God was to interpose in the spiritual darkness (evil ignorance) of the world for its instruction and salvation (light and life). Such is the grandparent meaning, evident to all, of this figure. But consider for a moment some of the collateral meanings; how that it is by the word that light comes (Gen. 1:3), and John 1, because the Word was God. Nothing is more truly a part of an intelligent being than his word which expresses his mind. So Christ is called the Word—and therefore the Light in instruction—because He reveals the Father, or expresses personally what is in the mind of God (2). The light makes day and separates it from night; so those who are illumined by Christ are called children of day (1 Thess. 5:5), separated from the influence of darkness. And here notice “the evening and the morning,” that is, the order of God's diurnal cycle, and thus the Jewish day was reckoned; while the world generally took its day-time before its nighttime. With God night-time precedes His day-time; the good wine is kept for the last. With Christ and His followers the time of darkness, anguish, pain and death comes first; and then the deliverance. “Hail, holy light, offspring of darkness, first-born!” but with the world it is the reverse (4). The diffusion of light is at first without

visible agency (Gen. 1:3); and then by the visible agency of a central source of great majesty which is to rule the day, and by attendants which, when he is invisible to the world, look on his face and reflect his light. And so in the new dispensation (5) the invisible source of light takes different aspects. Just so with Christ, who is spoken of as the “Morning Star” to those (the church) who wait now, and as “the Sun of Righteousness” to those who shall wait in the succeeding dispensation (6). Light reveals, and thus God by His word reveals the nature of everything, not only of sin—which thought seems to cling in our natural minds, always attributing a severe aspect to “God is Light” —but of everything right and lovely and of good report also, which aspect is seriously overlooked. “Verily the light is sweet and pleasant,” Eccl. 11:7, not merely severe. Into the horror of perilous darkness its celestial beams bring comfort and healing on their wings, revealing beauty as well as deformity judging all things. Final judgment is outer darkness. As the ancient Arctic dwellers would assemble on their bill tops to greet the sun's return after their long, long winter night, hailing his beams with plans of joy; so should the world have hailed the advent of spiritual light, heavenly truth; “but their eyes were blinded.” (7) The mystery of light cannot be explained (as might be expected in any symbol of deity); but the undulatory theory generally accepted is the same theory in principle as explains the progress of sound, thus giving us another association between the ear and the eye, the word and the light. (8) Light not only reveals colors—as Lord Bacon writes, “all colors will agree in the dark” —but creates all color; for it is the separation of light into elementary parts, and the absorption of some of these parts, that is the cause of colors. If light be broken on a prism, as in the case of falling raindrops, it separates into different colors, whence the rainbow; and again, if all the colors be put gradually on a disc and the disc revolved, they will blend into white (called technically the recomposition of light). So the divine character is not seen in its full beauty until it comes as revealed in Christ into contact with the weeping clouds of earthly misery, and then the different attributes of God are seen in the transcendent majesty of their stronger, and in the ineffable grace of their more tender, elements. And it is in this sense that Joseph's “coat of many colors,” received by him from his father, represents the eternal character of Christ, as also the blue and purple and scarlet of the tabernacle curtains.

Many other analogies may be found in this figure; but the foregoing at least flow naturally, and without straining. They suggest something of the appropriateness of the figures used by the Holy Ghost; and the amplitude and opulence of the divine imagery.

J. C. B.

Chapter 151

Scripture Imagery: 3. Figures Used in Reference to the Son of God

The most remarkable fact in this subject is the extraordinary number and variety of the figures which are used in reference to the Son of God. And indeed this is a striking evidence of the exhaustless affluence of Him that filleth all in all—that God has drawn upon all the resources of the universe, bringing forth every object the most useful or beautiful, and advancing it to convey to us something of the varied and manifold aspects of the person, offices, and achievements of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each figure gives some fresh aspect—like the turning of a celestial kaleidoscope—and so many fresh aspects are there to be conveyed, that everything lovely and beneficent which surrounds us has been invested with a halo of consecration by this sacred association. And thus anyone having fair knowledge of the scriptures cannot pass through the world without every moment seeing some object that reminds him of Christ or His work—a star, a mountain, a stone, a lion, a door, a lamb, even a nail,—things humble and serviceable, as well as the most dignified and splendid. Even were such a man blind, as Milton describes himself, with “wisdom at one entrance quite shut out,” yet would the voice of the Ancient of days speak to him from the “noise of many waters:” and were this gate of the ear closed also, the genial warmth of the sun's ray, the fragrance of lily or rose, the very bread he conveys to his mouth, have been consecrated by the Holy Ghost as symbols of Immanuel. Throughout this earthly life these lights gleam—most brightly of all in the darkness of adversity—until, over the dying bed, the medicine that assuages his pain, and the physician that administers it are found to have been appropriated, as emblems of the work of that great Physician who came to heal those that are sick and wrest them from the grasp of death.

Amongst the earliest of these emblematic objects is Adam, who is typical of the “last Adam,” mainly in that He is appointed God's vice-regent in His image and likeness to rule in the earth. And of subordinate points of resemblance, the following seem chief. As Adam was head of the human family, so Christ is head of the whole race of the redeemed; as Adam was put to the test of temptation, so also Christ; as Adam's one act affected his whole posterity, so Christ's one act affects those of which He is head; as Adam receives a bride, bone of his bone, formed as the result of his having been cast into the deep sleep—the semblance of death, and presented to him when he awaked—the semblance of resurrection, so from the death of Christ results the formation of the spiritual bride, presented to Him, without spot or blemish, in His resurrection. As with his bride he is brought into a relationship of unity in love, involving protection and devotion on his part, and submission and fidelity on hers; so the Bride is to be associated with Him in sorrow and dishonor as well as in dignity and happiness; and this unity is so complete that they are both included in one name, “He called their name Adam;” and in 1 Cor. 12:12 the Head and the body, the church, are included in the one title Christ. That there should be points of divergence too is to be expected: the shadow is “not the very image.” There is no type nor symbol able to express fully even one aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ. At least they fail somewhere, for the simple reason that He immeasurably surpasses in every particular anything which the universe could afford to illustrate that aspect. So in regard to His second point—a formal definite testing by

temptation—Adam falls, in a paradise and under the most favorable circumstances; whereas Christ withstands in a wilderness, and under the most unfavorable circumstances.

Immediately that Christ (in type) treads the earth rest succeeds; and so the Sabbath directly follows (Gen. 2). Just so, when in redemption the Israelites get across to the wilderness, the manna appears (Christ on the earth) and the Sabbath is directly connected therewith. There is this difference however, that Adam represents the Lord on earth ruling and therefore brings rest in the way of authority, something as it will be in the millennium; while the manna represents Christ in humiliation, in the character of the Gospels, yet giving rest; humbled and outcast, yet able to say," Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In one form or another rest is always characteristic of Him; but probably the most beautiful of all phases is that whereof the type is now before us—God resting in Him in divine satisfaction and complacency. Of course those who read this paper will know that the antitype of the Sabbath is not the "Lord's day" of the present dispensation, but that it is still in the future (Heb. 4:9). "There remaineth therefore a keeping of Sabbath—σαββατισμ■ς—to the people of God." To keep Sabbath in that sense now would be to dissociate it, from Christ, which is to miss its whole connection. Spiritually the same principle is true; it is only as Christ is apprehended that the soul has rest with God.

It is noteworthy too as being the seventh day. As a practical musician detects a distinct character in each note of the scale, from the solemn repose of the "first" to the piercing expectancy of the "seventh," so the scripture student recognizes a peculiar meaning in the, numbers used, which meaning is often the key to unlock the signification of a whole passage. Besides its other well-known characteristics, it is well to remark that 7 is composed of the union of the earthly number 4 and the heavenly number 3 (the sevens of scripture are nearly always thus divided); it is the union of heaven with earth. No longer now Elohim, but Jehovah Elohim: relationship is established.

This progress had now reached a final stage. The material creation steadily develops till its "diapason closes full in man." There is nothing more correct than development: nothing more incorrect than evolution, which is being now quietly relinquished by those who most warmly supported it a very few years ago. And as there was no physical object to be subsequently created (here) higher than Adam—and indeed there does not seem to be a single species of plant or animals of any sort since his time—so there never has been nor can be any spiritual development higher than the last Adam. God rests in Him.

Then we see a bridegroom and bride in a paradise, the subject of celestial benediction, the objects of divine complacency; the center of the organized system— "he for God only; she for God in him." This, and infinitely more, is true concerning the anti-type. Concerning the type we may well say O si sic omnia! But it was the devil's province to bring evil into good; as God's is to bring good out of the evil.

Chapter 152

Scripture Imagery: 4. The Serpent, the Sacrifice, the Cherub

The Serpent, The Sacrifice, The cherub

The brightness and harmony of the earthly paradise is speedily changed into harmony and discord. Not far from the shadow of the tree of life is hidden the fruit of death. The agency of temptation is insidious: the sin is proffered in innocent, and attractive guise. Mankind, allured by lust of eye, lust of flesh, and pride of life, grasps at the tendered bait and obtains a knowledge of good (by denying good) and evil (by gaining evil). All is instantly changed: henceforth the tree of life is reserved for another paradise, and its aspect is different, it is now-like the Scandinavian tree (Igdrasil), whose roots are in Hela or death, and whose branches, bearing perennial leaves and fruits, stretch into the Empyrean abodes—to be a tree of life in resurrection only.

We are told in Rev. 12:9 and xx. 2 very definitely that the serpent represents our great adversary the devil. The figure is apt in these points, deceit and death. The two most characteristic features of all sin I believe to be craft and cruelty. “Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations; O my soul, come not thou into their secret." All the attributes of the father of sin are comprehended in these two terms, “A liar and a murderer." In the serpent this is graphically expressed: it is “more subtle than any beast of the field;” and under the hooded glory of the cobra lurks the malignant virus of death. If we could forget this, we should see that it is not without semblance of outward innocence and beauty, which, however, only makes it the more to be dreaded. As Montague the statesman said of Wharton two centuries since, “He is like a fire-ship: dangerous at best, most so as a consort, least so when showing hostile colors.”

It is for this reason that the worship of the serpent—ophiolatry, which has extended, in one form or another, all over the world—is peculiarly heinous: it is the supplanting of God, not merely by a stock or stone, but by the symbol of Satan. For this reason also the character of its worship was distinct from general idolatry, in that it was the avowed worship of a dreaded and hated object, being somewhat similar in this respect to the worship of Ahriman the evil deity by the Persians, in contrast with the more intelligible worship of Ormuzd, the beneficent one. But it was reserved for professing Christians to develop this abyssmal wickedness to its utmost depth. The oriental sect of Gnostics, called the Ophites, even went so far as to connect their adoration of the serpent with the observance of the eucharist; and that in a repulsive manner which I forbear describing. For this reason too God puts a perpetual curse on the serpent so that even in the millennium when all other creatures are in happiness, “dust shall be the serpent's meat.”

There is another figure used of Satan in the lion seeking whom he may devour. Here the prominent feature is violent destructiveness, as in the foregoing figure it is the crafty destructiveness. These two features always alternate and, so far as I can see, the violent hostility comes first, and, when this fails, the crafty one generally succeeds. Thus, in the beginning, he seems to have assailed the power of the Omnipotent, but was defeated: he was “hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky, In hideous ruin and combustion down To bottomless perdition!” Then the tactics are changed and the specious deception of Eden succeeds—for a time at least. In

like manner (not to mention other dispensations) he assailed the church, first, as Peter describes, imprisoning, burning, crucifying; but when three hundred years of that left the church still triumphant, the methods are again altered. Now it is as “Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses;” that is to say, by imitation and deception. The important thing to see is that it is the same opponent and hostility though under different forms.

It is noteworthy that scripture applies the two figures—the lion and serpent—in certain limited aspects as types of Christ. I am aware that so popular an authority as the laborious compiler T. H. Horne restricts the typical application of the brazen serpent to the circumstances only; but I think there can be no doubt that the serpent itself is meant in John 3:14 to be typical, expressing that Christ is to be, looked to as uplifted in the “likeness of sinful flesh.” But the “likeness” is brass—that which is capable of bearing fire (judgment). He is capable of sustaining infinite judgment, as being of an infinite nature and capable of infinite suffering; but the reference there is more especially to His having been “made sin” though we know in Him was “no sin.”

Amid the dark threatenings of the judgments, which must follow the first human offense, some words spoken concerning the “woman's Seed,” and the action of clothing the first sinners in the skins of beasts, i.e. the covering belonging to a slain and innocent victim, are the first gleamings of heavenly light. But they are dim and nebulous, like the faint streaks of the milky way in the black dome of night—the blending “of gentle lights without a name.” It is only when we view these dim nebulars through the telescope of the sacred word that we can see they are composed of the confluent rays from far-off and unnamed worlds of truth and hope.

It is difficult to understand why the meaning of the cherub should be generally so misapprehended: the popular idea is expressed by the figure of a baby's face, which represents very correctly the exact reverse of the scriptural idea. The cherubim are described in much detail by Ezekiel (ch. 1). It is frequently said that the cherubim meant in Genesis and Exodus are different from those; but on what ground this is said I could never discover. The onus probandi of the matter is on the person who makes the assertion, and not on one who—in the absence of any qualifying terms—takes a word to mean substantially the same thing in different parts of the same book. In Ezekiel (ch. 1-10). it is very apparent that they are majestic and awful descriptions of the faculty and progress of judgment; as from Isa. 6 we can see that the seraph expresses the faculty and progress of Mercy.. The cherub has four wings; the seraph six: so Mercy is swifter than Judgment. In Rev. 4 we see in the “beasts" round the throne the characteristics of both united—the numerous eyes and four faces of the cherub, and the six wings of the seraph—Mercy and Judgment met; ceasing not day or night in ascribing praise to the Holy Lord God Almighty.

It is sometimes said that the cherub signifies the executive function. Yes, very true, but executive of what? It is without doubt executive of judgment in Ezekiel, and here in Gen. 3 too its glittering sword reveals the same function (though for a merciful end no doubt). Then it may be thought that the fact of the cherubim being on the ends of the mercy seat yields a difficulty; but I think there is singular beauty in the expression of Judgment and Mercy being combined as the basis of God's dealing with sinners; and especially is it to be remarked that the faces of the cherubim were to be turned downwards towards the mercy seat—not towards the, sinful being—so that they ever saw the blood which the mercy seat provided as the sinner's atonement; Judgment looks upon what Mercy provides and maintains.

The cherubim then (perhaps some readers may need to be told that cherubim and seraphim are merely the plural forms of cherub and seraph; they are untranslated words though somewhat distorted in being Anglicized, as most untranslated words are) come forth from the north (the place of judgment, Lev. 1:1.1) in resplendent glory of cloud and fire. They are four in number—universal operation: they have four faces—universality of aspect: they have four wings—slower than mercy: straight feet, like a calf's, and like burnished brass—progress ever stable and judicial; wings joined—every judicial operation interlocks with all other judicial operations, turning not as they went. Their faces were like a man's—intelligence and authority: a lion's-majesty and vengeance: an eagle's-omniscience and ubiquity: a calf's (or a cherub's, these were the faces no doubt which were to be downward toward the mercy seat)—patience and stability; and they have hands—the executive faculty. “Whither the Spirit was to go, they went” —Ezek. 1:12 the blood is sprinkled before the oil.

They are further characterized by the color of amber or fire, but “the appearance of the wheels and their work” a more hopeful color, beryl, connecting itself with the rainbow that ever in Rev. 4 rises in divine promise above the fearful prospects of judgment. “Their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel” —indirect and collateral results, besides the leading characteristic of straightforwardness. They are full of eyes—see everything before and behind, judging not only results but causes.

Ezekiel says twice that the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels—not in the amber fire; the spirit of judgment is not in its direct work of destruction, but in the revolutions proceeding from its indirect work—the beryl, the rainbow (Ezek. 1:28) the beneficent results. And here also may our spirits well repose, not in the horror of its yellow consuming flames, but there where the heavenly blue mingles with the yellow—a verdant hope, like springing grass, of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

J. C. B.

Chapter 153

Scripture Imagery: 5. Cain, Abel, Enoch, Seth

Cain; The Sacrifice; Abel; Seth; Enoch

As Cain represents the course of the “man of the earth” in sin, so Abel represents the course of the righteous, and especially of the Righteous One—Christ. Now both Abel and the sacrifice typify Christ in suffering—not in glory as Adam did—but in the sacrifice He is suffering at the hands of God (i.e., by His ordinance) for sins, whereas in Abel we see Him suffering at the hands of man for righteousness. In Abel's sacrificial action we see Christ “offering Himself” Three aspects are true: He suffered by the “determinate counsel” of God “for sins” of others; He was by “the foreknowledge of God...by wicked hands taken and slain” for His own righteousness and He laid down His life voluntarily offering Himself without spot to God.

There are other aspects of the sufferings and death of our Lord, but these seem the principal ways in which they are presented. It is exceedingly objectionable to make such a theme a subject of cold critical analysis, still we cannot err in following with reverence what is revealed. It has been pointed out how distinct are these presentations, and how invariably that, when the suffering from the hand of God is presented (as in Psa. 22 and 102) it is for sin, and the result at the end of these Psalms and in the following ones is blessing to mankind; but when suffering from man is spoken of (as in Psa. 69) it is for righteousness and the result is judgment. It is in the former aspect the sacrifice is seen; in the latter aspect Abel. The characteristic of this type, then, is a Righteous life opposed in the world, hated and temporarily defeated, apparently crushed, but accepted by God, and in its results ultimately triumphant. Such a life breathes an atmosphere composed of two elements, Faith and Obedience—kindred elements of such mutual regard that one cannot live without the other. Judged outwardly this life seems to be lamentably wasted and resultless: the very name signifies something vain and transient—a breath; but it is a breath of divine inspiration, the effects of which travel over the dismal centuries. Abel “being dead yet speak eth,” and one most definite speech is that there must be a future life in which wrongs are redressed and the perversions of human judgment reversed if there be such a thing as justice in the universe.

We are thus warned from the first against the crude and vulgar error of supposing that virtue is always rewarded and vice always punished in this life: a most mischievous delusion, which the multitude of novelists and dramatists work perpetually to uphold, notwithstanding that the daily experience of every one is otherwise. If we judge the virtue of lives by their outward success and results, then we have to account for the suffering and death of Abel the proto-martyr, and the outward failure and disaster of thousands of lives, like his honorable, and like his apparently condemned and fruitless. The type of all such is Christ: there has been no such (outward) failure as that of the life and death of our Lord in human history. He said “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught;” and, after a dependent, laborious and devoted life, the outward result is a handful of ignorant fishermen as followers, who desert Him at the approach of danger, deny and betray Him; a crown of thorns, a scepter of reed, a cross of wood, and & borrowed grave. If God be just, such a life cannot be allowed to terminate there: time is thus shown to be but

a part of eternity; and what is not set right in the present existence will be set right in the future.

Moreover Christ's death in this aspect is full of comfort for many a discouraged and broken life, apparently barren of results. It could not be more so than His; and yet, in outward defeat and disaster, He won far greater victories than when in the olden time, or in a day to come, He hurls the assaulting hosts from the battlements of heaven. The apostle is told that there is indeed One who has by the prowess of His victories acquired a right to unfold God's purposes; and this One is the Lion of Judah. But when John turns to see the Lion, he sees, instead, “a lamb as it had been slain.” It was in this way and character that Christ gained His mightiest triumphs—in misconstruction, hatred, suffering, disastrous defeat and death. And we too—Constantine's motto being better than Constantine—In hoc signo vinces

Seth, appointed or substituted in place of the dead Abel, may represent Christ in resurrection. Then men begin to call upon the name of the Lord. There are two races thenceforward, the natural human line by Cain, citizens and embellishers of the world, and the death-and-resurrection line by Seth, who call upon the Lord. The line of Cain progresses on through a list of names suggesting a development of evil ending in Lamech— “humbled” —a bigamist and murderer, the “seventh from Adam” in natural life. Meanwhile the resurrection line proceeds through a list of names disclosing suffering and victory on to Enoch—a fit expression of the church's last privilege being translated without death before the judgment comes—and Noah—a future dispensation of salvation, but through the midst of the judgment which destroys all Cain's posterity. It is a peculiar fact long ago pointed out by a Hebrew student; that the meanings of the first ten names along Seth's line run respectively thus: 1, Man (that is, as God made him), —2, Substituted—3, Fallen man, subject to all evil—4, One who laments—5, The Illumination of God—6, Shall descend—7, Teaching (or dedicating, i.e., Enoch)—8, His death shall send—9, The humbled—10, Consolation. I am not aware of any evidence of this remarkable sentence being designed; but, remembering how the names were invariably given with appropriate meanings then, it can hardly be doubted that it discloses a notable similarity in the development and progress of the principles that we find in redemption in a far larger scope. I have noticed something of the same kind of development to occur in the sequence of names through the line of Cain; but it is only development of evil: the end of Cain's line is Lamech—made low or humbled; but the end of Seth's line is Lamech—Noah, i.e. [to the] humbled, consolation. What a difference is made in the terminations of the two lines by this one name Noah—and by means of this one man!

Enoch resembles the highest view of the church dispensation—the beau or divin ideal. He is called the seventh from Adam, the ultimate development of the resurrection line: he is without human history or political importance— “unknown and yet well known.” Being “dedicated” to heaven, his home is there, and thither he is translated without seeing death, before the judgment comes on the earth; he leaves behind him a simple record that, walking by faith, he pleased God and he testified of the advent of Christ. I need hardly say that this is not at all true of the historical or professing church.

J. C. B.

Chapter 154

Scripture Imagery: 6. the Ark and the Flood

There is no longer need for controversy, even with the most skeptical of the small scientists, as to whether there has been a general flood such as that recorded in Genesis. The history of every ancient nation on the globe goes back (with more or less vagueness and mythology) to it. Plato amongst the Greeks, Ovid amongst the Romans, Berosus amongst the Chaldeans, and numbers of other heathen writers, bear witness of the universal tradition. Its story is inscribed on Apamean medal, Assyrian cuneiform tablet, and South American monument: but that is the smallest part of the external testimony. In any part of the world, from the trans-atlantic prairies to the pinnacles of the Himalayan mountains, if a man stoop down and question the ground under his feet it will tell him the same story of a great general inundation of waters; sea shells and marine fossils being found on the highest hills and indeed everywhere. The remains of tropical animals and plants have been washed up into these temperate climes, mingling with millions of rounded stone, “boulders” manifestly brought down from the frozen north imprisoned in icebergs, coming by reason of some mighty disruption in that ocean of ancient ice, which Nares calls the Paleaocrystine Sea. In the basins of London and Paris great numbers of the bones of tropical animals are found. In Kirkdale Cave, Yorkshire, are the bones of the hyaena, tiger, rhinoceros, tropical animals, mingled with the bones of the wolf, bear, and deer, of northern or perhaps arctic climes. In many places—especially in Britain—are found fossils of monkeys, cocoa nuts and palms lying within a short distance of boulder-stones and drift clays evidently dropped from floating icebergs. What else could have produced all this except the northward wash of a mighty deluge from the great southern ocean main, with the returning wash of the retreating waves?

When the warring and unstable waters retreated, they left behind, in rock and fossil, manifest and substantial witnesses for succeeding ages of what had taken place; so underneath the conflicting and uncertain deluge of the theories of geology are the hard and established facts of geognosy that nobody at this time of day thinks of questioning. Some geologists may give this or that reason (inconsistent, contradictory, or mutually exclusive reasons) for the above facts. But to one who believes the sixth chapter of Genesis the matter is plain enough—that God's word and God's world alike proclaim that there has been a general deluge. It is right to say that many eminent geologists used to believe this: geognosy reveals what is called a diluvial period in all lands.

These universal evidences of the Flood are monuments, revealing as to the past a mighty disturbance of the normal course of nature in order to punish human sin; and declaring, as to the future, that as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man....."When the Son of man shall be revealed,” that is after the church (Enoch) has been translated, “one shall be taken,” (taken away by judgment) “and the other shall be left” (to enjoy, as Noah's kindred did, the blessings of the millennium). He “gathers out of His kingdom all that do offend. . . then shall the righteous shine forth.” The order and manner of the advent of Christ, as Son of man, to do this is altogether different from His coming—quite unseen by the world—for the rapture, on which occasion those who are taken are taken for blessing and not for judgment. He who stood at Pilate's bar at Gabbatha has been appointed by God “to judge the quick and the

dead at his appearing and his kingdom." And so He judges the quick, or living, at His appearing, as thus described, in sudden and destructive advent; contrasting with the solemn judicial procedure of the great white throne which will be at least one thousand years afterward.

Through this fearful tempest of judgment a saved remnant is brought in perfect safety into the new world, and the manner of their deliverance typifies Christ as (1) the ark—the means of their salvation; (2) Noah, the captain of their salvation; (3) the sacrifices; and (4) the food provided for their sustenance.

The ark then represents Christ as the sole and sufficient means of salvation, “the like figure by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Let the reader notice the following points. It was God's arrangement; it was sufficient and perfect, but humble and inadequate to the outward view; it was of wood-humanity—the man Christ Jesus; it was— pitched within—nothing can leak out—and without—nothing of evil or danger can leak into it; it was divinely and perfectly proportioned; it had rooms—varied dispensations, orders and families of salvation but one Christ; it had three floors, that is, there is development in Christ—progress to higher and still higher altitudes. But manifestly all “in Christ” have perfect salvation, that being no matter of degree or attainment; salvation is as absolute, for the feeble coney creeping timorously for refuge on to its lowest deck as for Noah on its topmost floor—no more so and no less. The ark has a window “finished above:” its prospect is heaven, not the floating corruption surrounding it, its “look commercing with the skies.” It is thus we approach God through Christ.

Gen. 7:16 “And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.” It is God as Creator, absolute and sovereign who commands the creature to take refuge in Christ; but notice how, directly he crosses the threshold, the name is changed, relationship is established. “Jehovah” shuts him in. When one approaches the Son of God and touches but the hem of His garment, instantly to that one the whole aspect of the universe is altered; above all things the aspect—and even the name—of God is changed; the anger of an offended sovereign is changed into for us the benign care of a Father. Notice also how this verse crushes the preposterous arguments as to there being separate Jehovistic and Elohistic documents. Here the two names occur together (as in some other passages) and with manifest symmetry and design. J. C. B.

Chapter 155

Scripture Imagery: 7. Noah, the Food and the Invitation

When the angelic salutation aroused the shepherds, the advent was announced of the celestial Ambassador in the twofold character of Savior and Lord. The world was in danger; He must be its Savior; the world was disorganized: He must be its Lord. These two titles God has joined together and no man shall divorce them: But that is just what men wish to do: they do not object to any benefits that may accrue through Him as Savior, but will not submit to His authority as Lord.

Yet see how indispensable and natural it is that He should be Lord. If a Camillus or an Alfred will deliver Rome or England from anarchy and peril they must command and lead, for they only are worthy of such position, and they only can adequately fulfill its duties. Hotham denied this principle when he insolently told Colonel Hutchinson that he would not obey him, “he fought for liberty and he expected it in all things.” But Hutchinson was just the man to teach him that liberty does not mean anarchy. The puritanic Colonel—a man of singularly noble and pure spirit—had, himself in turn, to learn submission to the iron will of Cromwell. If Israel, groaning under the bondage of Antiochus, cries to God to “grant a leader bold and brave, if not to conquer born to save,” the savior whom He grants must be their chief, rallied round and obeyed. Mattathias unrolls his standard and the people flock thereto. It is thus that in the plan of salvation we have not only the ark—the means of our salvation—but also Noah the Captain of our salvation—not only Jesus (Savior) but the Lord Jesus; a Son over His own house. It is well for us to dwell frequently on this and consider how unnatural, ungrateful, and unwise it is for us ever in any way to ignore the claims of His authority upon us. “He is thy Lord (adonai), worship thou Him.”

The difference between that kind of authority typified in Adam and that typified in Noah is the difference between the reign of a king and the rule of a Lord. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. The ancient idea of these titles seems everywhere much the same as is suggested by Mr. Carlyle's remarks: king, konig, konning—cunning, the canning, knowing or ableman—Rex, Roi-Regulator. I think it is he also that gives “law word” as the origin of lord, but whether that or the more generally credited heaford (bread giver) be it, the distinction always seems to have been that whereas the ancient king in a broad comprehensive way legislated, arranged and commanded, the lord was the executive ruler to carry out in detail these comprehensive schemes. What the king established in theory, the lord executed in practice. It is the difference between Agamemnon the “king of men” marshalling and ordaining the rival and scattered Grecian hosts and fleets to attack Troy, and Ulysses, “wise in the council, glorious in the field,” acting under him—leading in the van; quelling the insurrection; smiting Thersites with rough blows; “a much experienced man.” It is the difference betwixt the wise and comprehensive shepherd-care of David and the strong, ready energy and practical expediency of Joab. And the allegiance due in each case is different but consistent: the objects of Christ's salvation owe. Him not only a general loyalty, an attitude of broad and comprehensive submission; they owe Him that and also an implicit obedience in every detail of their lives. Consider what an unnatural thing it would be for Japhet and the others to set aside Noah and arrange everything in the ark according to their own caprice: it is infinitely more unnatural for the saved within the ark, either in the present or the future dispensation, to set aside

the rule and ignore the will of the Lord Jesus Christ—say for instance in His church, where not only Japhet and his brothers, but every living being down to the very “creeping things,” seem to want everything arranged their own way or rather their own ways. It is to out—Hotham Hotham and say, “Thou foughtest for liberty and I mean to have it in all things.” Liberty is good: obedience is better.

Noah then represents Christ, as the righteous and devout ambassador to a corrupted and anarchic world first calling to repentance (preaching not grace but righteousness, like Jonah's preaching) and then when there is no hope of improvement—when judgment becomes the greatest mercy—gathering up with him his people, regulating and conveying them securely through the flood of fearful judgments foretold in Revelation, into the “Rest” and happiness of a new earth, where the fragrance of his sacrifice ascends to an azure sky overarched by the iridescent beauty of the symbol of eternal hope. His name signifies Comfort or Rest, into which he conducts the redeemed who go through the great tribulation after the Church's—Enoch's—translation. This rest is entered into in his seventh century: it appears by no means improbable that the earth's sabbatic millennium will correspond with its seventh historical millennium in the same way: if so it is comparatively near at hand. Finally Noah is head of the redeemed race in the new earth.

In an interesting and useful essay on “The Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion,” John Foster condemned the too—frequent use of figures relating to eating. Well, there may be some ground for that, but after all eating is a matter so generally understood, and of such strong and practical interest to every one that the numerous classes of figures relating thereto are amongst the most striking and important in the Bible. I shall only now say that its general significance is obvious enough. It is the means of sustaining life; it is the means of pleasurable satisfaction of a (more or less) painful demand of the body—or soul; it is the building up of the eater by something from outside, which is taken in to the body, or soul, and assimilated, made part of oneself. Can the reader conceive any other figure which would convey one tenth of the concentrated and vehement emphasis with which the soul's need of Christ is expressed when it is said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you!” Men of Taste—the dilettanti few of a pseudo-culture, may object to a figure like that if they wish; but men of hunger, the thronging myriads that people the vast continents, to whom the others are but as “a drop in a bucket,” will understand it more readily than any other—metaphor which could be used.

Thus we find the redeemed are not left to their own resources when saved from the approach of judgment; that would be a poor starveling salvation, unworthy of a God of such affluence and benignity. No, He gives gracious direction to provide for them “all food that is eaten.” As in this dispensation we have Christ the sustenance of our spiritual life strewing the wilderness as the Manna—the especial presentation of the four gospels—so in that or any dispensation, the saved shall find in some form or another that in Christ Himself is their perennial source of sustenance, strength and satisfaction. “All food that is eaten": all that can fully satisfy every renewed nature from the lowest to the most developed, from the dwarfed mind of the idiot Yeddie to the masculine intellect and capacious heart of a Wyclif, or a Paul.

I never noticed, till Juvencus lately pointed it out to me, the singular beauty of the final injunction. God does not say, Go into the ark, but Come into the ark: He was “in Christ," and, when He invites them to Christ, He invites them to Himself. When the storm-threatened wayfarer approaches to

make the divine Ark his refuge and dwelling place, he discovers that Another is there to welcome him: God has made it His own retreat and tabernacle. The crowning and final glory of Ezekiel's Temple is this—JEHOVAH SHAMMAH!

Chapter 156

Scripture Imagery: 8. Birds, the Dove, Raven, Probational Numbers, Olive Leaf and Tree

Probational Numbers. Birds, Raven, Dove. Olive Leaf and Tree

The flood descended for forty days, which number indicates the period of probation: the nation of Israel was tested forty days, during the giving of the law, and forty years altogether in the wilderness: the Lord was tempted forty days: Canaan was spied forty days: Jonah's warning call to Nineveh forty days. It is composed thus—five is the human number (five fingers, toes, senses, &c.); therefore the number representing human responsibility must be twice five: thus there are two tables of law, and ten commandments; one set of duties to God and another to man. Well, let these ten responsibilities be universally tested (that is, multiply by 4), and the result is forty. But then divine forbearance sometimes prolongs the period of probation in which case it is again multiplied by three, the divine number, bringing us to 120: this is therefore the period through which the long-suffering of God waited during the preaching of Noah. Observe that this testing of things, while it destroys all else, bares up the ark on its face. Judgment vindicates and exalts Christ and all who are connected with Him.

On the expiry of this time Noah sends out first the raven and then the dove. The distinction between unclean and clean is many sided in meaning, but the broad general feature is that the unclean feeds on dead flesh, whereas the clean does not touch that, but, being herbivorous or graminivorous, eats what has been dead but is now alive in resurrection—grass or grain. Birds, dwelling in the air—the heavenly places, are symbolic of spiritual natures either good or bad—clean or unclean.

The raven is representative of the latter; the nature “earthly, sensual and devilish.” “The ghastly, grim, ungainly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore,” haunting the “night's Plutonian shore “; delighting in carrion; its sable wing poised ever above the weak and sickly of the covey, and its iron beak plunging first at its victim's eyes—is so expressive a symbol as to need no explanation. Being released from the ark it gladly departs; it is much more at home on the floating carrion than in the ark; and then it is lost sight of for a time. Something similar takes place at the beginning of the millennial age which is here typified. The fowls of the air are afforded a great feast (at the end of Rev. 19), the flesh of the overthrown opponents of Almighty God. Then follows on the new epoch wherein Satan and Satanic elements are out of sight—for a season.

But the dove finds no rest in such contemplations: she returns to the ark till judgment have completed its work. The wisdom that is from above, the divine nature, is first pure and then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated. It is remarkable that so little attention has ever been directed to the form in which the Holy Ghost descended on Christ. Still it has not altogether escaped attention: Longfellow quotes “Old Fuller's saying wise and sweet, 'Not beasts, slow bellies, did not lead Paul to despair; but as a vulture, but a dove, The Holy Ghost came from above;'“ and Francis Bacon, who anticipated many men in most things, anticipated Fuller in this

saying. The form this assumed was expressive of the character of the mission of the Son, then inaugurated—glory to God (which could only be by the way of Purity) and on earth peace.

Now on the first flight the dove having nowhere to rest, returns: the Holy Ghost can only rest where the work of judgment has been accomplished: the oil is put on after the water and blood. The dove returns to Noah but afterward goes out from him and returns no more. And this is how, I think, John 7:39 is to be understood: there have been, in Old Testament times, many visitations of the sacred Spirit to the earth, but not, until the ascension of Christ gave witness to the perfected efficacy of atonement, could the Holy Ghost be yet given; and He is then given as a witness of peace having been made with God. Thus it is that the dove, when the floods are overpast, bears witness of the fact by approaching the ark with an olive leaf in her mouth: and then, a fresh epoch having elapsed, can fold her silver wings in repose under the evergreen branches of the stately cedars in the radiance of a new heaven and earth. Witness—spiritual sight—is always given by the agency of the Spirit, and so the blind man goes to the pool of Siloam ("sent"); and those who are blind are, in Rev. 3:18, exhorted to have their eyes anointed with eyesalve: they would then have doves' eyes (Cant. 1:15)—seeing as the Spirit sees.

That it is an olive leaf which the dove brings is expressive. A leaf is emblematic of profession or testimony. In Eden and in the case of the barren fig tree it was mere empty profession and was accursed; but quite otherwise in the first Psalm, “his leaf shall not wither.” The leaves contain the mouths and lungs of plants, and surround it like so many tongues to make known what tree it is and what fruit is (or should be) thereon. Here the testimony borne is of Righteousness, and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost. The olive tree is, in Scripture, a very important symbol of the position of favor and responsibility occupied by those who are in the place of witness for God. Rom. 11 explains it. The tree is a very remarkable one; its chief feature being the oil,—that is the vessel of testimony is chiefly characterized by its containing the Holy Ghost as the source of light. There are many other suggestive features: it is fruitful, the egg-shaped fruit, disagreeable at first to the natural taste, is afterward greatly relished, wholesome and medicinal; the bark is bitter, the wood is beautiful, the blossom is cruciform. It is evergreen, and will grow in the most barren and stony soil, yet Egypt cannot produce it. It was on the Mount of Olives that the Lord spent many of His most sacred hours. There Gethsemane was situated, the meaning of which name (oil-press) can hardly be without a solemn significancy.

The plants which have their blossoms shaped like a cross such as the olive (though the olive does not belong to the order cruciferae, but has an order of its own) are, generally speaking, humble-looking but wholesome and medicinal. They are very extensively used in diet—the radish, turnip, cabbage, &c. belonging to this order. It is the unfailing test of a true and wholesome religion, that, though it be ever so humble, it shall bear not only the crown, but also the cross manifestly stamped upon it.

Wherever we look, whether down upon the lowly cress, obscured by surrounding weeds, or up into the midnight sky—where the flaming splendor of the Southern Cross is answered by the glittering radiance of the Northern Crown—we see impressed on the universe the two great events of eternal history—the sufferings of Christ and the glories that follow.

Chapter 157

Scripture Imagery: 9. The Altar, the Burnt-Offering, Miracles, Noah's Prophecy, the Rainbow

It is a natural transition of thought from the dove and olive to the Altar—the advent and action of the Holy Ghost leads to worship.

The altar was a type of the basis of worship; and, being so, of course the only antitype is Christ. It has three aspects: the stone altar, which is typical in a general way of the basis of reverential approach to God; the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle—the basis of the sinner's approach and forgiveness; and the golden altar within the veil, the basis of adoration. In the second case, the brass over the wood expresses the power of Christ to sustain judgment, sin being in question. In the third case we see expressed, in His humanity (the wood) and His divine righteousness (the gold,) that which shall form the only and sufficient foundation of eternal praise to God; and in the first case here referred to, Gen. 8:29, we see a type of what is more general and comprehensive, the fulfillment of which shall be seen in the general approach to, and acknowledgment of, God in the millennial age, whereof we read, “In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt...The Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel, mine inheritance.” The other special typical features of the stone altar seem to be its ready accessibility, its stability, and the order (Ex. 20) that no human elaborations be permitted on it.

It is important to see that the (material) altar is only a type. To retain it in use now, since the Anti-type has come, is to prefer the shadow to the substance. “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which [clinging to the old forms and external symbols] serve the tabernacle." Happily however God gives people more than their rights and it is not to be doubted that many who cleave to ancient types and symbols, do nevertheless participate in Christ. But, the apostle reasons, they have no right so. Now that the advent of the Son of God has brought the dispensations to maturity, the effort to drag into the present one the types belonging to the past is an incongruity of the same nature as though a child, grown to manhood, should carry about with him the toy symbols with which he first learned the rudiments of knowledge in the Kindergarten. Such an one would forfeit the “right” to be regarded as a man; though grace or courtesy would perhaps grant him a compassionate recognition.

Upon the altar are offered sacrifices mainly of five distinct characters: the burnt, meat, peace, sin and trespass offerings. The cleansed and renewed world approaches God with the burnt-offering. There is no sin-offering, for the question of sin had been settled by judgment. The five offerings are different aspects of the sacrificial work of our Lord. The salient points of the burnt-offering are its being a voluntary sacrifice and its being wholly dedicated to Jehovah. “The priest shall burn all on the altar.” This is not so with the other sacrifices. It is the expression of a voluntary dedication of the whole being to God—through fires of death and all-searching judgment; fit way to begin a new dispensation.

NOTE. The Deluge was a miracle, which leads me to say that it is very strange that in the many definitions and illustrations of miracles, to be found in theological works, no one seems to have defined it as the Dispensing Power, for this is a precise and complete parallel.

Sovereigns have always claimed to have a power to act, apart from the law, in special circumstances; and, by virtue of their own authority entirely, to dispense certain fiats; this was called the dispensing power, and a remnant of it exists to this day, in the power of a sovereign to pardon a criminal, convicted by the law. (The symbol of this faculty is the curtana, a golden “sword of mercy” without point or edge.) This dispensing power in the hands of a wise ruler, and used sparingly on urgent occasions, would be a beneficial thing; but anyone can see that it was peculiarly liable to abuse. Augustus claimed to be above the law altogether. The Roman pontiffs used the power with prodigality; and in England the Stuart dynasty used it so freely that it produced the Revolution of 1688; and finally the nation greatly limited this power, so that at present there is hardly any of it left. Now if it be such a general thing for a human sovereign to be able to act by the exercise of direct fiat, without the operation of the laws; and if such a power were felt to be so natural a thing that even in the reaction of 1689 some remnant of it was left, surely the sovereign of the universe must be allowed to have and exercise power of the same nature. The dispensing power is beneficial, when used with wisdom, sparingly for special purposes, and so with miracles; but if miracles were frequent or continuous, then the exercise of the power would defeat its own object, and the ordinary processes of natural laws would be disorganized.

The sign of the covenant made between God and men, based upon the work of the altar, is the rainbow. I have referred somewhat to it in Paper II. The Newtonian theory of light and color has been opposed by some notable men such as Hegel and Goethe; brit any child can prove for himself, by a glass prism and a disc, that the colors of this beautiful symbol of hope are composed by the rain clouds dissolving light into its different elements. God is light, and when God is manifested in the flesh, and comes in contact with the clouds of earthly sorrows, His nature is revealed in a beauty and grace never before known.

The millennial age whether in type or antitype ends with sin and judgment; and the dispensational part here closes with Noah's solemn prophecy. It is figuratively spoken—being that kind of figure called a “metonymy of the cause” —and therefore it is considered here. We see the fulfilling of the prophecy in these times in a remarkable manner. Shem was to have the highest blessing, and so the Savior of the world comes by that line, which occupies Asia Japheth would enlarge and dwell in the tents of Shem. It was two thousand years before the first signs of such a thing occurred, when Alexander, from Europe (Japheth's abode), invaded the Asiatic countries; and to-day we see England and France steadily invading Asia from the south and east, and Russia coming down from the north and west. Diplomatists may plot and politicians wrangle about it, but they can no more hinder it than they can hinder the sunset. Four thousand years ago an old man said it would be, and it must be. Ham, of course, is Africa (except Canaan, who perished by Joshua); and though there have been, at times, such sons and daughters of Ham as Hannibal and Cleopatra, whose power and ambition threatened Europe, it was not to be. Africa has been the cradle of slavery. This curse, like all others, Christianity ameliorates and (ultimately) Christ annuls.

Time and speech are divine gifts; wherefore diffuse language, in wasting both, is a double offense, and conciseness is a double virtue. In two or three sentences Noah condenses a graphic and

comprehensive epitome of the histories of all nations! The three words of Caesar—whose language is customarily so condensed as to take three times the number of words to translate it—compared with this is prolix verbosity. In all the records of human speech there is probably no parallel to the declamation of Noah for brevity of word and vastness of thought—save in the utterances of One who in His dying hour proclaimed in the one word, τετ■λεσται, the overthrow of the power of hell, and the redemption of mankind.

Chapter 158

Scripture Imagery: 10. Babel, Bablylon, Canaanites, the Line of Ham, Nimrod

Line Of Ham: Canaanites: Nimrod: Babel: Babylon

Instead of there having been any immediate fulfillment of Noah's prophecy, the line of Ham at first takes a very leading place in the world. The posterity of his son Canaan—specially accursed—seize and divide among them the fairest and best situated of all lands, the garden of the orient, which God had already allotted to the seed of Shem (by Abraham). To the Phoenician branch of Canaan the world is indebted for the invention of writing, arithmetic, astronomy, and shipping. But the most remarkable of all the sons of Ham was Nimrod.

Nimrod was the Belus of the ancient Assyrians, who established the despotism of Babylonia, and founded the great cities of Babylon and Nineveh. He was regarded as being deified and placed in the heavens, with his sword and leash of hounds—the brightest and largest constellation. In truth the vague and gigantic outline of the colossal figure of Orion, spreading athwart the whole eastern horizon, is no unfit representation of the huge personality of the mighty hunter and warrior, whose dim and vast form looms, from the starlit past, over the Asian plains. Apparently he was the original Baal, or lord; not so much a god as a demigod; not so much like Zeus on the Olympic heights, waving his ambrosial locks, as like the stupendous figure of Thor, grasping his ponderous hammer, and stalking amongst his companion Jotuns on the Norse mountains.

Nimrod is the typical man of the world, and Babylon is the typical city. They are both strong and attractive to outward sight; Nimrod the very beau ideal of authority, but he is, as his name signifies, “Rebel “; and Babylon the wonder of the world for beauty and organization, but it means “Confusion.” In due time, we find, God selects a man and develops a city; but the man is not the lordly Nimrod, nor is the city the stately Babylon. Thenceforward the man and city of the earth wage relentless war, century after century and millennium after millennium, against the man and city of God. Let the reader note well the characteristics of each and especially their origins. “All things,” says Plato, “are symbolical, and what we call results are beginnings.” The converse of this is also equally true: what seem beginnings are merely results; Babylon and its system are results of the great principles of human disposition which forced them into existence.

And this is what makes the offense of building Babel (which is now generally recognized, as having been the nucleus of Babylon) so extreme, and the judgment thereon so severe—the motive. It may be said, What crime is there in building a high tower? None, but the motive that impelled it made it a crime: that motive was a deliberate determination made by a people, who had lately been the object of God's mercy and deliverance, to exclude Him from all part in their arrangements; to take from His hand the scepter of government and magnify their own name at the expense of His. It is not only high treason, but it transcends that crime as the high treason of Lotharius and his brothers, in deposing their father from the throne of France, transcends ordinary high treason; it added thereto the heinous crime of ill-using one who had an especial claim on their

affection and respect, the one who had given them being, sustenance, preservation, and wealth. Now Junius Brutus, when his sons conspired to dethrone him, had them put to death; and though many may doubt the naturalness of Brutus' sentencing them, none doubt that they fully deserved it. The judgment, however, falling on the conspirators of Babel, was not of such an extreme nature. God had originally told them to disperse and replenish the earth: they build this beacon tower to hinder that; whereon God scatters them in judgment. He has His way eventually (as always), and they have to submit; but whereas it should have been the submission of obedience and happiness, it is now brought about in the way of penalty, disaster, and to the race the permanent inconvenience of diverse speech..

When the law comes it does nothing to accommodate itself to this confused speech; it is given in the one primitive language, and only one; and if men wanted to know God's requirements, they must learn that language. But when the gospel comes, the curse becomes a blessing: the way in which the difficulty of diverse speech is miraculously met at Pentecost is a present and overpowering evidence of the nature and origin of the message. All this is very characteristic: man brings curse out of blessing; and God brings. blessing out of curse.

Nimrod and his city then are the outward symbols of rebellion “which is as the sin of witchcraft” —outward symptoms of inward disease. The inception and development is heroic and rapid; while yet God's man is undisclosed from Chaldean idolatry, Nimrod rises with colossal power, and while yet Zion is unfounded, Babylon shines with luminous glory. The world's wonder; in magnitude greater than London; in symmetry more beautiful than Paris; in temples and palaces more imposing than Rome—surrounded by a wall as high as St. Paul's dome, and as broad as a wide road; so it developed. With a mighty overthrow, indelible disgrace, and eternal disaster—so it fell. After generations of laborious searching, travelers find a few heaps of calcined bricks to be all that is left of the powerful Babylon, while they puzzle each other as to which of the blasted and blackened piles, Mujelibe or Birs-Nimrod, is the original Babel.

But the enmity of Babylon against Zion does not end with the destruction, of the material cities; it is prolonged into the spiritual realm,, and so we find—as though the spirits of two deadly foes had escaped from their slain bodies, and continued the struggle—that, since the death of the two cities, there has arisen a spiritual Zion, attacked ceaselessly and ruthlessly by that spiritual Babylon, the final doom of which shall be when the mighty angel shall cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found again no more at all Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!”

Chapter 159

Scripture Imagery: 11. Abram and Zion, Nimrod and Babylon, Faith

A distinct period is reached when the tendencies of human self-will and idolatry culminate in Nimrod and Babel. A concrete proof has been thus given of a deliberate determination to dethrone God and exclude Him from all part in the affairs of men. God's reply to it is—firstly, judgment on the perpetrators of this crime; and, secondly, the calling out of Abram who is raised up as a new witness. Henceforth the place of divine favor and testimony is not with the world at large but with a man and a city separated from the world, persecuted by it, and yet returning good for evil by being appointed channels of mercy and benediction to all nations of the earth.

The development of the earth—man and city had been rapid, imposing and heroic; but the development of the divine selection is comparatively slow, unimposing and obscure: it was indeed heroic, but not in an outward sense—quite otherwise. In the time of Peleg God had made all arrangements. Yet after his birth Abram, the selected man, is not born for 191 years after, and is 75 years old before he starts from Haran, and is years in traveling 700 miles. Slow progress indeed; yet he has left such “footprints in the sands of time” as have petrified into an enduring record—like those portentous footprints which the mighty Saurians of the old world left in the sands of the mesozoic period, and which have since hardened into rock. They were apparently little valued at the time, but now the geologist prizes each one of them, as men of taste a priceless fragment of sculpture by Phidias.

This principle of a small beginning with a steady and gradual development—festina lente—is especially characteristic of God's work. Man works with a plank; God works with a seed. The man cuts and finishes his plank very soon: he puts it into the ground and it begins to rot. God also puts His work into the ground, where it is hidden for a time. The small brown seed dies, but in due time rises from the dead and begins to grow. The progress is so very slow as to be almost imperceptible; but it is increasing, and its “seed is in itself;” it is eternal. The seed differs from the plank in this—the plank, how well polished and finished soever it he, is dead; but the seed, however humble looking, is Alive. In the plank is a temporary triumph and then decay; in the seed there is temporary disappointment and defeat—it is trodden under foot and lost sight of—but, ultimate success and eternal life; ever living, growing, and extending till the small acorn has heroine a forest of oaks which “against the stormy sky their giant branches toss.”

We now therefore find the introduction of a new order of things. Henceforth the servant of God is to be no citizen of this world but it stranger; no resident in it, but a pilgrim, traveling steadily forward to a land of fairer promise than Shinar; looking for the city (whilst he passes by Babylon) which hath foundations, and whose Builder and Maker is God. He is “looking for” it, but sees it not—sees nothing but the wilderness and the foe—knows not whither he is going, but he knows that God knows, and this is sufficient: he walks by faith and not by sight. Abram is the personification of this principle of faith; he is the father of the faithful. We have in Genesis a series of Representative Men; and this is what he represents—the nobility, security and happiness of a life based on a belief of God's words, and surrounded by a trust in God's works.

For faith has these two general aspects, and a third resulting there from. Firstly it is a solid basis the foundation, “the substance—■π■στασις—of things.” It is like the rock-foundation of a lighthouse, out of sight so that the building seems to rest on the unstable water; unless one mount skyboard—then looking down, he can see, from where God sees, that its foundation is steadfast and eternal: or it is like the tranquil depth of the mountain lake, quite unruffled in its serene quietude, however much the surface may be disturbed. It is most like the bass part in music, binding the melodies, which wander over its head, into a harmony, giving them unity, strength and solidity. Especially is it like those strange “ground” basses, used in the seventeenth century, in which the deep notes moved through a, constantly recurring melody of their own over and over again, while the higher parts were always varying yet always harmonizing. There is one feature of the great blind musician's which makes him distinct from all the rest: it is the majestic and solemn gravity of tranquil repose and strength which characterizes the bass parts of his compositions, especially the marches. Now if there be one thing more noticeable than another as a general and pervading characteristic in Abram's life, it is this spirit of placid repose and calm deliberate movement; though he lived in especially troublous times, passing through exceptionally turbulent circumstances.

The second aspect is of faith as a shield to “quench all the fiery darts.” The man of faith is thus protected, in much the same way as the earth is, by an atmosphere which, though it seems nothing, being invisible and intangible, yet is an invulnerable guard against the fiery assaults from the heavenly places. The meteorites, which are launched in hundreds at the earth's bosom, fly towards it with viewless and noiseless death: at once on reaching the atmosphere they become ignited with the friction; they instantly flare, scream and explode, ultimately falling harmlessly to the ground. Few men stay to think how the earth is thus hourly menaced and defended. And this is how the man of faith is also defended: the deadly missiles hurled continually against him are darkly discharged but are instantly revealed when they come within the atmosphere of his trust in God, and even though they should hurt him, they cannot harm him.

The third aspect is that faith “worketh by love." It is a dead or non-existent faith, unless there be works flowing from it. James demands “Was not Abraham justified by works”? Certainly he was, “but,” says Paul, “not before God.” Just emphasize those four words and at once the apparent difference between Rom. 4 and James 2 is reconciled. The soul's justification “before God” can only be by faith; but that faith is perfected in works James reasons, and this is how a man is externally recognized as being a possessor of faith. Well, the way in which these works (Christian actions) come about is on the principle of love. The law worked by fear. Faith worketh by love—this is the great motive. As a telegraph works by electricity; as an engine works by steam; as a compass works by magnetism; so faith flashes messages between earth and heaven, winged by love; so faith “overcometh the world,” empowered by love; and so faith points day and night to the North Star of the universe, guided by love.

J. C. B.

Chapter 160

Scripture Imagery: 12. Faith, Hope, Love, the Journey, the River

Abram; Faith; Hope; Love; The Journey The River

A man's character can no more be composed of a single virtue than a rope of a single strand. But “a threefold cord who shall break?” When the element of faith is interwoven with hope and love we have the perfect character. So, while we find that the leading feature of Abram's life is faith, we find that it is intermingled with the other two spiritual graces, and each present in a marked degree: there is not only a presence of the other elements, but a proportionableness; but faith appears to be the leading characteristic because of the circumstances through which he passed. The principle is seen also in the Epistles. The leading theme of Paul is faith; nevertheless he writes much of hope and love. The leading theme of Peter is hope, but he is by no means confined to this. And the leading theme of John is love, notwithstanding which he writes “that ye may believe;” and that a man “may have this hope on Him.”

Now Abram's life is divided into three epochs, by the insertion of the words “After these things” in Gen. 15:1 and xxii. 1, and I think the different aspects are seen thus—firstly, the call and the response of faith; secondly, the promise and the response of hope; and, thirdly, the trial and the response of love. These aspects in a sort of way correspond to the threefold aspect of length, breadth, and thickness which the scientific men attach to all things; for there is nothing that reaches farther than hope; nothing broader than love; and nothing more substantial than faith.

From chap. 11 to 14 then, we see the call and response. The call comes to a sinner amongst sinners; brings him out thence; and, after trouble and conflict, ultimately, notwithstanding his failure, the section closes on him as he stands triumphant over all foes and difficulties on the hills of Salem, whence Melchisedec comes forth to welcome him, and crown him with eternal benediction in the name of the Most High God. The Talmud as might be expected puts a different appearance on this call—that Abram had been a good little boy and broke his father's idols; that Nimrod had wanted to kill him, and so forth. But from Joshua's statement the facts are evidently quite different. Abram was born and bred amongst idolaters in Ur, the center of the worship of the Moon—God, Sin, and just under the shadow of Babylon's walls, beneath the bondage of Nimrod the Hamite, the despot of an alien race. From thence God, in supreme grace, calls him to come into a land whither He would guide him and where He would welcome and endow him. In traveling to that land, he has to pass by and resolutely leave behind him the world-city, Babylon; has to undergo a difficult and arduous desert journey. But God accompanies him; His wisdom guides him; His grace sustains him, and His power protects him. The representative and typical bearing of all this is too obvious to need much comment. Believers are “called” by the word of God in a way that awakens the power to respond—the call being personal in the experience of each. They are separated by this call from their old sins, penalties and associations; and consecrated to a blameless and glorious destiny. They are brought through the journey of life, which has become to them now, in some sense, barren and unfavorable, though its dreariness is illumined by the light of an accompanying Shechinah. At length they reach the cold and cheerless river that separates the

present from the future. Here they must all cross (Abram was the “Hebrew—the immigrant:” Eber means “the passage over"). Some must cross through its chilly flood; others (“we shall not all sleep”) shall cross dry shod, as when the host passed over of old, nigh Jericho, into the “Land of Promise." Every believer must follow the course of the father of the faithful. It is a representative course; “they go from strength to strength,” though outwardly it seems from weakness to weakness. “Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” whose Great High Priest, “after the order of Melchisedec,” welcomes them to “the Holy City” in whose golden streets “Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other,” and pronounces upon them the ineffable benediction of the Most High God.

“Part of the host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now!” Some of them plunge boldly into the icy waters; others “linger shivering on the brink, And fear to launch away.” Amongst the most pathetic pages ever written are those at the end of the second part of “The Pilgrim's Progress,” where the weary—pilgrims await their summons across the river. Christiana entered “with a beckon of farewell to those that followed her: the last words site was heard to say were, “I come, Lord, to be with Thee, and bless Thee'.... At her departure the children wept.” Then came the summons to Mr. Ready-to-halt. The messenger says, “I am come from Him whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches.” Mr. Ready-to halt bequeaths his crutches, saying when he comes to the brink of the river, “Now I have no more need of them . . . Welcome life” —so he went his way. Then Mr. Feeble-mind is required and “nothing in his life became him so much as the leaving it.” Mr. Honest had one named Good-conscience to help him over, but he relied not on him: his last words were, “Grace reigns!” Mr. Valiant for-truth goes in gravely; he sinks deeply, but as he went down he said, “Death, where is thy sting?” and as he went down deeper, “Grave, where is thy victory?” The most touching part is where Mr. Despondency is summoned. His daughter Much-afraid says she will go too: and these two infirm and bruised reeds close their lives of doubting, fearing, and trembling, in the joy of their Lord and the power of His might. Mr. Despondency's last words were, “Farewell, night; welcome, day!” “His daughter went through the river singing, but none could understand what she said”

Chapter 161

Scripture Imagery: 13. Bed, Bushel, the Candlestick, Lot, Terah

Abram: Terah: Lot—Bushel: Bed: Candlestick

There is an unhappy completeness in the typical character of Abrams life—its triumphs are checkered by defeats, and its virtues blended with failures. It would ill become us to dwell with any complacency on these failures of so great and eminent a servant of God. Nevertheless they are recorded for our instruction and warning; certainly not for our approval and imitation. After all, they were infirmities of a noble mind, they were “spots on the sun,” they were the failures of virtue, not of vice, and originated in a disposition for concession in grace—of all dispositions the most to be desired and feared.

The first case was, that he seemed very slow to sever himself from his home and kindred as God required. Instead of his going boldly and directly forth at the divine call, we read “Terah took Abram." Now in a matter of this sort he ought to have ignored family relationships, for God had told him to leave his kindred. It might have been all very well for Terah to have accompanied Abram, but for Terah to take him! Well, we see the result: they travel as far as Haran, a populous commercial center where several caravan routes converged, but for the man of faith “a dry place,” as the name signifies; and here they settle down until death dissolves this incongruous arrangement and sets Abram free. Other failures are found in the untruthful compact with Sarai—probably it was failure for him to go down to Egypt at all, even to “sojourn” —and in the case of Hagar. In the first failure we see the slowness of the flesh; in the last the haste of it. In every case there is a failing of faith, his especial virtue. So Moses, the meekest man in the earth, fails in his meekness at Meribah: so David, the most valorous, fails in his courage at Gath: so wise Solomon failed in his wisdom; patient Job in his patience; and Paul the greatest of all innovators, yet clings to a rag of the dying ritual, and shaves his head at Cenchrea.

Terah represents a very large and well-known class of persons who start well and stop short in the journey: an encumbrance to themselves and all connected with them. A prosperous and comfortable place like Haran they find very agreeable to settle down in much more agreeable than struggling through a hostile wilderness. And yet it is indeed “a dry place;” and they find instead of true ease they have, like the ass of Issachar, bowed down to a double burden, and that, (like the ass of Buridanus which was said to be placed between two bundles of hay, and could not make up its mind which to eat till it died of starvation,) they have the satisfaction neither of Ur nor of Canaan, the pleasures neither of this life nor of that which is to come. If the influence of these lukewarm and commercial spirits ended with themselves, it would not matter much; for the loss of their services is not of any particular consequence. But unfortunately their influence is extensive and powerful in staying the foot and paralyzing the arm of many an Abram from that day to this. Family relationships are very frequent elements in reference to these things. It is possible that Terah was a real believer, though an inconsistent one: at least it is certain he was a “professor.” There is a great deal about him in the Koran, which represents him as a highly respectable person, moving in the best circles. The eastern authors, all represent him as having been the inventor of

images instead of pictures for idols, a material and aesthetic advance in divinity which proves him to have been a man of much religiousness, if not of much religion.

The aim to make the best of both worlds generally results in losing both, like the dog which lost the morsel he did possess by trying to snap at that other morsel which he saw reflected in the water. In this case Hesiod's dictum may be inverted: the whole is considerably less than the half. Augustine said, “God does not wish a man to lose his riches but merely to change their place.” But Terah managed to lose his without their much changing place, leaving them all behind him. Speaking of a lately deceased American millionaire, a man inquired there of his friend, “How much did he leave?” “Every dollar!” was the reply.

Now Lot's case is entirely different; he was “a righteous man:” there is no doubt of that, though probably nobody would ever have imagined such a thing, had not Peter speaking by inspiration, stated it. Instead of being, like Terah, a creditable and religious man of the world, Lot was a really discreditable if not irreligious believer. He was certainly justified by faith, brought into Canaan—fully into the then divine favors and privileges; and yet he was a dishonor to God, a burden and anxiety to Abraham, and a cause of shame and misery to all who were connected with him. Not lost but saved by faith, he yet walked by sight—an uncouth combination. These crossbred beings are never comely and always sterile, and, whether they be symmetrical as a centaur or distorted as a Caliban, they are monstrosities, blotches and warts on the fair face of nature. Lot's name means “hiding” and Terah's “delay": Lot's case is the hiding a light under a bushel (i.e. business); Terah's case is the attempt to hide a light (Abram) under a bed (i.e. ease, slumber, luxury)—at Haran.

Now both these temptations followed Abram in order to extinguish his testimony: he was too noble and elevated a man for so sordid a temptation as the bushel to have much effect on: but these large and dignified natures are peculiarly susceptible to the temptations of ease, otium runs dig., and so he was thus obscured at Haran. No vulgar bushel could have ever covered the brilliant light of David also, but “at the time when kings go forth to battle, David sent Joab” against Rabbah, instead of going himself Sloth began the work which dishonor and death finished. It was the darkest hour of his life.

It would be very incorrect to infer that repose or business prosperity are represented as bad things in themselves; this was the Thessalonian mistake, which the apostle corrects by telling them, (1) “to study to be quiet; and” (2) “to do their own business.” What is condemned is the being so absorbed in either one or the other as to be hindered in the Lord's service. It is not that the bed or bushel is bad; it is putting candles under them that is to be condemned: the best thing that can happen then is for the candle to set fire to the whole concern. Abraham was a candle set on a candle-stick giving light to all the house. The Jewish Rabbis had a saying that “a candle lights a hundred men as well as one.” Abraham's candle has lit a hundred generations and is not out yet. All this notwithstanding that he was a rich man.

But he had inward prosperity as well as outward. Torah was paste in a golden setting; Lot was a diamond in a clay setting— “a jewel in a swine's snout;” but Abraham was a diamond in a golden setting. Torah was like that Spanish Hidalgo whose friends thought him wealthy, but who, in his hidden life, was so poor as to eat with avidity the remains of a beggar's dinner. Lot was like the miser Daniel Dancer, who had enormous wealth but ate scraps from the bones he dragged out of

the dogs' mouths. And there are lives like his still—those who struggle with sinners for morsels of carrion, whilst they themselves are possessors of heavenly estates and endowments. But Abram, “lofty patriarch,” is a truly rich man in every sense, inwardly and outwardly; he has a large, strong, generous, and richly endowed nature; he responds in every action to that noblest of mottoes, Noblesse oblige. He is a light in the darkness; an obedient servant to Almighty God; a gracious master to his own servants; a self-sacrificing friend, and a magnanimous foe; the father of the faithful, and the friend of God.

Chapter 162

Scripture Imagery: 14. Bread, the Cup, Melchizedek, Sand, Stars, Wine

Melchisedek: Bread: Wine: Cup &C. Stars: Sand

Through a rift in the dark clouds which encompass the history of Lot we view for a moment the majestic and mysterious figure of Melchisedek, coming forth from Salem with regal welcome and priestly benediction for the victorious servants of the Most High. His sudden appearance is august and imposing besides its typical meaning. The subsequent references of scripture to Melchizedek invest him with a royal grandeur and magnificence, as a type of Christ, altogether unique.

A priest ordinarily is one who has a position of privilege between God and man towards man his function is to disclose the will of God; and towards God he has to advocate, by sacrifice and intercession, the cause of man. Now there are two orders in scripture: the Aaronic, or hereditary; and that of Melchisedek which is prior to Aaron's and of very much grander dignity than his. The peculiarities of this order are, firstly, that it unites the priest's office with that of the king; and, secondly, that, instead of a qualification for the position being given by family descent, as in the order of Aaron, the qualification for this high office consisted in the holy and glorious nature inherent in the one on whom it was bestowed—not extrinsic but intrinsic. Now only God can judge what is in any being apart from his actions or lineage; and this is the peculiar feature here in this type; that the Father who “knoweth the Son,” in all the depth and amplitude of His nature, judges Him to be qualified—by His nature and quite apart from His actions—to be “priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.”

The typical meaning is set forth in such detail in Heb. 7, and is so familiar, that I only point out, (1) that the apostle gives us an example in accepting as a guide the meanings of the names used (at least in some instances), saying, “First being by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that King of Salem, which is, King of Peace.” Divine peace is always preceded by righteousness: “First pure, then peaceable “; “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other “; “And the work of righteousness shall be peace." (2) He shows that the silence of Scripture may be full of meaning sometimes: no mention is made of any genealogy of Melchisedek in the Old Testament, from which silence he deduces an important chain of reasoning. (3) This priest is a perfect intercessor: Abraham's intercession for Sodom, for instance, was exercised six times; had he gone on once more to the number of perfection, seven, would he not at the rate he was reducing the number of righteous men, we may say, have come down to ask that Sodom should be spared if there should be found even one there? and there certainly was one righteous man, Lot. Who can tell what the result of perfect intercession would have been even in that extreme case? But this priest after the order of Melchisedek “is able to save to the uttermost seeing He maketh intercession.”

Of course there is no special caste of priesthood in the present dispensation, for the simple reason that all Christians are brought into this lofty and privileged position. “Ye are a royal priesthood,” says Peter, writing, not to any clergy or officials amongst them, but to “the strangers scattered.” In

Rev. 1:6 it is said of us that we are made, βασιλε■αν, a kingdom of priests. Consider what a splendor of magnificence there is in that short phrase—a kingdom of priests!

Melchisedek brings forth bread and wine, emblems of the means of life and happiness. Wine, “that maketh glad the heart of man," has however sometimes a second and very different application in Scripture, where we read of the “cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” Treading the winepress is an invariable figure of the execution of judgment. The cup is a symbol of adjudication: the ruler of the feast sent the cup to whom, and in what order, and with what contents he judged best. Hence Psa. 75:7, 8. “But God is the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another: for in the hands of the Lord there is a cup.” A judging or “divining cup” was a frequent thing amongst the ancients: Joseph alludes to the idea, Gen. 44:15. Now this cup may contain either happiness or condemnation. It may be either the “cup of blessing which we bless;” or its contents may be of a nature so dread and awful as to cause the most patient of all sufferers to pray, “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

There are two other humble domestic utensils which also are used to convey stupendous revelations of the divine nature. One is the bottle of Psa. 56:8, “Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle.” This is an allusion to the ancient tear-bottles or lachrymatories often found in Egyptian tombs. It expresses in a very powerful and living way the sympathy of the Lord with His suffering people. In all their afflictions He is afflicted. Jesus wept. The third symbol is in the expression “Moab is my washpot.” Moab's special sin was pride, the most appropriate punishment for which is scorn—“surely He scorneth the scorner.”

Abram then receives the promise of posterity, and his name is changed to Abraham— “father of a great multitude” when as yet he had no children at all! But God's promise is better than anyone else's performance. The promise is given with a double aspect; his children were to be as the stars, that is, the heavenly family, those who inherit his faith, as shown in Rom. 4:16, which includes every believer; and they were to be as the sand on the sea shore, that is, the earthly posterity: the sea (Gentile world) may beat upon them, “cast up mire and dirt” upon them, and for a time submerge them, but can never dissolve nor assimilate them.

Certainly it is a very wonderful Book which uses figures so diverse and important as the stars of heaven and the sands of earth to express an old man's descendants; and which can at the same time, with a similar disregard for the laws of human rhetoric, take the humblest of common domestic utensils—a cup, a bottle, and a washpot—without loss of gravity or dignity to express the judgment of God, deliberate, vast, balanced, as a solar system; the sympathy of the Lord, descending as the dew upon Hermon, and the scorn of the Almighty scathing as a withering blight.

Chapter 163

Scripture Imagery: 15. Amen, Covenant-Victims, Furnace, Lamp

Covenant-Victims: Amen. Lamp: Furnace

A practical principle of extreme importance is brought out when Abraham asks, “Whereby shall I know?” in reference to God's promise: he is instantly pointed to the covenant-victims. That is to say, when anyone needs “assurance,” he is pointed to Christ—not to his own feelings, spiritual experiences, good works, resolutions or anything else. The fact is, a man's spiritual emotions are apt to be very variable and change with the barometer or the state of his health; but even if they were not so, the “feelings” form no proper ground whatever to rest on, in reference whether to assurance of salvation or to anything else. The feelings vary; but Christ is the same yesterday and to day and forever.

This is an aspect of our Lord's work very much overlooked; namely, that—quite distinct from the shedding of His blood in atonement—there is the sprinkling of His blood, as Victim of the covenant, to ratify and seal it. All the promises of God in Him are yea [that is, affirmed and ratified], and in Him Amen [that is, culminated and fulfilled]. But this word “Amen” is a very remarkable one: it is a symbol-word of absolute and final affirmative: it is the “formula of acquiescence “ amongst the Jews; with which a deponent responded, when examined on oath: it was the word which our Lord habitually used (being translated “verily” about 100 times in the Gospels): generally speaking it is not translated but is carried into the different languages of the earth intact. Like some few words of sacred importance, it is untranslatable and is pronounced by all tongues alike. Two foreigners of diverse languages met on a steamer in the South Pacific. One of them who was a Christian thought from the demeanor of the other that he must be one also; but he knew no word by which to accost him. At length he approaches, raises his hands and eyes, and says “Hallelujah!” to which his companion responds, putting his hand on his breast, “Amen!” They compressed a great deal of excellent and orthodox theology in those two words and did one another quite as much good as if they had held a long disputation on the homoiousian controversy, the shape of tonsures, or the color of vestments.

For “Hallelujah” is the pervading harmony, and “Amen” the closing diapason of the vast universe. So we find in Rev. 3, when, at the Laodicean epoch, every purpose and promise of God seems thwarted and broken, Christ is presented as the AMEN. There is a strange presentation to Laodicea in every way. In all the former churches the Lord had been characterized by some of His possessions or attributes—even to the beloved Philadelphia where He “hath the key of David;” but in Laodicea (the present or approaching condition of the professing church) we have not the attributes or powers of Christ presented as a means of remedy, but Christ Himself So He is called the Faithful and True Witness—others, as witnesses for God having proved unfaithful and untrue; the beginning of the creation of God—now that all things approach the end, God goes back to the beginning; and The Amen, in Whom all the divine and eternal decrees center and coalesce—Who affirms and fulfills every word which has proceeded out of the mouth of God, and collecting the (apparently) broken lines of His counsels, reconciles, formulates, and fulfills them. The wailing

discords of the groaning creation are “resolved” into an everlasting harmony in this closing diapason—AMEN.

“The fowls came down” —the evil spiritual powers and principles are ceaselessly trying to take away the sign of the covenant; that is, to rob us of Christ, or some part or attribute of Christ. Abraham shows us what we should do: he did not compromise with them nor give place to them, he “drove them away.” We need ceaseless vigilance and uncompromising firmness in this respect, to yield (doctrinally) no particle of the truth concerning either His personality or His work, His name or His word.

In the mythical story of Senapus, the blind king of Ethiopia, his table used to be spread with rich and sumptuous viands; but as quickly as thus furnished, hell-born harpies would swoop down and snatch away the food. And there is many a one still, who is crowned with divine favor and furnished with celestial food, but who is thus continually robbed of his portion, from before his sightless eyes, by the powers and principles of darkness. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong!”

Then the patriarch is cast into a horror of darkness and oppressed sleep; but he wakes again. It is typical of what his posterity should go through of oppression and suffering ere they should rise in the national resurrection of which Daniel speaks. And through all the horror and oppression goes the smoking furnace and the burning lamp, passing between the reeking bodies of the slain victims: and this was how the covenant was made and what it signified. For God had ordained that through judgment and calamity His people should be purified as in a fire and should give light as a lamp in the darkness. This would be true of both the lines of promise, the stars, the heavenly family, and the sand, the earthly family. Of the former—the spiritual family—none would question that this is the purpose and destiny; but of the latter, the fleshly family of Abraham, we need to be reminded, now in the day of their rejection, that the decree is no less certain to be fulfilled, and that the time must surely come when the heralds of Jehovah shall proclaim He hath “chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” “Arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.”

Scripture Imagery: 16. Hagar and Ishmael

Hagar And Ishmael

Here is introduced, in remarkable contrast with the elevated, placid, and pensive life of Abraham, the pathetic story of Hagar, the willful and despairing bond-woman. And this is typical of the contrast between the dignity of faith “in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,” and the slavery of legal bondage: “for this Hagar is mount Sinai” — “which gendereth to bondage." The outcome of this is the system of law, a carnal and conditional system of privileges, whose development is Jerusalem. Ishmael was the type of this subjection, this legal system of things. But Isaac was the type of a higher order of things in every direction: he came in the way (not of law and penal submission but) of promise and faith; and the development is the heavenly Jerusalem. Though Isaac was last in regard to time, he was first in regard to purpose: God promised him before Ishmael's birth, although Ishmael was here long before Isaac's advent. “For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman; but he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise; which things are an allegory, for these [women] are the two covenants.” Ishmael represents those who are the “children” of the law-covenant—penal obedience and bondage; Isaac those of the covenant of faith—which worketh by love—and who stand in a “liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.”

Ishmael represents also a material and fleshly system of things, as Isaac a spiritual one. And “as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so now.” The apostle's reasoning is that Christians are children of the heavenly Jerusalem (Sarah), and that “we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise,” and that we are to “cast out the bond-woman,” that is, have nothing to do with anything of legal bondage and penal obedience. The Galatians were becoming involved in these, and he, with passionate urgency, entreats them away from such “weak and beggarly elements.” These elements (or rudiments) were not weak and beggarly in themselves, but in contrast to the strength and opulence of the gospel; and now to turn back to them is to prefer the rudiment to the development, the shadow to the substance, or the skeleton to the body. It is to prefer the hard life of Ishmael to the princely dignity of Isaac; to choose the slave Hagar as a mother, rather than the wife and “princess” Sarah; to prefer condemnation to justification—Moses to Christ. All who take any ground of justification short of God's absolute grace—all who look to their own hearts as a ground of salvation, or fear their own demerits can prejudice the infinite efficacy of the work of Christ—all who turn to the law for righteousness before God, or as a guide of conduct, are by the apostle shown that they are electing to be sons of the slave Hagar rather than of the princess Sarah, to be citizens of the earthly Jerusalem rather than of the heavenly, in short Jews rather than Christians. The scripture is so complete that the Abrahamic portion they would turn to condemns them, and tells them to “cast out the bond-woman!”

Chapter 165

Scripture Imagery: 17. The Wells

In personal history Hagar is an example or illustration (we could scarcely say a type) of the dealings of divine grace with a helpless and despairing sinner. She is found, partially by reason of her own fault, and partially by injustice and misfortune, in a position of the utmost misery and danger, yet remembered and seen by a God of compassion; she is dying of thirst, yet there is a well of springing water at her side; she does not seem to remember God nor seek Him, but He sends His angel with the gracious inquiry, “What aileth thee, Hagar? Arise.” She is blind to the presence of the means of salvation, until “God OPENED HER EYES AND SHE SAW a well of water.” She is not only saved from suffering and death but is endowed (in her son) with future possessions and blessings, and moreover receives directions for her personal right conduct.

[Though directions are given, and approved by God, “to cast out the bondwoman,” yet He protects her when thus cast out: so we see God protecting the legal system though He warns us against harboring it, saying “the law is holy; and the commandment is holy, and just, and good."]

The well in the desert of Beersheba was there before the poor woman had her eyes opened to see it. God had provided it just where it would be needed, and He guided her to it and gave her sight to behold it. All that she had to do was to take (when “the water was spent in the bottle” —every human resource had failed), what God's foreseeing grace had placed there for her salvation. A well represents to us the smitten Christ yielding the Holy Ghost: the ground is wounded by man, and in a noble revenge—like that “noble tree that is wounded when it gives the balm,” —pours forth to him the water of life and refreshment. Hence Moses was told to smite the rock (Ex. 17) at Massah and the water streamed forth: “that rock was Christ.”

At the well of Sychar, another poor sinful and hopeless woman is found sitting with sightless eyes—until those eyes are divinely opened—beside the true spiritual Spring, who could say “If thou knewest.....Who it is thou would have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water.” She would have drawn water out of the well of salvation, the true well, to which Israel in the coming day shall sing “Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: the princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it"! Passing through the valley of tears, they shall find in it a well.

A writer of some authority says that “you cannot get water from a well without first pouring some in.” Probably he means a pump, for just the reverse is true of the well: it returns water for wounding, it gives freely, because of its noble nature. There is an ancient saying, “You are thinking of Parmenio, I of Alexander,” referring to an utterance of that king's in giving a munificent award: that is, you are thinking of what Parmenio deserves, but I am thinking of what is befitting the dignity and bounty of Alexander to bestow. If we think of our deserts, then our claims are small indeed, but if we think of the affluence and bounty of the Giver, our expectations are enlarged to apprehend infinite and eternal endowments “without money and without price.” (Concluded from p 320)

Chapter 166

Scripture Imagery: 18. Sign of the Covenant, Lot's Wife, Sojourning, Well Strifes, Well Stopping

It may be observed how often the well, though so peaceful and beneficent in itself, is the occasion of bitter contention—as in Gen. 21, 26 &c.: in the sense Christ says, “I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Yet whilst all are contending around with clamorous party-shibboleths, each claiming a monopoly in the source of life, the well heeds not the clash of words or steel, but continues ever its gracious work of giving forth the living water. It yields allegiance to none of the contending factions, but yields blessings for them all. “It gives not to a party what was meant for mankind;" nor will it ever be possible for any party, though it be as large and imposing as that which Gregory the Great founded, to establish a monopoly of Christ.

“Isaac's servants digged in a valley and found there a well of springing (Hebrews living) water." It is in the low places that the living water is found. “And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The well is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek [conflict]. They digged another well and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah [hatred].” The Philistines had been stopping the wells (ver. 15) and had filled them with earth, but Isaac had re-digged them (ver. 18) and “he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.” So there were afterward “Philistines” who sought to destroy Christ, and for a time apparently succeeded in checking the streams of blessing. But Isaac (Christ in resurrection) unstops the fountains of grace; and he calls them by the same names; that is, Christ, in resurrection, carries on His accustomed work of mercy according to the same essential principles as from the beginning.

But, even after that, the pilgrim's journey is a progress of conflict. If the enemy cannot destroy the well, he will seek to deprive the pilgrim of it; and if Satan's power could not, even by death, cut off the source of spiritual life, he will seek to occupy the ground himself and thus deprive us of Christ; and this not once or twice but at every stage of the journey. So the pilgrimage is often marked by “conflict” and “hatred;” but, nevertheless, the pilgrim at last reaches Rehoboth where there is “room.” This is like Bunyan's land of Beulah, for “he went up from thence to Beersheba” (the well of the oath), where God's benediction rests on him. “And he builded an altar there and...digged a well.”

How fit that these two beautiful types of what our Lord Jesus Christ is—to God and to man—should rest together, side by side, at the close of the pilgrim's journey! As in the wilderness, with Israel, the rock followed them with its everflowing springs of refreshment, so here we trace from stage to stage of the journey the ministry of the well—from the first point where, at Lahai-roi, the helpless and despairing sinner found that “Thou God seest me,” onward through hostility and hatred, until at last the border of Canaan is reached, and, at Beer-sheba, by the side of the well of “the oath,” the journey is ended; the altar is erected by the side of the last and permanent well—the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

It is remarkable that it was God who gave the name Isaac ("laughter") to the son of the promise. We are apt to think that gloom and austerity are the characteristics of devotedness, but Abraham laughed in God's presence, and so far from being rebuked for it, his laughter, being an expression of faith, is approved in the naming of his son. The laughter of Sarah is the amused expression of unbelief, and she is sharply rebuked. Though the Oriental peoples are habitually grave, there is a great deal about laughter in the Bible, and mostly it expresses these two notions of happiness and contempt. “Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh” are the comforting words addressed to His suffering disciples. But very different in meaning is the expression, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

In Rom. 4 Paul draws especial attention to the fact that righteousness was imputed to Abraham before he received the ordinance of circumcision. This is the great principle of Scripture that ordinances follow and are, based upon justification, and not that they in any way lead to it—which would be to reverse God's order. Both the justification and the promise precede circumcision, but this is remarkable—that an ampler revelation of God immediately follows it. To be an object of mercy in forgiveness or of grace in decree, Abraham did not need to be (previously) circumcised; but to commune with God as with a “friend,” to be entrusted with the divine counsels, to make priestly intercession for others, it was necessary that he should be. Even in Old Testament times this rite was understood to be simply a type of the cutting-off and repudiation of the “flesh'—the carnal nature. It took place on the eighth day, accompanied by naming or re-naming, signifying a new creation. In this, as in all else dispensationally, the believer is “complete in” Christ, “in whom also ye are circumcised.....in putting off the body of the flesh.” But there is a certain application of its great principle—if condemning and repudiating the “flesh” be rather a consequence than a cause of justification, yet it has its important place, and must precede anything like an intimacy and intercommunion with the Divine mind. Judicial dealing precedes experience.

A difference is drawn between the concision and the circumcision; that is, between the observers of the mere outward ordinance and those who apprehend the spiritual meaning which it represents. And this is connected with the exhortation to “beware of dogs:" the characteristic of dogs is that they return to what they had previously rejected—in one word, apostasy. The writer proceeds, “For we are the circumcision, which worship in the Spirit of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.....If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.” He had all natural advantages, but repudiates them, and “counts them but loss that he may win Christ.” On one occasion, in Parliament, the Speaker had to rise to put the Question as to whether he himself had or had not been corrupt, and being obliged to confess that the “Ayes” had it, he had deliberately and formally to pronounce his own condemnation and abasement. It is this passing of judgment— “this sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead” that, though it be painful, is the means of bringing us into greater and richer endowments.

Consequent on all this comes the very important and characteristic word “Sojourn” =so-jor-ning, sojourner. It is day-staying, in contrast to “dwelling” which is a permanent thing. Throughout both Testaments the two words occur with frequency, carrying important principles. Thus Peter entreats the believers as sojourners (παρο■κους) and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts, and “to pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” They are to be merely travelers here in this world and not to make it their home or dwelling place. On the other hand these pilgrims dwell in God and His

word “dwells” in them, and His Spirit “dwells” in them. In the collective sense, and as individuals, God Himself “dwells” in them, and it is desired for them that Christ may “dwell” in their hearts by faith. Finally they themselves shall “dwell” in the house of the Lord forever.

We should not omit to “remember Lot's wife” as one who had great privileges in being in near relationship to a man who was saved and justified; and as one who had been divinely favored and warned, because of that relationship; who for a time had taken the warning and determined to leave the guilty city; yet who, notwithstanding all this, perished. In Lot we see how near a man can be to damnation and yet be saved: in his wife we see how near one may be to salvation and yet be lost.

Chapter 167

Scripture Imagery: 19. Death and Resurrection of Isaac Character

Whilst, in regard to his nativity and heritage, Isaac represents the children of the covenant of grace, yet in his character and history be is a type of Christ in that aspect comprehended in the words “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;” and also in some of the results flowing there from in resurrection. Isaac seems characterized by a quietness, yieldingness, and submission of life, which typifies the Lamb of God—the meekness, patience, and suffering of our Lord; just as David on the other hand, signifies a leonine and warlike set of features. Both are, of course, consistent; and the character of Christ is so large that it comprehends all, and much more than all that is set forth by these, and so many other varied types.

Now it is to be expected that the Isaac-character would meet, in this world, with a great deal of contempt; and so we find that that is its running accompaniment. The very promise of his birth excites a contemptuous laughter in her who was to be his mother: when he is an unconscious child he is mocked at and “persecuted” by “the flesh” (Ishmael): in fact the meaning of his name seemed to indicate not only the laughter of happiness, on the side of faith; but ever the laughter of contempt on the side of unbelief. In his closing days his own wife and son conspire to befool him: and, to the end, make him a laughing stock.

The leading characteristics, then, are submission and meditation—a placid contemplative life. There was a “submission unto death” and following there from were the two most important actions of unstopping the wells, and, in the close of his earthly life, the act of benediction. So Christ, having passed through death, in a voluntary submission, unstops the sources of divine grace in resurrection, and then departs out of the world in the act of blessing His disciples. Subordinate to these are: (1) God insists on attaching the covenant to Isaac; (2) Ishmael (or any one else) should “not be heir” with him; (3) the death of his mother, and the calling of his bride; (4) his father gives him all that he had; (5) the especial blessing of God rests on Isaac; (6) he intercedes for his wife (church). These are all typical features of more or less interest, but the great course of his life is necessarily unheroic and obscure; a “life exempt from public haunt,” finding “tongues in trees, books in the running brooks.”

Seneca said, “He who has never had a calamity befall him, is unacquainted with true happiness.” There seem to have been none of the eminent servants of God, of whom we know much, who have not been thus qualified for happiness by disaster. A heavy cloud lowers over Abraham and his son in Gen. 22 They, in common with millions of the race, must reach light through darkness, and obtain blessing through sorrow. “The good are better made by ill, As odors crushed are sweeter still."

“Every one can master a grief but he that has it.” It is remarkable how we can philosophize about the necessity for resignation, and the value of trials—in the cases of others; we are not generally so ready to exercise this resignation and recognize this value if our own nests are threatened. “I never knew any man in my life who could not bear another's misfortunes perfectly like a Christian." Nevertheless some time or another sorrow knocks—loudly or gently—at everyone's door: good will

it be if we can rise to meet it with the placid dignity and strength that characterizes both Abraham and his son. It is important to remember that Isaac was at this time a young man and Abraham a very aged one; and unless Isaac were willing to be bound and slain, the thing would have been impossible. This is the pre-eminent feature wherein he was a type of Christ: he was not only an innocent victim, but a submissive one—obedient unto death.

There are some beautiful and suggestive shades too—he was an only son, yet his father, when love and wisdom seem to require it, spares him not; the son carries the wood to Moriah, as the great Antitype carried the cross to Calvary (on or near the same spot); the father and son “went on both of them together” and, so far as the few words uttered during the “grief that does not speak,” that “whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break,” indicate, they went on together to the place of suffering in the perfection of mutual love and confidence, and then (outwardly) their relations undergo a terrible change. “The third day” Isaac is seen in resurrection life “in a figure.”

I knew of a man who, during the progress of an eclipse, finding he could not look at it because the sun's light was too strong, took a piece of looking glass, and standing with his back to the sun, was able to see in the mirror all that took place. The corona of light from the eclipsed sun at Calvary is too blinding for us to have much perception of what took place there; and sometimes we can better apprehend it by seeing its reflection in a “glass darkly.” We see on Moriah the dim and feeble reflection of Calvary, a father and a beloved and only son deliberately preparing for the sacrifice of that son's life. But there the type breaks down, as every other type does; God mercifully interposes that Abraham's son may be spared, but He “spared not His own.”

Chapter 168

Scripture Imagery: 20. Isaac; the Question, the Sacred Names

"And they went both of them together," but the progress seems to have been a silent one from the form of expression following Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son." And now the son asks a question—the question of all time; the cosmic question, uttered and echoed by the myriad tongues of the groaning creation— "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb?"

Here are the implements of judgment, but where is the Victim; here is the need but where is the supply; here is the sinner, but where is the Savior; here is the worshipper, but where is the means of approach; here are the agencies of suffering, but where is the Sufferer? Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the Lamb? This was for four thousand years the inquiry—more or less mutely and imperfectly expressed—of every devout man; and there was but one answer that could be given, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb." Faith gave that answer with placid assurance, not doubting nor questioning—nor understanding; and faith received it with silent submission. The full answer and explanation came, however, at last; came when, at the end of a worn-out and dying dispensation, the aged Simeon held the celestial Babe in his arms and said, "Lord now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation;" came, when the stern and ascetic Baptist, looking upon Jesus as He walked, said, "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!"

So it is found that "in the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided "; and so the place is named JEHOVAH-JIREH. The name Jehovah was taken by God as showing the relationship which He would maintain by faith: it means I AM and whatever is needed can be, by faith, added to that "I am—." It is like a signed check which is left for the possessor to fill in the amount as he requires. Thus we find the word Jehovah linked with qualifying terms several times, and on each occasion the qualifying term grows out of the character of the circumstances and suits it. In the passage before us, there is a position of extreme need—Where is.....? and therefore we find JEHOVAH-JIREH, I am thy provider. In Ex. 17, the people of Israel, unorganized and undisciplined, was attacked by a powerless and ruthless foe; and they required a rallying point, a banner, JEHOVAH-NISSI. Again, in the beginning of the book of Judges, the position is one of continual turbulence: in the sixth chapter "the mighty man of valor" was threshing "a handful of wheat by the winepress "to hide it from the Midianites." When he sees the departing angel, he cries in an agony of fear, "Alas, O Lord God!" But the Lord said, "Peace fear not:" so the name of the altar is JEHOVAH-SHALOM =I am thy peace. Then in Jer. 23 the sin complained of is so great that the very pastors are seen to be wholly corrupt— "Woe be unto the pastors!" there is no hope when the rulers have thus become vile, until a heavenly light shines forth from the well-known and well-loved words JEHOVAH TSIDKENU.

Finally observe the beautiful suitability of the last of these qualifying terms. Ezekiel gives a very long description of the holy temple of the future; he describes the surroundings and furniture in the glorious words of his book. What is it but the house without the father, the home without the

husband, the palace without the king? He describes, indeed, many grandeurs of the millennial temple, spacious, solemn, rich, brilliant, superb in its splendor and imposing magnificence; but only to lead to this, the zenith and culmination of all its manifold glories JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, or, THE LORD IS THERE.

And, to the devout mind, unless the Lord be there, its beauty is ugliness and its glory is shame; and on the other hand the humblest position is, by the presence of the Lord, transformed and illumined as with the golden light of heaven. This is what has taken place at the first coming of Christ. He turned His back upon the earthly temple, and sat with His disciples in an “upper room.” When king David was betrayed, dishonored, and turned out of Jerusalem, those who were loyal to him and loved him went with him across Kidron and up the bleak mountainside. They preferred the king to the palace—wherever he was, was their palace; but there was no lack of time-servers then, as now, who remained behind, preferring the palace to the king, and were ready to welcome any usurper that would leave them their places. The time has been and will be again when the Lord would be found in temples of outward splendor, but not now; “Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.”

Observe that faith goes forward, not understanding how the provision will be made, but reckoning on God's aid— “so they went both of them together.” A negro being in a difficulty to define faith, said, “Now see dat wall; well, if I prays to go froo dat ar wall, if I has faif, it's my business to jump at de wall, an' it's de Lord's business to put me froo.” But if he did not go forward, nobody could expect him to get through. Real faith always gets what it expects, and more. Abraham said, “God shall provide a lamb;” but when the time came, he “lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold behind him a ram.”

That was a good reply given by the mother of one who, coming down in the morning, swung open the cupboard door and said, “There, I prayed for a loaf of bread to be in the cupboard; and there's none, of course, just what I expected.” The mother replied, “Then you got what you expected!” Unbelief also gets what it expects—nothing.

Chapter 169

Scripture Queries and Answers: Daniel 7:8

Q. Dear Sir, In Dan. 7:8, the prophet is occupied with the horn and his audacious pretensions, which cause the “Ancient of Days” —the everlasting God—to act judicially (ver. 9). Hence the thrones are set, and the books are opened. After this, in the same sequence of events, it would appear, and as the result of God’s judgment, the beast is slain, his body destroyed and given to the burning flame (Rev. 19:20), in contrast with the other beasts which had their dominion taken away, but their lives prolonged for a little time. Then in the night visions the prophet sees one like the “Son of man” coming to the Ancient of days and receiving a kingdom, the world-kingdom of Rev. 11:15, it is to be supposed.

Now the question in my mind is as to when this will take place. The books I have read on the subject seem to treat the matter vaguely. They all seem to conclude that the Lord Jesus first receives the kingdom and afterward comes to execute judgment on the nations. But is this the Scripture order of events? Psa. 110:1 says, “Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool.” And in Matt. 26:64 the Lord says “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds.” He does not leave His own throne then to come in the clouds; and therefore cannot have received His kingdom at that time. It is true in the counsels of God, the Lord Jesus is King already; but it seems to me from the word that He does not receive His kingdom until the nations are subdued and the eve of the millennium come. W. T. H.

A. Is not the querist also a little vague? No intelligent reader of the prophetic scriptures conceives that the Lord will “leave” His own throne but the Father's, when, receiving the kingdom, He comes to execute judgment, whether warlike (Rev. 19) or sessional (Matt. 25 or Rev. 20:4). Psa. 110:1 speaks of His sitting. at Jehovah's right hand meanwhile, till the moment comes for the judgment of the quick, quite passing by (as a yet unrevealed mystery) His descent to receive to Himself the heavenly saints. His advent in judgment will deal with His foes made His footstool. But scripture does not describe the nations as “subdued” before He comes in His kingdom) to judge, though God will have smitten the earth with increasing severity in His providence before then. During the millennium the Lord will reign over them all in peace and righteousness; after it will be the last outbreak, when Satan is loosed for a little, but they are destroyed. And then follow the dissolution of all things, the judgment of the dead—the wicked dead, and the new heavens and earth in the full and final sense, the eternal scene with its solemn background of everlasting punishment.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I beg to submit the following queries to you.

Q. 1. John 1:14, δ■ξαν ■ς μονογενο■ς παρ■ πατρ■ς. Is there anything in this passage which necessitates or even allows departure from the regular rendering of παρ■ with a genitive by “from, proceeding from” &c? Is “with” (which requires rather a dative, see 1:40, 17:5, twice, &c.) permissible here? It is so given in “A new Translation.” Every other instance in John's Gospel of παρ■ with a genitive seems to exclude any but the regular construction of “from” or “of.” Cf. xvi.

28, xvii. 6, 8, &c. Of course the interpretation will be affected by the translation.

Q. 2. John 1:18. ■ μοννογεν■ς υ■■ς, ■ ■ν κ.τ.λ. The reading here seems a difficult question, θεο■, υ■■ς το■ θεο■, and other variants having some support. But μον. θε■ς appears to be supported by some uncials, cursives, versions, and Fathers. It is adopted by Alford, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, and others. Griesbach marks υ■■ς as doubtful; Lachmann inserts θε■ς in margin. This being the case, is the evidence brought forward in favor of θε■ς really strong enough to shake confidence in the Received Text of this passage? Yours faithfully in Christ, W. J.

A. 1. All the older English Versions of John 1:14 favor “of” and avoid the usual rendering “from,” as does the new translation which prefers “with,” ordinarily answering to the dative. “On the part of” or shortly “of” seems best here.

A. 2. There is no doubt of the ancient, if not large, support, of θε■ς, instead of the ordinary reading υ■■ς, “Son.” Nevertheless Tregelles alone ventured to follow them as he does in other harsh readings, till the Cambridge Editors joined him. All others, notwithstanding ■ B Cpm L 33, two or three versions, and patristic allusions, prefer A and fourteen other uncials, all cursives but one, the ancient Vv. and Fathers. It is not according to the analogy of scripture to speak of “only-begotten God"; and “Sun” is the true correlate to “Father.” Alford stands with Griesbach, Lachmann, Scholz, Scrivener, Tischendorf, Wordsworth, as well as all the older critics.

Chapter 170

Scripture Query and Answer: 2 John

Q. The true application of 2 John is asked, more especially of verses 10, 11; and proof is wished that those refused for Newtonianism or for receiving its partisans fall under this scripture.

A. Is the raiser of the question aware that several grave and intelligent men printed and circulated their own full confession that the doctrine in question, which they had received and taught, did deny the Christ of God and must destroy the souls of all who abode under its poisonous influence? It is not in question therefore what opponents may have said. Abler persons than those who now palliate the error know far better what they held, and that it was as bad or worse than we said who resolutely rejected it and denounced its deadly nature. Can he be aware of what was taught about Christ? Was He really “exposed, for example, because of His relation to Adam to that sentence of death, that had been pronounced on the whole family of man”? Had He “the exercises of soul which His elect in their unconverted state ought to have?” Could the Spirit's anointing never have come on Him, unless foreordained and known as the Victim? Was it so that Christ was sealed of the Spirit? Had He to find His way to a point where God could meet Him, and that point, death on the cross under God's wrath? Is any one of these statements (a small sample of this awful heterodoxy) compatible with “the doctrine of Christ?”

He who questions this understands neither that doctrine nor its denial, and proves himself quite incompetent to speak, as being under the blinding power of the enemy. The doctrine overthrows Christ as come in the flesh and would make Him wholly unfit to be made sin for us. Now, not to speak of reproof or avoidance, putting out is far too mild for such an evil. Hence 2 John lays down in the broadest way, not this or that special form of anti-Christianism, but that if any bring not “this doctrine” [i.e., the true teaching of Christ's person], “receive him not into your house,” nor salute him. This is much more stringent than the measure prescribed for the incestuous man in 1 Cor. 5, and of course very much beyond withdrawing from the disorderly in 2 Thessalonians or the divisionists in Rom. 16. It is the most heinous sin, with which the Christian has to deal, and very precisely was the turning point of our great breach in 1849. For ver. 11 extends the partaking of evil deeds to all who have fellowship with those who do not bring this doctrine.

The reasoning that questions and undermines it is mere unbelief, in direct opposition to God's object in the church; which is bound to purge out all leaven (doctrinal, Gal. 5, as well as moral, 1 Cor. 5). It is in principle to build again Babylon on the ruins of the pillar and ground of the truth, and more worthy of a worldly man than of a soul that loves Christ and God's word. Yet I doubt not that real Christians have been and are beguiled into this indifference to Christ. But this makes it the more urgent that all who are true to His glory should prove their love to God's children, not by the faithless allowance of the worst evil in a person because he may be a Christian, but by loving God and keeping His commandments. And this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.

Chapter 171

The Secret of Life

Let me say, with what force does the Spirit of God in scripture teach us the secret of life. With what an intense sense would He impress on our souls, that we have lost it, but that Christ has it for us.

The flaming sword in the hand of the Cherubim, keeping every way the way of the tree of life, was the expression of this, as soon as ever sin was committed and death brought in. That light let Adam learn, and all of us through Adam, that this life which we have lost we never can regain.

The ordinances which forbad the eating of blood, set up as soon as ever the flesh of animals was given for food, and continued and repeated jealously in the land, were a witness of the same: a standing witness, which spoke to the heart and conscience of man from the days of Noah to the times of the gospel, and perhaps indeed to this present time. (Acts 15)

The gospel teaches the same great truth abundantly. None are left with any power to question it: man is dead, dead in trespasses and sins; and he is without strength and can never recover or revive himself.

In this intense emphatic way does scripture from beginning to end let man know that he has lost life, and lost it irrecoverably.

With equal intenseness is the other great secret unfolded—that life is in Christ, the Son of God, and in Him for us.

Peter was given to know this—that life was in Jesus, who was none less than the Son of God. And upon his confession (Matt. 16) the Lord goes on at once to reveal the further truth, that this life, which they owned to be in Him, was a victorious life that should be used for the church.

I stop not to give the beautiful proofs which the Lord's ministry affords of this eternal life, this victorious life, this life of the “quickening Spirit” being in Jesus all along His times here: but we see it gloriously displayed after His death. The empty sepulcher as seen in John 20:5-7 is the peculiar witness that a conqueror had been in the regions of death; and He was then, as we know, seen of the chosen witnesses for forty days after He had risen.

But, wanting to meditate a little over the great fact that this victorious life in Jesus the Son of God is for us, I turn to the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

There He that was dead is alive again. He did not die simply to exhibit His victory, to show that He was the stronger man, though in the hands of the strong one; but His death is declared to have been for us. It tells us, as Matt. 16 had pledged, that His victorious life the Son uses for the church. He sat down having purged our sins.

He by the grace of God tasted death for every one. He by death met him that was keeping us through fear all our lifetime subject to bondage. These are the interpretations of His death which we find in the first two chapters.

At the opening of the third we are commanded to consider Him who was faithful—faithful to Him that appointed Him then to undertake to give us life through death. We are to consider Him for the establishing of our faith and for the comfort of our souls, acquainting ourselves with this great secret, that the Son of the living God has been in conflict with death, and in the place of death, that He might bring back life to us who had lost it and lost it irrecoverably.

And as we are exhorted to consider Him, so are we further exhorted to hold Him fast and firm and steadfast, as this came chapter proceeds.

And what is the warning—what must be the warning—after such teaching as this? “Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” How simple, yet how needful, and yet how blessed! None less than the living God has been made ours in Christ Jesus; and therefore it is easy to say that our all depends on holding to Him. J. G. B.

Chapter 172

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9

Q. Have we the last of Daniel's seventy weeks (Dan. 9:27) defined by its events in other parts of the word? Does Matt. 24:4-14 speak of it in a general way? I have no doubt that verse 15 gives us the commencement of the last half of the week, going on to the coming of the Son of man; the setting up of the abomination of desolation (or, that maketh desolate) being the sign given for the last half-week.

This is clearly noted by our Lord's quotation from Dan. 12:11; also in Dan. 7:25, as “A time, times, and half a time.” In Rev. 11, 12 half-weeks are referred to, in the varying terms of “forty and two months;” of “twelve hundred and sixty days;” and of “time, times, and half a time.” Do these all refer to the last half? In Rev. 11:1, 2 the temple and altar are measured for protection; whilst the outer court is left out to be trodden down of the Gentiles. Do the measuring, and the leaving out to be trodden under foot, refer to the same period? The treading down evidently has reference to the last half of Daniel's last week. Does the measuring refer to the first half only, or to the whole week? for this figure seems to show the power and protection of God, in testimony for the first half-week, given in days. If at its termination the treading down commences, we should have the whole week: the first half closing when the witnesses were killed; at which period, the abomination being set up and the apostate Jews abandoned to idolatry, the treading down commences upon them, as God's judgment, this being the great tribulation spoken of by the Lord and by the prophets. If then the protection, shown by the measuring of the temple and altar to the worshippers therein, refers to the whole week; (as I should incline to think it does), the second half of the week is a protection, not by power given to the witnesses for killing their enemies, but by immediate flight from the scene of idolatry, and consequent desolation, to a place of safety prepared of God. This we have in Matt. 24:16-22; and in Rev. 12:6, where the woman flees into the wilderness, having a place prepared of God, for “a thousand, two hundred and three-score days;” so also in verse 14, “she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” This last half is again referred to in Rev. 13:5, as power given to the beast to “continue forty and two months.” This last is evidently the same as Dan. 7:25, and the last half of the week.

Once again I hope these questions are not out of place. Whilst looking at Rev. 12 and the acting's of the first beast in persecuting the saints for the time mentioned, along with his “blasphemies against God, and them that dwell in heaven” (ver. 6), I would ask, Is the image, made to the first beast by the dwellers upon earth at the suggestion of the second beast (ver. 14), the “abomination” spoken of in Dan. 12 and referred to by our Lord in Matt. 24:15, “standing in the Holy Place” as the object of worship instead of God? And is this what the apostle refers to in 2 Thess. 2:4, “sitting in the temple of God, sheaving himself that he is God.” G. R.

A. The readers are directed to the Bible Treasury (first edition i. 276, ii. 32, 63). If any one can furnish fresh help, it will be welcome. In the second edition the pages are i. 272-4, ii. 32, without the notice in 63.

Chapter 173

Smite the Rock

Exodus 17:6

The difficulties of scripture, when opened to simple faith, are amongst its chief beauties and its strongest confirmations. God has not written His word to perplex souls but to exercise their hearts in dependence on Him and confidence in Him. When a supposed discrepancy, as unbelief would suggest, turns out to be a two-fold lesson of distinct truths, how encouraging to the believer, who thus finds in the word, not a dead wall that forbids our passage, but a door that opens to faith with a beautiful prospect which it is for us to enjoy on both sides! Let me exemplify this in “the rock” of the second book of Moses compared with that of the fourth, which skepticism will have to be nothing but two different accounts of the same transaction, and of course equally fabulous. The believer knows that they are wholly distinct, one in the first year of Israel's departure from Egypt, the other in the last year of their sojourn in the wilderness; each of them absolutely true, both of them not only highly instructive but divinely prophetic, and therefore not written by Moses simply but as inspired of God, who had ever before Him the glory of Christ and the blessing of His children.

This deeper character is intimated by 1 Cor. 10:1-11. And as the Lord Jesus warrants our seeing in Ex. 16 Himself the true bread of God coming down from heaven, we may well look for a kindred type in chap. 17.

There was “no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink.” Such is unbelief, ever forgetful of grace, ever turning to second causes. God was not in the thoughts of Israel, who only chade Moses. It was tempting Jehovah, that is, doubting His presence in their midst, and this to care for them, after He had given the most magnificent and varied proofs of His power on their behalf; and this up to the last moment. Why not ask water of Him who had given them flesh at even, and filled them with bread in the morning? Well might Moses say, “Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?” (ver. 1, 2).

But unbelief is as dull to learn as ready to murmur, as swift to speak as slow to hear. “And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst” (ver. 3).

Not so Moses, who “cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me” (ver. 4).

The Lord will be inquired of: it is all-important for man; but He has His own ways. As His end is that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, so His beginning is goodness without limit where failure is impossible. But man needs to learn by his misery and need, ever prone to forget it through misuse of His very mercies. How blessed that God acts for His own glory!

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us or not?” (ver. 6, 7)

“Now the rock was the Christ.” Such is the comment of the New Testament in direct allusion to the fact before us. The truth is greater and more abiding than the wonder.

It is not only the bread of God in Him that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. More than this is wanted in view of the sinner's need and of God's glory. The Son of man must be lifted up. The power of evil must be crushed; God's character must be vindicated; sins can only be forgiven righteously, because borne and judged: all meet in the precious death of our Lord Jesus. The rod of judgment, “wherewith thou smotest the river,” must smite the rock. Christ suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. Love, infinite love, there was in Him thus given to die for us; but He was rejurted and put to shame; yea He was forsaken of God, whose face was hid from Him when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. It was not merely that unbelieving Jews esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. In very truth He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was as surely upon Him, as we are healed with His stripes. Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all; and the stroke was on Him for the transgression of His people. It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to put Him to grief, to make His soul an offering for sin. He bore iniquities; He poured out His soul unto death; He was numbered with transgressors; and He bore the sin of many.

If souls fail to see and bow to this most solemn and affecting testimony of God to the humiliation and suffering of His own Son, it is not for lack of plain words and forcible figures. The real difficulty is in the will of man, which refuses the overwhelming demonstration of its own badness and of God's goodness. For if this be the truth of the cross of Christ, what grace and long-suffering and holy love on God's part? what vanity and pride and malice, what hatred of the Father and the Son on man's? The very cross, whereby peace and deliverance comes, is the absolute condemnation of sin: were it in our person, it must be ruin irretrievable; in Christ it is our salvation.

But there is more here. “Smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.” It is the type of the Holy Ghost given. This gift consequent on Christ's work goes far beyond new birth. Now that redemption is effected, the Spirit is within the believer a fountain springing up into life everlasting, yea, a river flowing out in testimony of Jesus glorified. As having believed in Christ we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of God's glory.

Can any prefiguration be conceived clearer or more important? Not that Moses knew all this beforehand; but that all was naked and open before His eyes with whom we have to do now, as He inspired him then. May we be not faithless but believing.

Chapter 174

Speak Ye Unto the Rock

Numbers 20

The rebellion of Korah brought out the priesthood of Aaron more conspicuously than ever Ministry is not priesthood, though it has its own important place. But priesthood alone can and will carry the failing people of God through the wilderness into Canaan. “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.” “Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” On Christ first the sacrifice, next the priest rests, unto salvation. For as yet we are passing through the wilderness, and with difficulty are the righteous saved.

God is faithful who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape that we may be able to endure it. For we have not a high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help (Heb. 4)

The necessity for Aaron's intercession was made apparent when the plague set in among the murmuring Israelites, and Aaron had to run, into the midst, having put on incense and made an atonement for the people. Thus he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

But God did more. He decided forever between the princes of the people and the priest of His choice. For every one of the twelve heads of Israel laid up their rods before the Lord that He might choose beyond controversy who should intercede with Him. “And behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds.” All the other rods were dry and fruitless. On the morrow Aaron's rod alone burst forth into life, buds, blossoms, and fruit. The question was once for all determined: he only was chosen to draw near. Israel in themselves were as sapless and and sere as their dead rods. Man needs a living priest. Aaron's rod (and indeed Melchisedec yet more in this) but typifies Him in whom is the power of an endless life. Henceforth this is the rod, the living unchanging witness of divine power and suited blessing before God for the people. The priest bears the iniquity of the sanctuary. Ministry is subordinate to priesthood; as the tribe of Levi was joined to the priest (Num. 18). And grace for all provided, the ashes of the red heifer, that the defiled among the children of Israel might at no time want a purification from sin. For they were always exposed to uncleanness by the way, and they must then be sprinkled by the water of separation, in order to be purified. God would not lower His holiness by the allowance of defilement in His people; but He provides for the defiled the water of separation, that the unclean should be daily purified. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here the now generation is seen to be tried before the close, as the old had been at the beginning of Exodus. Now as then there was no water for the congregation; and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. “And the people chode with Moses and spake saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! Why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.” No wonder Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces at such base unbelief. But the glory of Jehovah appeared; and without a reproach Jehovah said to Moses, “Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth, its water and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give unto the congregation and their beasts drink” (ver. 8).

There was no misunderstanding; for “Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock.” From this point however all was wrong. For Moses, provoked by the exceeding ingratitude and revolt of the people. “spake unadvisedly with his lips.” “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Who asked this at his hands? Moses was overcome devil instead of overcoming evil with good. He who had so long lived the meekest of men utterly failed in this very respect at last. When God was magnifying His mercy and calling attention expressly to the truth that nothing—but priestly grace could bring an erring people through, Moses yielded to natural resentment and asserted his own authority: “so that it went ill with him for their sakes.” He had sunk so far to their level, instead of hiding himself, as faith would have done, behind the grace of God. And his deed was no better than his word at this critical moment. “Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?” “And Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod smote the rock twice” (ver. 11). Who, I say again, asked this at his hands? It was total departure from the commandment of the Lord, who had told him to take the rod,” not his rod but Aaron's, and “speak unto the rock,” and it should give forth water. With his rod Moses struck the rock twice. The witness, hitherto faithful, misrepresented God and must die for his error. The rod of judgment misused brought death to himself, the rod of grace prevailed for the people. For he had brought out the rod, the virtue of which alone was adequate for so failing a people.

In Ex. 17 it was according to God that Moses should strike the rock with his rod. There Moses alone appears. From the smitten rock water must dome out. Jesus came by water and blood. Humiliation unto death must be the portion of Christ, if the people of God were to receive the Spirit. There must be a foundation of righteousness and there is. The Son of man must be lifted up.

But now, for the journeying of the people through the wilderness, for passing into Canaan, grace alone avails, the grace of an ever living priest. Wounded and resentful feeling could avail nothing. “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” “Hear now ye rebels” might be true and even just, if it were a question of man; but was it God's word for that moment? Was He acting in grace or in judgment? And if it were added “must we fetch you water out of this rock,” was God before their eyes? Was it not self wounded by the ingratitude of man?

Wondrous to say the servant's error hindered not the grace of God. “For the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their beasts also.”

“But Jehovah spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord and He was sanctified in them.” Moses and Aaron sanctified Him not, but gave up grace for the vindication of their injured authority. Had this been God's feeling, they had fetched no water out of the rock. Jehovah was sanctified; but it was in maintaining His own word, His own grace, notwithstanding the failure of Moses and Aaron: a failure which brought immediate reproof on themselves, and the sharp chastening of dying outside the land, the land of Canaan, whither grace was conducting the people.

Chapter 175

The Spirit of God: Part 1

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” John 1:29-33.

Two works of our Lord Jesus are referred to here—what may be called His great earthly work, and His great heavenly work. On earth His work is—and what can be so great?—to take away the sin of the world; not only the sins of us who believe, but the sin of the world.

Did you ever, by the way, know one that quoted the phrase correctly? Have you ever seen it employed aright in any liturgy that ever was framed? I do not recollect it so much as even once, although familiar with rather many of such compilations. Evidently the truth intended is not before hearts, nor even understood, but confounded with something different; and hence men cite the words falsely. This shows the all-importance for the truth of cleaving to the only unerring standard, the written word of God. Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; but the Holy Ghost in this connection carefully abstains from saying “sins.” It is constantly assumed, when persons read the passage, that Christ has taken away the “sins” of the world. Now this would be another thing altogether, and confound the text with 1 Peter 2:24.

When John the Baptist gave his testimony, in pointing Him out to his disciples, saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” he did not mean that He was then effecting it, nor yet that, when He died on the cross, the sin of the world would as yet come to an end. Then and there no doubt He laid the basis for taking it away. The only work which could ever take away the sin of the world was the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God. Yet the sin of the world is not yet gone. If sin were taken away out of the world, no wickedness could be known or exist any where longer. There would not be an atom of evil left.

When, then, will the sin that the Lamb died to take away from the world, be clean and forever banished from it? In the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. It will not vanish away till then. As believers, your sins are undoubtedly forgiven, but this is another thing. Your sins are now blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus if you believe on Him, “whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us” (Hebrews 10:15-17). Hence we read: “You now hath he reconciled” (Col. 1:21); but He has not yet reconciled “all things” (20). He has shed His blood for the purpose, and that blood is beyond doubt a perfectly efficacious sacrifice, whereby all things are surely to be reconciled to God; but they are not reconciled till He comes again. There is still suffering, sorrow, and death; there is corruption and violence, unblushing idolatry, and heartless infidelity; there is still every kind of human iniquity and rebellion against God going on in the world as much as ever. Yet the work which, as a righteous ground before God, will remove all this evil

out of the world, is done; and God has accepted it but not yet applied it to the world, though He is so doing to believers. When the Lord takes the world-kingdom, it will be richly applied and for a long while, but not in absolute and everlasting fullness, till “the new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Then there will be left remaining no more sin nor effect of sin in the world. It will be completely gone. Then will it be proved how true it is that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

I am aware that people lay some stress upon the fact that John said, “which taketh away,” as if it were then going on; but this is a very ignorant way of using Scripture. For instance, one goes into a druggist's shop and gets there a bottle of laudanum labeled “Poison.” This does not mean that the poison is working now. If the druggist says it is laudanum which kills a man, he does not mean that it is then doing its work, but simply that, when it is applied to a man, it will kill him. People confound what is called the absolute or ethical present with the actual present. One is sorry to be obliged to use high-sounding words about this matter; but it is difficult to convey what is wanted in simpler language, and it is important that it should be conveyed accurately. Even learned and devoted men—and you know very well that I do not wish at all to question their ability—have sadly mistaken in this matter.

But a man may be a great scholar, and not wise in Scripture. Not a few of the greatest scholars have been rather heterodox. Great learning does not necessarily give even good sense. Further, a man may have both learning and good sense, and yet not be spiritual. If you had ever such ability and attainments, you would still require the teaching of the Spirit. Assuredly this is what one constantly finds, if much used to commentaries and writings upon the Scripture, as some Christians have been in their time. You would find it dull work to pore over their discussions, if you had reason to examine the folios and quartos that have passed through the press; you would prove how very little Biblical learning has to do with the real intelligence of the word of God. Learned as many of the writers of these commentaries were—and some of them were also able men indeed—yet somehow or other, when they took up the Scriptures, they failed to apply Christ as the one key to unlock all. They rarely seem to speak out of the possession of the truth; and this is the only way to understand the Bible. You can never understand it unless you have Christ and Christ's work, and its present result in power for the soul, clearly before you, in order out of this to interpret the word of God, which then to a large extent becomes an explanation in God's own language of what you have already got. You have already life in the Son of God if you are a believer; you have by His blood the forgiveness of your sins; you have by faith entered the family of God as His children, and have been sealed by the Spirit till the day of redemption.

Let me bring the matter home to you. I had great difficulty in finding a few verses of a Paraphrase which we might sing to-night in a certain connection with my subject. Be assured that I do not wish to find fault—the very reverse. But then I could not agree to sing what was not true. I should have liked to have found something scriptural to celebrate about the Spirit; but I could not. I found a prayer to seal us by His Spirit. But how could one sing that, any more than, when I had my coat upon my back, I could ask a man to put it there? If you are sealed, it is a fact, and it is a fact that abides. It is not an uncertainty. It is not something that requires to be repeated. There is no such thing as being again sealed by the Spirit. It is not a partial blessing, or constantly in need of renewal, just as you have to take food every few hours. This is not the case with the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is a privilege once given which continues, however important it is that we should not

grieve Him but be dependent on His action and be filled with Him. Clearly then he who wrote the Paraphrase referred to was not aware of this; and the consequence is that he was in no little uncertainty when he came to the Spirit's operations. I see in the 60th Paraphrase, and no doubt it is the same all through—

“Oh may Thy Spirit seal our souls.”

I could not sing this, nor could I ask you to sing it; because, if I believe the Scriptures, He has sealed my soul, and He has sealed yours if you are now children of God in the liberty of Christ. If you are not in liberty, you need to be sealed. It is the sealing of the Spirit that brings not life but liberty into the soul. You recollect the apostle's words— “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Now, in a previous verse of the same chapter he says “The letter killeth” (referring to the law), “but the spirit giveth life.” Thus, if one take up the Old Testament and abide in the mere letter, no spiritual blessing is gained. If one take, for instance, the various offerings and merely think of a Jew bringing his bullock or sheep, or perhaps a pair of birds, to the altar, what is there in this to quicken the soul? Nothing. The consequence then was that the Jews who simply brought their birds or beasts to the altar lived and died Jews, and never went to heaven at all. But any one of us drawing from these symbols that there is Another who must settle his case with God, that there was to be an unblemished One to take up the cause of the sinner atoningly, and that this sacrifice is none other than Christ's, passes at once from dead offerings to the Lord made sin on the cross. There is the spirit that quickens.

When a man is quickened, he does not always receive liberty. I have known a soul (who, I cannot doubt, being quickened, has gone for thirty or forty years without being sealed at all) to remain still in great bondage of spirit, a lady who passes too much of her time in capricious judgments, too harsh here, too light there; the end of all which is that she finds the word a two-edged sword, which, while it has an edge against other people, has also one against herself. Constantly doubting whether such or such a person is saved, she goes from one thing or person to-another, but always comes back to herself, and never yet has seen for her own soul that God rolled everything upon Christ, never yet for her own need been able to rest on Him as the Lamb. The consequence is that she is not what Scripture calls “saved.” It is not that she doubts He is the Son of God, but she constantly hesitates about her own interest in Him when it comes to the point. She is like a person who would say, “I am not content with the High Priest confessing the sins of the people. If I could only hear Him mentioning my name and my sins, it would give me true comfort; but I only hear about sins in general, which I cannot believe to be a confession for me.” This is not the faith of the gospel really. The word of God's good news says, “Whosoever;” for He know a great deal better than to indulge souls in such delusions.

Supposing for a moment, that there was such a thing as naming anybody, do you not know that there may be hundreds of the same name? Thus a person would on this principle be always in doubt whether his own sins were really confessed; so that, if one were to be indulged in a desire so selfish, neither he nor others could ever get solid peace at all. Graciously therefore does God say “Whosoever.” Surely any of you that have had questions about your soul are covered by the words “whosoever believeth.” Again, “If any man thirst.” Just see the blessed ways God has taken to open the door and to bring sinners in. He loves to save. It is the delight of God to reconcile to Himself. It is glory to the name of Jesus when a poor sinner comes and casts himself upon His

precious blood. He is the Lamb of God, and the very fact that He is so is the best possible ground for a soul to come now, no matter who he may be or what he may have done.

It is not true that Christ has taken away—still less that He was then taking away—the sins of the world; for if this were done, not a single soul would be sent to hell. Everybody would be saved if all the sins were taken away. If faith were still necessary in order to apply it, the believer would be comparatively uncertain, or in danger of self-righteousness; for all his difference from a lost soul must then lie in what is personal: God's grace would be the same absolutely for all. But this contradicts Scripture.

The consequence of this mistake is the more serious, because it leads to other and if possible worse mistakes. In the Roman Mass Book they say “The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Christ, according to their doctrine, has taken away everybody's sins; but nobody gets to heaven unless, besides that, he is faithful to the church, and does what the priest tells him—unless he obeys not only the commands of God, but also those of the church, availing himself duly of the seven Sacraments. And so there is a hope that, being thus found faithful to the church, he may get to heaven at last. Is it not a very poor kind of salvation? Is it God's?

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 176

The Spirit of God: Part 2

It is God alone that can save; none but a divine person. The Church needs to be saved, and therefore cannot save. The whole notion is radically false, and while opening the door to the delusion that everybody's sins are gone, it brings everybody's sins upon them after all, because if after being baptized they sin again, Christ does no good to them, and the whole work has to be done over again. Such is the doctrine of the Council of Trent, yea of East as well as West. Indeed it has so affected other bodies that there is scarcely any Protestant body in Christendom that has not been more or less injured by this dangerous departure from the word of God. This shows the importance of even one letter. The “sin” of the world is right— “sins” would not be true. It is never said that our sins are gone except to the believer. Where it is written that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, it is the believer's sins that are referred to. There is no such thing as His bearing the sins of every person in the world; but if you come out of the world, if you confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, you find your sins are gone. Christ has done the work. God gives you to know by His word and Spirit that you are forgiven. This is the doctrine of scripture, so that there is the fullest comfort—without reserve, and without hesitation—in virtue of the mighty work of the Lord Jesus. But the full effect of His earthly work will only be when every trace of sin is gone in the eternal scene of righteousness and glory.

We come now to His heavenly work. What can it be? Many are not aware that Christ has done a great heavenly work. I do not speak of His priesthood, nor even of His advocacy before the Father. He is a Priest to give us sympathy in our suffering, and He is an Advocate to give us restoration when we have sinned. For alas! you know believers may sin, and do sin; and the Lord Jesus is Advocate with the Father; as John says— “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

But there is another blessed work that John refers to here in the verses we have read, and what is that? “The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” Yet the Lord Jesus never baptized with the Holy Ghost till He went to heaven. It is from heaven that He does so, and this is clearly brought before us in the Acts of the Apostles, to which you can now refer. You may see it for yourselves clearly promised for the last time in chapter 1:4, 5, “And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Do not suppose that this was confined to the apostles, or to those who were Christ's immediate disciples. The apostles were prominently before His mind, but not exclusively.

Accordingly in the next chapter we find that, when they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, which filled all the house. Just as the wind did then fill the house, so the Holy Ghost came to constitute them God's house. Cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them. There was the personal as well as the general presence of the Spirit of God. He did not appear like a dove, but like cloven tongues of fire.

He came like a dove on the Lord Jesus; for the Lord Jesus had no sin: not a taint of evil was in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a perfect man, not even knowing sin; and, that this might be, He was conceived of the Holy Ghost. If He had been born in a natural way, He must have had sin; but the power of the Highest counteracted this, so that He should be born of woman, yet, “A body hast Thou prepared Me” without sin. This wonderful truth was set forth in the peace offering, where the flour was mingled with oil, without leaven, which represents the corruption of our nature. But there was no leaven in the meat-offering. Oil, the constant symbol of the Holy Ghost, was mingled with the flour to make the cake, and, when the cake was made, oil was poured upon it. This was admirably fulfilled in our Lord Jesus. First, the Holy Ghost came upon the virgin, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and next, when He was about thirty years of age, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him without blood, because He was without sin. And God the Holy Ghost comes down on us.

But see how strikingly our case resembles, and yet is differentiated from, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are of a sinful nature, but born of the Spirit. There is by the Word of God the action of the Holy Ghost: we are born of water and of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost does not come on us until we rest on Christ's redemption. The problem was, How could the Holy Ghost come and dwell in what was unclean? Now the efficacy of the blood of Christ is to make us perfectly clean in the sight of God. This is what redemption does. The precious blood of Christ “cleanseth us,” it is said in Scripture, “from all sin.” Do you believe it? Do you really bow to what God declares, that “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin?” We see the reason why the Holy Ghost was never before given to a sinful man. I do not say He never operated on such; on the contrary He did so in every believer since Abel. But He never was given, never sealed a believer, till the blood of Christ left him without spot or stain. There is the Spirit of God quickening the soul when a man is a sinner; and there is the Spirit of God now sealing him, when he, a believer, rests on the work of Christ. So our Lord Jesus told the disciples that they were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. They were already quickened, being for years true believers, but they were not yet baptized in the Holy Ghost. But now He goes up to heaven to send down the Holy Ghost; and this is most distinctly shown in the second chapter of Acts, ver. 32, 33, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

The Holy Ghost was given to Christ twice—for Himself while He was upon the earth, for us when He went to heaven: and this is the reason why the Holy Ghost never leaves the church, because He is given to the church in virtue of Christ, and not because of our good behavior. The Holy Ghost is given to Him, and it is through Him and because of Him that the Holy Ghost always abides. If the Holy Ghost were to leave the church, it would be as good as saying that Christ was no longer worthy of the Holy Ghost abiding. God could not say so; and this is what makes the Holy Ghost so precious. And so the Lord told them in the fourteenth chapter of John, “He shall abide with you forever” (16).

To be sure there are people who do not believe this. I do not know whether it is the case now, but some forty years ago it used to be a regular practice for known evangelical men to put forth a little document every year calling for united prayer that the Holy Spirit should be shed forth again on the church—that we should have a fresh effusion of the Spirit of God. Is not this a very serious thing?

Suppose that people were to begin to pray at the end of the year that Christ should die again! Everybody would look aghast, thinking it a denial of the faith. But is it less really preposterous, is it not equally unbelieving, to pray for the Holy Ghost to be given again? He is shed, and being shed, He abides forever.

Do you tell me, that the Spirit is to be shed again in this world's history? I grant it; but this will be for Israel, and for the Gentiles when Israel believes, as it is beautifully shown in the High Priest going into the sanctuary and coming out. Perhaps you recollect that the bells which were on the vestments of the High Priest gave forth a sound when he went into the most holy place, and when he came out. The bells ringing when he went in would answer to the gift of the Spirit of God to us, the church, when our Lord went up on high; and the bells ringing when he came out, to the fresh testimony of the Holy Spirit when Israel shall be brought in. But there is no such doctrine as the Holy Ghost shed repeatedly for the church. When He was sent down, He was given to abide with us forever. I am aware of all the darkness in the middle ages—of the revived superstition and the fresh and abounding rationalism in the present age; nevertheless, the Holy Ghost abides. Yet I do say that the Holy Ghost abides, because Christ said it, after He obtained eternal redemption, as it was because of this that He went up into heaven itself. It was not a temporary redemption, like that of the Jews, who were taken out of Egypt, but might be carried off to Babylon. It is otherwise with the church of God. The Lord Jesus brought in eternal redemption, and the consequence is that the Holy Ghost comes down and abides forever.

So far our Lord's case differs, on Whom the Spirit came down like a dove, because there was a perfect absence of evil; no question of the smallest sin or taint, or anything to indicate corruption in our Lord. This could not be said about us, and therefore did the Holy Ghost descend in the form which He assumed for the disciples, “like as of fire.” Fire always marks the judgment of God. The Holy Ghost could not have come upon the disciples if there had not been God's judgment dealing with their sin in the work of Christ. But there was more than this—there appeared cloven tongues, because it was to be a question of testimony. Not so in Christ's case; for He is the One testified of. We are called to be witnesses of Him. We know but are not the truth; He only and emphatically is the truth to be witnessed to. Cloven tongues formed a beautiful emblem of the power of the Holy Ghost put forth in making believers witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. Cloven tongues—no longer one language as of Canaan, but more, every tongue of every nation under heaven—point not to Jew only but to Gentile, so that the expressiveness of the symbol seems unmistakable.

Such then is the fact: let us now enter a little into the doctrine. Notice, first, that the Spirit of God, and we are speaking of the gift of the Spirit, is never mentioned until a man has already believed. Always bear this in mind. The new birth makes a man a believer; the gift of the Spirit comes when he is a believer. The gift of the Spirit brings him into liberty—not into life. The truth of Christ brings him life, and the Spirit of God takes His part in quickening; but the Holy Ghost is given to him already a believer; and this seals him in perfect liberty. For this reason you will observe that in the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans we have the sinner looking to Christ and His blood, and not one word about the Holy Ghost yet, because the idea is to present Christ, not to distract him with what works within him. The Spirit does work in order that he may look to the true object, but the Holy Ghost is never an object of faith, which Christ is. When a man has received the gospel, when he rests upon the blood of Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given. This is the first mention of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Romans. We

come to no less than the fifth chapter before there is any allusion to the working of the Holy Ghost in the believer; and then we hear of the love of God shed abroad in the believer's heart by the Holy Ghost.

“Perfect love casteth out fear.” But it is God's. Whenever we turn upon our own love, or take any satisfaction from it, it is a poor sign of state or faith. Real love always has a high ideal of the object that is loved, but never of itself. God's love in Jesus is a perfect love, and casteth out fear. There is no perfect love except the love of God in our case, not ours to God, but His to us. His is perfect love, and only so; and this alone casts out fear. I know that He loves me so perfectly that He not only gave His Son to come down and bear my sins on the cross, but that I should be as He is in heaven. There are two ways in which Christ shows perfect love: first, by coming down to bear all my sins and stripes; secondly, by going up to heaven to give me His glory. Meanwhile He sheds on me the Spirit, that God may dwell in me and I in God. Such is the perfect love of God. Christ was carrying out God's mind, God's affections, God's great purposes; and all this is exactly what the Holy Ghost bears witness to. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Passing over some most instructive chapters in the Epistle to the Romans we come to the eighth, where we are told— “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” We need not read the next clause, because it ought not to be there; and one may safely venture to predict that, when the new version of the Scriptures comes out, none will find it there. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” This is the first reason assigned why there is no condemnation—sin and death are no longer a law to the believer, because the Spirit of life in Christ risen has liberated him He has a new life; and the Holy Ghost has been given to him. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The allusion is to what the Lord did on the day that He rose from the dead. He told Mary Magdalene to go and tell His disciples— “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” This was His message. He put the disciples, as far as could be, in precisely the same relationship with God as Himself He could give them (not Godhead, but) the place He had as the risen man before God. Up to that time He had to bear sin, and death in rejection and atonement were always before Him. Now everything evil was behind Him, and glory in heaven before Him. Now He says, this is your position as well as Mine “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” And that message brought the disciples together, “the doors being shut for fear of the Jews,” and the Lord entered the closed doors just as easily as if they had been open. You will notice that the first thing He did—after giving them the comforting announcement of peace, peace for them, and peace for others—was to breathe upon them. And what breath was that? His resurrection breath—life in resurrection power— “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It was the resurrection life of Christ breathed into the souls of the disciples. I do not say that it was a thing that could be felt physically, or seen, of course. Such is not the nature of the spiritual life. The wind may be a figure of it, but it is not a material thing palpable in an outward way. Yet it is a reality—a present reality—much more so than the old life, which itself is quite impalpable. The wisest who cry up the present time are no wiser on this point than the sages of former times. Yet life is not more momentous than wonderful; and bow solemn to think that, when

it leaves the body, all efforts to restore it fail! You may galvanize a dead body and make the limbs move, but electricity is not life. Even in natural life you come to a barrier that no science can penetrate—no microscope can discern, no tests can analyze; but there it is, an inexplicable secret to man—a thing that shows the finger of God, where all the discoveries of science only bring out more clearly the fact that man cannot solve its enigma.

If such is the case with natural life, how much more so is it with the spiritual—that life that comes from Christ and enjoys Him forever! With this law the Christian has to do, as the Jew with the ministry of death and condemnation—written on stones: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Death, of course, was the end of the first man. The resurrection of Christ is the believer's power of entrance into the new condition where there is no change, or sin whatever. You may tell me the Christian may sin, and quote passages from Scripture to prove that; but they do not mean that the new life has sinned. It is because a man has not kept the old life in order. The old man is like a wild beast, which you have to keep like a wild beast under lock and key. We are responsible to do so. Nothing can be more shameless than to hear a man who has broken out into sin say— “Oh, it was not I that sinned, it was the weakness of the flesh.” If you live in the Spirit, you are bound to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. It is unchristian-like for any man to excuse his wickedness by talking about the flesh. No doubt it is the fact; but he is bound to keep the flesh under, and there is power in the Holy Ghost given him to deal with the old man.

In Gal. 5:17, correctly translated, we read— “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.” Our version runs, “So that ye cannot do the things that ye would;” but this is quite wrong. What the word of God, properly rendered, says is good and true— “That ye do not the things that ye would.” The Holy Ghost is given to the believer, and the action of the Spirit is directly contrary to the flesh, as the flesh is contrary to the Spirit. “Lo, I come,” said Christ—who indeed was the only one that could say it unwaveringly— “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God;” but we are responsible, being set apart for the purpose—sanctified unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we are merely to obey and that the blood of Christ repairs our disobedience. The meaning is that we are sanctified to the same kind of obedience as Christ, whose blood gives us confidence that our sins are by grace forgiven.

The allusion in 1 Peter 1:2 is to what took place at Mount Sinai, when blood was sprinkled on the people, and they said, “All that the Lord hath said will we do.” But they did not. They were disobedient; and the blood witnessed that they must die the death because of their disobedience. We start with the precious blood of Christ, while at the same time we are called to obey as Christ did; and what comes in to meet our delinquencies is confession of our sins, or the washing of water by the word. This is the meaning of the washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord Jesus before He went to heaven. It was to show His own here the work He is gone to heaven to do for them. Peter at first refused to let his feet be washed, and then, when corrected asked that his whole body should be washed; but he was wrong in both respects. He did not know, if one be already washed with the washing of regeneration, that no more is wanted for the removal of subsequent faults than to have his feet washed. In other words the particular evil that may be contracted in walking through the world requires to be removed. “He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet.” If at first wholly washed, as every believer is, he needs only

partial cleansing, in other words the washing of his feet, when he subsequently does wrong. Peter did not lose the benefit of being born of water and the Spirit when he afterward sinned grievously. If not a true saint he would have gone and hanged himself, like Judas. Therefore the very thing the Lord prayed for was that his faith should not fail. Judas, in the despair of his heart went and perished miserably. Peter did not, although he committed a great sin, because the Lord prayed for him, and afterward indeed took particular notice of him— “Tell the disciples and Peter” —the only one mentioned, and why? Because he was the one that most needed it. How gracious is the Lord! How full of tender mercy! He is the spring, the unfailing giver of all grace. Once in Him all your sins are gone, and yourself brought nigh as alive to God. This is the true place of every believer. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 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; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

You observe two reasons are given why there is no condemnation. The first is, that Christ gives a life which God cannot condemn; whilst the second is, that God has already condemned (not merely the sins but) the sin that gave them birth. The whole of our evil is already condemned in the cross of Christ—the wondrous Christ of God. These are the two grounds why there is no condemnation. And the effect is that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Not in any Jew, but in every Christian; for every Christian loves God and loves his neighbor, and these are the two great moral aims of the law. How can a Christian not love God, who first loved him? And does not the Christian love his neighbor? Does he not go forth every day of his life to serve not only his neighbor and friend, but even his enemy? This is what the Christian is called to; and this is what every real Christian does, although not so fully as he ought, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Just so far as a Christian walks in the Spirit is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him. It is a remarkable fact that the people who were under the law never kept it, and that those who are not under the law are the only people that do keep it, and this because of the delivering power that God has brought in through Christ.

Let me here recall to your notice the constant danger of a soul that has been awakened, to mix up the work of the Spirit with that of Christ. It is always on the look out for fruits. As you are, you had better say nothing about fruits yet. If you seek to find fruits before you enter into peace with God, you never can find peace. No man ever found peace with God by looking within himself; and God never meant any to find peace save by turning to Christ. Do you not hear Him saying— “Having made peace by the blood of His cross?” This is not within but without you. It is something wrought for you by Christ, and Christ alone: and the quickening of the Spirit is not to furnish ground for peace within you, but to prove that you are nothing but a poor guilty sinner, thus forcing you out of yourself to rest on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tendency of the anxious soul is to look within, for confirmatory marks of the Spirit. But so long as he does not rest on the work of Christ, he never can have peace.

For saints there is another danger. When you have peace, beware of separating, as is too often done, the Spirit from Christ. Men say you need the Spirit of God to sanctify you. Rather you need the Spirit of God constantly to direct your eyes toward Christ. There are these two dangers then: one for a man who is just awakened; the other for him who has found peace with God. The saint

cannot go in safety unless he has the Spirit of God fixing the eyes of his heart on the Lord Jesus. This is the point the apostle refers to at the close of chap. 3 in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

But I would say a few words on a preceding verse. “Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” and I will show you how difficult it is—not in reality, but in appearance—either to understand the Scriptures, or to give them even a right outward form. People often think that if you have “spirit,” or any other word in a verse more than once, it must always bear the same meaning. Here this is not the case. “The Lord is that spirit.” How should “spirit” be printed? I answer unhesitatingly, with a small “s.” “Now the Lord is that spirit.” The “Spirit” would be downright heterodoxy. Who would tolerate such a notion as that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost? One can understand how in the “Shepherd of Hermas” (a most offensive little treatise, and really heretical, which in the second or third century used to be read in public worship) there occurs a confusion and worse between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost; but this no where is or can be in Scripture.

The fact is, that the meaning of the verse is connected with what was quoted before. The apostle was contrasting the old covenant with the new, and he says, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Christ, under the letter of the old, quickens; the letter of the old without Christ does not. “Now,” says he, “the Lord is the spirit,” i.e., of the old. The letter cannot quicken, but the spirit does. It is the Lord that is meant by the Passover, Red Sea, Manna, &c., as also by the burnt, meat, peace, and sin offerings; and so one might go through all the letter of the law. “The Lord is the spirit “; and this, is the reason why I should print “spirit” with a small letter, though it is not so in my book. It may be different in your Bibles. But if not, you must remember the copyists were not inspired, any more than the printers, translators, or critical editors. The question is the bearing of the truth of God; and I affirm that the doctrine which confounds the Lord Jesus with the Spirit is not true. Is it not impossible, therefore, to print “spirit” in that verse with a capital “S” consistently with truth? For this would identify the second person of the Trinity with the third which is wholly untrue.

But the moment you come to the next clause “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” you must have a capital “S,” because the Holy Ghost is meant. The Lord has gone on high, but the Holy Ghost is sent down below; and He it is who now seals the believer, bringing him into liberty in Christ. Thus what the apostle first lays down as a principle is that the spirit of the old forms of the law always pointed to the Lord Jesus. “The Lord is the spirit.” Then besides this, the Spirit of the Lord is now come down from heaven to anoint the believer, and seal him in virtue of redemption.

Not a few passages might be quoted bearing on the same point. I might go through almost the whole of the epistle with the same result, each having its own special bearing, and all perfectly harmonious; but this is scarce necessary.

What I want is to lay before your souls the truth of God as to this the great Christian privilege. Have you not only Christ for your life, but the consciousness that your body is the temple of God? I know there are many who would think this a most extraordinary thing to claim. Let me tell you that— “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ He is none of His;” he does not belong to the Lord as a Christian unless he be sealed. He may be quickened, born of God, and converted. But the proper power, the true distinctive mark, of a Christian is that he is sealed with the Spirit; and the sealing of the Spirit comes in answer to the redemption of Christ Jesus.

Wake up then, wake up, beloved children of God, to your great privileges! Those who are ignorant of the gospel may call you presumptuous. In truth you can never worship or serve God as you ought, if you do not enjoy your proper privileges. You need to do so in order to be at home with God, to gain confidence in His love, and glorify Him. The spring of all power to perform duty depends on the simplicity with which your soul enters into your relationship with Christ. Even in common life relationship affects as it should govern all our actions. The duty of a servant is quite different from that of a master; and a similar rule holds good in all our social relationships. There is a walk, and a worship too, belonging to the children of God, and to none else. You cannot mix men of the world with those that are of God without dishonoring Him. Indeed the effect of such a union is ruin practically to the souls of both; because, as the child of God cannot raise up the worldly to his own level, he must come down to the level more or less of the worldly man; and this is why in many of the liturgies they mingle both in an offensive alliance that suits neither, with language of a wholly inconsistent kind. A Christian is not getting forward with God. who tries to please both world and church; if he follows God's way, all will go well with him. We are members of the family of God-heirs of God with Jesus Christ. Even on earth the family life is the highest type of bliss for man. And God has a family, in whose wellbeing He takes special delight. Suppose a person were to go into a household, and, pretending himself a friend of the children, should put it into their heads that possibly the chief of the house was not their father, you would say, “What a villain he is, to try and spoil all the peace of that family!” And if this would be bad in your families, to play a like part is a great deal worse in God's family. It is as insulting to God as it is injurious to His children; and though people may do what they like with God for a while, the day is coming when they will have to own their folly and sin.

I beseech you, therefore, to be faithful to the Lord. Let me urge on you, in the name of the Lord Jesus to search and see whether these things are so. If you are not children of God, the door is open, the way is clear, the Savior is waiting. If you simply come as poor sinners, the Lord will in no wise cast you out. But come as sinners in the sense of your sheer need, in the confidence of His grace. Do not come as if there were a doubt that had to be cleared whether you could succeed or not; and the Savior will meet and serve you at once. When the Syro-Phoenician woman came, she spoke as a Jew. She cried, “Son of David.” What right had she to say “Son of David, have mercy on me”? No more right than a Frenchman has to repair to an English Consul and ask his assistance; let him go to the French Consul. The Son of David was for Jews. When the two blind men so appealed in Matt. 9, had they to wait for an answer of peace, when they confessed their faith? When two more at the end made the same call near Jericho, did the gracious One rebuke or reply in grace? The woman of Canaan was wrong—somewhat as worldly people when they say, “Our Father, who art in heaven;” for He is not their Father at all, but will judge them by the Lord Jesus. But if a person comes and says, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” will He then say them nay? The Lord would not at first answer the woman's prayer, because she went on mistaken ground. And when the disciples would have done with the case, ashamed of her crying after them, He had to correct their impatience with His maintenance of God's order: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then she said, “Lord, help me!” When she dropt to this, the Lord answered her, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.” The moment she hears it, the truth flashes on her soul that she was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a dog. She sinks to the lowest place, and says, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” She took the place of truth, and got the blessing of grace. The lack of

this keeps many souls from obtaining the blessing. They are unconsciously in a false position. They assume to be worshippers when they should not. If they confessed themselves poor sinners needing to be saved, they would find the Savior at once. If you can and do say, Abba, Father, be assured you have the Holy Ghost; and if not progressing in the Christian race, see and judge what hinders you, and if you are not grieving the Holy Ghost; search the word of God, and follow Christ! Amen.

Chapter 177

State of Soul and Mind of God

There are two things which should mark every saint of God; namely, experience flowing from having to do with God, and intelligence as to His mind, so far as He is pleased to reveal it. State of soul is especially connected with godly experience, without which there cannot be divine intelligence, so as to judge, walk, and worship aright, or profitably communicate God's mind to others.

Daniel, in the second chapter of his Book, is the blessed expression of what marked a saint of God, and that at a time of weakness and failure, when circumstances were by no means favorable. But under God they proved to be an occasion for the saint to enjoy communion with God, as well as to become the vessel to make known His mind as to the rise, course, and end of the world under given responsibility, together with what is beyond it in blessing on God's part.

After knowing God in grace, the most blessed thing, surely, must be to be allowed to have to do with Him about everything, both in the confidence of what He is, and in the exercise of that faith which trusts in Him at all times. The object doubtless God had, as to His creature Man, was, that he should implicitly trust and confide in the One who created and blessed him; hence his true and perfect happiness was in it.

Satan, the enemy of God and man, sought, and alas! succeeded in shaking man's confidence in God, giving him the thought that he should be independent, and would do better without than with God. Alas, the snare and success, with its fearful consequence! If man has failed to give God His worthy place of confidence and trust, grace has worked and does work, in order to recover and bring man as a believer back, to own and have to do with God. Saints more or less, throughout the Old Testament, shine in thus owning and honoring Him. Daniel as a saint was no stranger to God; his experience was not only that of one believing in God, but there were marks of the after life of faith together with the refusal and separation from what was a denial of it. When God gives faith, He gives, the exercises which are proper to it, bringing about the very circumstances, as both a test and a display of sufficiency to the soul possessing it.

Daniel manifested the state of soul he was in, at the moment of hearing the difficulty which he was not Then prepared to solve; but he knew God was acquainted with all that man was a stranger to, and troubled about, and his faith at once confided in Him. What holy and peaceful dignity, at a moment of universal trouble, with no human way out of it to be able to look away from everything and person, to the living God, with the assurance that He will interpose to display Himself, and honor those who put their trust in Him If faith is confident, it is never presumptuous; hence Daniel who owns and believes God, betakes himself to that which is exactly opposite to the spirit of independence, set up by the will of man at the first. Prayer is the happy expression of dependence, and is the healthy mark of a soul right with God, as well as walking with Him, and counting on Him. Daniel in his experience was no stranger to prayer, together with its positive value in the hour of need; so he invited others of like experience, and sought from God the needed mercy. How unspeakably blessed to be able to go to God and count upon Him; may it be written,

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Special circumstances of trial and pressure in which man had been totally helpless proved a ready occasion for faith to exercise its confidence in, and dependence upon, the living and known God; therefore special mercies were sought from the God of heaven, and in due time the suited and ready answer came.

The life of dependence has its special moments, as in this case, when, in the knowledge of having the ear and interest of the living God, the saint is assured, as the apostle John states, of having the petition desired of Him. Daniel in the habit of his soul was evidently no stranger to ever looking to God, answering in a way to the exhortation to the believer in a later day, “Pray without ceasing.” Truly there never can be a moment when the saint is not dependent upon God; neither can there be a circumstance in, which the sufficiency of God will not show itself. What a refuge is the living God in the hour of trouble! How blessed when there is a state of soul, with the exercise of faith to appropriate it, as well as the resources in the only One equal to every circumstance, and who loves to communicate His mind so as to exalt Himself, and honor the faith confiding in Him.

Daniel proved that prayerful dependent waiting upon God was the attitude suited to receive divine communications; for it was then the thing troubling the world, with its responsibility and course, which was given to the one who was not only outside the spirit and current of it, but had refused its associations and advantages, verifying that God knows those who honor Him. The receiving direct answers from God, as the fruit of seeking and waiting upon Him, leads to an experience of soul which can only find its level in turning to God in worship and thanksgiving. Daniel as a receiver and worshipper seemed in spirit and character with Eliezer in early times (Gen. 24), who gave an outlet to his prosperous way in worship and thanksgiving, or as the Elders around the throne in heaven (Rev. 4), who, having received crowns of gold, cast them before the throne in holy and happy worship.

When everything received from God returns to Him the glory and praise of it by those so favored, such are counted worthy to be entrusted with making God known to others with the blessing and teaching. Daniel, when going into the presence of the king to communicate the mind of God, carried the savor and power of what he had expressed in his worship, both as to God Himself in His majesty and greatness, and what He alone can do, confessing too, that however favored the vessel, it was naught save as God was pleased to use it.

Truly such a state of soul, with such experience of unshaken confidence in God, prayer of faith, and the answers, leading to holy and happy worship, may well be sought for in these times of assumption and self-sufficiency, with, (it is to be feared,) no little lack in having individually to do with God. The true dignity of the saint of God shines when permitted to go before the world, in its hour of distress going direct from God, as the bearer of His mind, whether in the form of a fresh revelation, a revealer and interpreter of dreams, or to make known what has already been revealed in the scriptures.

What a moment for Daniel to go forth with the received intelligence, both as to the king's dream, and the interpretation of it!

If Nebuchadnezzar was to be set in privilege and responsibility as to direct rule under the God of heaven, it was the saint of God, though a captive under this new power of the world, who was favored to tell its head his God-given position. The wonderful image, as seen in its fourfold

composition, with its complete and successive power, illustrated from the head to the feet, to continue until the world-kingdoms should give place to the kingdom of God's own Christ.

Daniel was thus in a moment let into the secret as to entrusted power and rule under the God of heaven, together with the smiting of the image an act, declaring the holy and righteous judgment on the part of “the little stone” cut out without hands, the revealed means by which the present form of government should close, and the world afterward be filled with fruit. What experiences as a result of having to do with God! What wisdom, and understanding, to know the thoughts of God, and to communicate them, as to the rise, course, and end of the Gentile powers, designated in the New Testament as the “times of the Gentiles!” This fresh form of power would come to an end by divine judgment, though at the same time become the occasion for God's hidden resource in the Person of Christ, typified by the “little stone” to be introduced. He, alone can, and at the appointed hour will, establish and rule the earth in righteousness, peace, and blessing, to the glory of God, and the happiness of man. In the closing Book of the scriptures (Revelation) it is recorded in the first chap. that the last of the apostles was banished to the Isle of Patmos for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. When there, it was that the apostle John is said to have been in the Spirit, a state suited to receive divine communications which concerned the rights and glories of Christ, the Lamb of God. He is the One about whom God and man were at issue, man having rejected and crucified Him. But God has raised Him from the dead and exalted Him, investing Him with all power and glory for the appointed rule of the earth, and making known clearly the previous judgments to be executed upon the professing church, and the world. John was therefore let into the mind of God as to present and future things; moreover he was enjoined to show to others things shortly to come to pass.

If John stood in a special and somewhat similar-position to Daniel, all believers are of course not be so placed as to experience or communications. Nevertheless, it is the given privilege of every saint of God, having now the complete and perfect revelation of God, and the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God (the One to make known what is written), to exercise the same unshaken confidence in God, with habitual dependence on Him. May we be in that spiritual state so as to know and communicate what is clearly written, as to man and the world, his sphere, with the relationship and place of each to the exalted. Lamb of God. The same cross of Christ by which all who believe are delivered from sin, death, the world, and Satan's power, has plainly determined the moral end of man and of, the world.

1 Cor. 1 states unmistakably that the flesh of man even in its best form (wisdom) is at an end, and refused by God. John 12 declares the world to be judged morally at the cross, for it is written, “Now is the judgment of this world.” Moreover the apostle Paul in Acts 17, when insisting that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent, declares that God in having raised Jesus from the dead, is the witness to His judging the present habitable world in righteousness, the day for its execution being appointed. Jesus, the rejected, but exalted, and hidden Savior, is the very One who is to execute it. If the fixed judgment lingers as to its being carried out, it is because of what the apostle Peter states that the Lord is longsuffering, not wishing that any should perish, but that, all should come to repentance.

The Spirit of God speaking by the apostle Paul to the Thessalonians as to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, having cleared their minds as to what would take place when the Lord came for His

saints, goes on to speak, in the First Epistle, of the day of the Lord, declaring the sudden and solemn judgment of the world in connection with it, and drawing a distinct contrast between the children of darkness and night, and the children of light and day.

In speaking of the latter, it is said that they have the mind of God as to the present course of the world with its end. “For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,” though at this very time the children of darkness will be saying “peace and safety.” However golden and peaceful things may appear, and thereby deceive, the children of light are favored to know that there is no escape for the world. Hence as Daniel made known the rise and course of the worlds power, so the believer can declare its end. The One who executes judgment upon the world, is the same One who died for the believer, removing all wrath and judgment, being risen forever out of it, and lives, in view of all believers living together with Him, in that bright and eternal scene of glory.

If Daniel knew the blessedness of what it was to find his spring of joy, strength, and peace in God, the present children of light knowing the course and end of the boastful world of to-day, in relation to God, are enjoined to wear the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation; a salvation incomplete in its purpose toward the believer until found with, and like He be the Savior in glory.

To interpret the day of the Lord in its two-fold consequences is to bear testimony to the coming joy and blessedness of the children of day, but to sorrow and judgment for the unbelieving children of night. What privileges and responsibilities belong to those who are in the secret of the mind of God as to coming glory and judgment! How important for the believer to be living in the hope and power of the one, and in separation from, and testimony to, a world increasingly sleeping amid its pleasures and delusions! Nebuchadnezzar in all his greatness and glory, with every worldly advantage, was in the hour of trouble helpless, and resourceless. So alas! is the world to-day, as well as willingly ignorant of God's resource in Christ Jesus for salvation, life, and peace with the bright prospect of eternal glory.

May the Spirit of God produce and maintain in each believer an experience and intelligence consistent with the present moment by a scriptural testimony to the world as to the day of the Lord, which like the Red Sea of old will be both salvation and judgment. God hath not appointed the believer to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

How wondrous the grace and mind of God to all who believe!

Chapter 178

Flesh and Faith: Their Energies From the First

Genesis 3, 4, 5

These are very important chapters. They show us the production of the two great energies which, to this day, animate the whole moral scene around us; and also show us these two energies doing their several businesses then, as they are doing still.

They are remarkable chapters; wonderful in exhibiting so much various moral action so distinctly and yet so concisely, leaving, I may say, nothing unnoticed, and yet in so short a space.

I would notice the production of these great energies and their workings, the energy of flesh and the energy of faith, i.e., of the old nature and of the renewed mind.

The lie of the Serpent prevails to produce the first of these.

The Serpent gains the attention of the woman to words in which there was some suggestion injurious to her Lord and Creator. It was a lie, though subtly conveyed; the only instrument by which he could reach and tempt her. She listens and answers—and her faculties thus enlisted are soon in action in the cause of her seducer, and she falls.

The principle which is called the “flesh,” or “old man,” is produced at once, and at once begins to work. Confidence in one another is immediately lost. Innocence had needed nothing; but guilt is necessarily shame, and must get some kind of covering. Every man to this hour carries in him what he cannot comfortably and confidently let out; even to his fellow-creature. Restraint has taken the place of freedom, and artifices come to the relief of guilt and shame. So is it now; and so was it in that hour when the flesh was generated.

More deeply still does it retire from God. Men can bear each other's presence under the dressing of form and ceremony, and the common understanding of the common guilty nature; but they cannot bear God's presence. Though he had the apron of fig-leaves, when His voice is heard, Adam retreats under the trees of the garden. This is the flesh, or the old guilty nature, to this day. God is intolerable. The thought of being alone, or immediately with Him, is more than the conscience can possibly stand. All its contrivances are vain. God is too much for the flesh. It secretly whispers and lays all the mischief on God Himself, but it cannot come forth and tell Him so Out of its own mouth it is judged.

These are its simplest, earliest, energies: we are hateful and hating, and we are at enmity against God.

But the working of this same principle (thus produced in Adam through the lie of the Serpent) is manifested in other ways afterward in Cain. “Cain was of that wicked one.” He becomes a tiller of the ground. But he tills, not as subject to the penalty, but as one that would get something desirable out of the ground, though the Lord had cursed it; something for himself, independent of God.

This is a great difference. Nothing is more godly, more according to the divine mind, concerning us, than to eat our bread by the sweat of our face, to get food and raiment by hard and honest toil. It is a beautiful accepting of the punishment of our sin, and a bowing to the righteous thoughts of God. But to get out of the materials of the cursed ground what is to minister to our delight, our honor, and our wealth, in forgetfulness of sin and of the judgment of God, is but perpetuating our apostasy and rebellion.

Such was Cain's tillage. And accordingly it ended in his building a city, and furnishing it with all that promised him pleasure, or advanced him in the world. This he seeks after—and seeks after with greediness, though he must find it all in the land of Nod, in the regions of one who had left the presence of God.

He had his religion withal. He brings of the fruit of the earth that he was tilling, to God. That is, he would fain have his enjoyment of the world sanctioned of God. If he could command it, he would keep God on terms with him, though he was making the very ground which he had cursed the occasion of his enjoyments. This is very natural, and practiced by our hearts to this hour. Cain desired to link the Lord with himself in his worldliness and love of present things, that he may keep conscience quiet. But the Lord refuses, as he does to this day; though as we have said the heart to this day would fain make the same efforts, and get its worldliness and love of present things sanctioned and shared by Jesus, that conscience may not interfere with the pursuits of lust.

What ways of the flesh or of “the old man” are here! All this is the very thing that is abroad in the world to this hour. It is the working of that apostate principle which was generated by the lie of the Serpent in the soul of Adam. And being of the wicked one Cain “slew his brother.” He had religion, as we have seen but he hated and persecuted the truth; just as to this day. Look at the same thing in Saul of Tarsus, as he gives you the account of it himself in Acts 26 Look at it in the person of the Pharisees set against the Lord. Look at it in the history of Christendom all down its generations to the present hour.

This is the enmity of the seed of the Serpent to the Seed of the woman. “Cain was of that wicked One and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.” This was the cause. It was the enmity of sin to godliness, the enmity of the carnal mind against God, the lusting of the old man, the lusting of flesh against Spirit; it was the hatred of the world to Christ, because he testified of it, that “the works thereof were evil.” It does not always wear such garments stained with blood; but it is always in the heart, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

Such is the flesh, the old nature, in the history of its production, and in the course and character of its workings. It is exactly now what it was then. It rules “the course of this world” under Satan, but it is found also in each of us, if provision be Made for it. But we are to know it—to know it whence it came, and how it works, and to mortify it in its principle and in its acts, in all its proper native energies which so continually beset the soul.

But we now turn to the other activities which we find produced and at work in these wonderful chapters—the activity or energy of faith produced by the word of God through the hidden but effectual power of the Spirit.

While Adam was in the condition to which sin had reduced him, while he was still the guilty and culprit man under the trees of the garden, the word of the gospel, the tidings of the Conqueror slain, of Him who bore the penalty, and yet reached the point of glorious victory, the woman's Seed, reached his ear; and he is born again of the incorruptible seed, the word of the truth of the gospel.

He comes forth just as he was. But he comes forth in the full sense of salvation and of the victory which the grace of God had counseled and wrought for him. Accordingly he speaks of life. There is something very fine in that. He calls his wife “the mother of all living.” There is something truly marvelous as well as excellent in that. Dead as he was himself in trespasses and sins, he talks of life—but he talks of it in connection with Christ, and with Him only. He gives himself no living memorial at all. He does not link himself with the thought or mention of life, but only the Seed of the woman, according to the word which he had just heard. Nay, he rather implies that he knew full well he had lost all title and power of life, and that it was entirely in another—but that it was in that other for him. That the life found in another, was for his use, he had no manner of doubt; the proof of which is this—that at once he comes forth from the place of shame and guilt into the place of liberty and confidence and the presence of God.

He regains God. He had lost Him and been estranged from Him. He had lost Him as his Creator, but he had now regained Him as his Savior, in the gospel, in the woman's Seed, in Christ his righteousness.

But we may add, to our great comfort as sinners, this simplicity and boldness of faith is exactly after the mind of God. Nothing could have been so grateful to Him as this—and consequently, in pledge of this, He first makes a coat of skins for Adam, and then with His own hands He covers his naked body.

Very blessed this is. This is the faith which at the day of the well of Sychar, and to this day, gives the Lord a feast—meat to eat which even the loving careful sympathies of His dearest saints know not of.

Christ is now everything to this pardoned sinner. In like manner, through faith, Eve exults in the promise. It is the joy and expectation of her heart; and Abel's religion is entirely formed by it. The penalties of sweat of face and sorrow of heart seem to be forgotten. And what is deeply to be considered—the earth is lightly held, when Jesus was firmly grasped. Adam has regained the Lord Himself, and he seems, never to count on being a citizen of the world again, but a mere tiller of the ground according to divine appointment for a season; and then to leave it to share the full fruit of the grace and redemption he had now trusted, in other worlds. He dies—that is all. He seeks for no memorial here. He builds no city. He aims not to improve a cursed world. He toils in it, and eats his bread out of it. But he never forgets that judgment is upon it. The family of Seth call on the name of the Lord, and look, in God's way and time, for comfort and blessing in the place of present toil and curse. But that is the thing of hope and of prophecy, while stranger-ship in the judged world, is the present path of faith and godliness. This is a wondrous Scripture indeed and it speaks to us of this very hour through which we are passing.

The energy of the flesh or of the old nature is produced and set at all its proper work; the energy of faith is also brought forth in the souls of the elect, and displays its power very blessedly. We learn

our own lessons here. We carry the two energies in us. By nature we are citizens of the city Enoch, and through grace our souls have got connection with Christ, like Adam or Abel or Seth. And we wait for the translation of Enoch (Gen. 5:24).

These are contrary the one to the other. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

Chapter 179

There Shall Be No More Curse

(Revelation 22:3)

A curse is a malediction, and we know that no word from God can fail of its effect; tinder any circumstances a curse from Him cannot be otherwise than a very terrible thing. It may be a stroke only of God's temporal government (Deut. 30:1-8), or it may be absolute, the fall and final judgment of sin, the full and adequate penalty of our sins. Christ was made a curse for us on the cross (Gal. 3:13); He thus bore the judgment of sin, and of our sins. This was primarily for the glory of God—the vindication of the divine glory with regard to sin. It was also for the good of the world as such, the ground of all respite and of every mercy towards it, temporal or spiritual; and it is the ground of the eternal salvation of believers. But, in God's moral government, temporal punishments also attend sin. God works in this world His displeasure of it, as He shows also His love by His mercies. This is always true, however the Israelites may, in a more definite and specific way, be the people of His manifested government.

Thus punishments and blessings may be temporal only, or may go on so as to be eternal. Temporal judgments, however, are not to be called curses, unless distinctly stated to be so in Scripture—in fact are never so to the children of God, even when disciplinary or in chastisement. For “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every sin whom he receiveth,” and “all things work together for good to them that love God.” So that what may be of the character of a curse to the unbeliever is turned into a blessing to the believer, i.e. the very same dispensation of God's providence, or stroke of His moral government (however painful), may be, and often is, a curse to one person and a blessing to another, such for instance as suffering and death. Moreover, judgments may apply to an individual only, or may extend to a family, to a nation, or even be universal in scope. But they are connected with the moral government of God in this world, and are therefore with a view of vindicating Himself as the Supreme moral Governor, restraining evil, and instructing and benefiting the wise, i.e., the children of God (Isa. 26:9; Dan. 12:10).

But bear in mind that all instruction, which through the grace of God turns to the profit of the individual or community, is in this world; in the next the results will be seen, and these are then eternal and unalterable. Some of God's severest judgments are remarkable not only for divine wisdom in government, but even as containing mercy towards the world. When our first parents fell, we read of no “curse” pronounced on them personally, though we do read, “cursed is the ground for thy sake;” and the very penalties pronounced upon them were morally necessary, and had mercy in them. For example Adam was condemned to toil, and what would men be, what would the world be, without such a necessity? And even as to death, whilst to the Christian it has neither sting nor terror, for “all things are yours',” says the apostle, “whether the world, or life, or death,” &c., yet, even as regards this world, what would the world become, if wicked men lived on in it without dying? So even the penalty of pain in child-bearing is not wholly punitive. There are in fact always wise reasons for the course which God's moral government takes, nor does He

willingly afflict. We should remember that that government is in view of the whole power of evil, that it has objects and results therefore infinitely beyond our comprehension, and that, even though often and deeply in sorrow, we may well trust the love of Him who has saved us, (but at the cost of the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son,) for the maintenance of His own righteousness.

The importance of clear views on this subject is great; for strenuous efforts are being made in connection with other very pernicious doctrines, to represent Christ as a curse-bearer, in common with men, during His life upon earth; as also to put Christians, in common with the world, under curse from God. This would of course destroy their peace; and it is therefore desirable that the truth should be brought prominently forward.

The time is coming when “there shall be no more curse” (Rev. 22:3), i.e. as connected with a probationary and temporal state of things, in short upon the face of the earth. This text has nothing whatever to do with the eternity of punishment. That question is settled in Rev. 20:11-15—the language there used being as clear and indisputable as it is awful. J. B. P.

Chapter 180

The Two Beasts

The first Beast of Rev. 13 is the great Gentile power, to which the empire is given in the accustomed terms of scripture; but with its healed head, in its last blasphemous state, admired and owned by all not kept of God in sovereign grace, hating and blaspheming those who had their tabernacle in heaven. His rise is out of the general mass, “the sea.” What then is “the earth” out of which the second Beast rises? All heavenly association is blasphemed; and this Beast has its origin within the system where Satan rules; which when assuming a religious character, is Jewish, and as rejecting Christ, false. He is the proper present energy of Satan to lead the world to recognize the throne set up in the first Beast. While himself a Beast with horns, it is by power, signs, and delusions that he acts, as we see here as in 2 Thess. 2 J. N. D.

Chapter 181

Union on Mutual Concession

This principle has a great repute and a very fair appearance; but it is profoundly evil and presumptuous. It supposes that the truth is at our disposal. Philippians 3 teaches quite a different principle: there is no idea of concession nor of any arrangement in expressing the truth so as to reconcile different views. It is said, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” It is not, Let us lower down the truth to the measure of him who has not come up to it. Nor is it two persons ignoring which of the two has the truth, or content to suppose the possibility of error in giving up more or less what they hold, in order to express themselves so as to be agreed. All this is an infringement upon the authority of the truth on us. “And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” There is no question here of concessions, but of the revelation from God to enlighten him who is not perfect in the truth. “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” There is no question here of concessions, but of walking together in the things we possess, with regard to which, because recognized as being the truth of God, there is no giving up anything, all being subject to it. In that case, there is no concession, either on one side or on the other; for all possess the same truth, having already attained to it in a measure, and they walk together minding the same thing. The remedy for the diversity of mind which may remain is not to make concessions (how deal thus with the truth?), but the revelation from God in favor of him who is ignorant, as we are all of us on diverse points.

But I shall be told, On that footing one will never come to an agreement. Where will you find in the word such a thing as coming to an agreement? To come to an agreement is not the unity of the church of God. The truth is not to be modified, and we are not called to force our imperfect views on any one. I must have faith, and one must have the same faith, to walk together; but in the things received as the truth of God by faith, I can make no concessions; I may bear with ignorance, but I cannot arrange the truth to please another. You will tell me, In that case how walk together? But why lay down grounds of unity which require either unity of views, or so evil a thing as concession on such or such a truth? As to the things on which we possess the truth, and with regard to which we have faith, we have the same mind, we walk in them together. If I acquire some knowledge more, I bear with the ignorance of my brother, until God reveals the thing to him. Our unity is in Christ Himself. If unity depends on concessions, it is only a sect founded on human opinions, because the principle of the absolute authority of the truth is lost.

They will tell me, that true Christians will never yield on fundamental points. I was going to say “I understand;” but it is not so. There are many who are agreed in spite of the errors which affect the foundations; I know that others would not; but this does not prevent the fact, that the principle of concessions is in no wise authorized in the word, denies the authority of the truth on us, and pretends to be able to dispose of it for the sake of peace. The word supposes the bearing with ignorance, but never concessions, because it does not suppose that men could make a rule different from itself, in order to come to an agreement.

I receive a man “weak in the faith;” but I do not yield anything to him as the truth, even on such a point as herbs; I might perhaps deny essential truths by so doing. Such a case may happen, where to observe days might lead to doubt of the Christianity of him who does it (see Gal. 4:9-11). There might be another case where I could only say, On this very point, “let every man be fully persuaded” (Rom. 14:5-6, &c). Sometimes the whole of Christianity depends upon something which can be borne with in other points of view (Gal. 2:14). I repeat, there is no trace in the word of a system which suppresses a part of the truth so as to have a common confession, but the contrary. There was the perfect truth, and God revealed what was wanting, when it was otherwise. They were of one mind and they walked together, and there was no need of concessions. One did not pretend to such things as required them; that is, the Bible does not suppose what one has the pretension to do. It is to mutilate the truth that it may be adopted by many.

The word, therefore, and especially Philippians 3, condemns this arrangement of mutilated truths, with a view to get them to be adopted by everyone; for this is to dishonor God and His truth. These are means for forming a sect, composed of those who are agreed on the points laid down as grounds of union. It is never the unity of the church of God; it will be an orthodox sect, even if it should take in a greater part of a nation, because it is a body formed on the agreement to which men have come on certain truths; but it is not the unity of the church of God. In a confession of faith there is no question of bearing with individuals who are ignorant on certain points, nor of acknowledging together that one is lacking as to the knowledge thereof, nor of enlightening those who are so: they just declare the truth they possess, that others may, by agreeing with that declaration, join themselves to such as have adopted it as a ground of union. That all may adopt it, the profession of the truth must be reduced to the measure of ignorance of all those who come in, if they are sincere in that profession; but this is not bearing with others: it is persons, as I have said, who dispose of the truth of God by a human compromise. Is that the unity of the Spirit?

And, again, pay attention to this. If I know the truth and make a concession so as to unite myself to others in a common profession, my concession is just simply yielding the truth to him who will not have it. If I, with others, make concessions because we only have opinions and are ignorant of the truth, or have no certainty as to it, what a monstrous pretension to lay down, in that state of ignorance, a rule to be imposed on others as a ground of the unity of the church, under penalty of not forming part of it! I may be told, But instead of this you impose your views, as being sure of the truth. Not at all, because I believe in a unity which already exists, the unity of the body of Christ, of which every Christian forms part; whereas you establish union on views on which you have come to an agreement. You will tell me that I am indifferent then as to the truth! No; but you have used improper means to guard it, by imposing the profession of a part of the truth as a basis of unity. J. N. D.

Chapter 182

Use of Eternity in Early Fathers

Justin Martyr (Apology II, Cologne Edition of 1686 p. 87): “The second (coming), when it is proclaimed that He will come with glory out of heaven with His angelic army when He will raise the bodies of all men that have existed, and those of the worthy will clothe with incorruptibility, and of the unjust will send into fire with eternal sense or feeling (α■σθησις—perception of what they are in) with the wicked demons.”

Elsewhere he tells us (p. 71), “For among us the leader of evil demons is called serpent and Satan and Devil, as you may also learn, if you search them, out of our writings, who, with his armies and the men that have followed him, Christ has made known, will be sent into the fire to be punished for an endless eternity (an eternity without limit). That this is not yet done by God is on account of the human race; but that they are inexcusable with God.”

Irenaeus, Lib. iii. cap. xxiii. “Go, ye cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, signifying that the eternal fire is not principally (in the first instance) prepared for man, but for him who seduced man and made him offend, and who, I say, is the prince (first origin) of the apostasy—for the prince of the world and his angels who have become apostate with him, which indeed (eternal fire) more also will justly get who, like them, without repentance and without return, persevere in works of evil.”

V. 4. Against those who ascribed material creation to another than God the Father, and denied the resurrection of the body by the good God, he says, “Those things which it is evident to all continue immortal, as say spirit and soul, and which are such since they are vivified by the Father,” and another thing “which is not otherwise vivified unless God afford it life should lose life.” Thus he declares the soul and spirit to be unquestionably immortal. In Greek fragments of the same (p. 372, Bened. Edition) he complains of Heracleon denying the immortality of the soul not fitly prepared for salvation, saying, that it was that corruptible thing which put on incorruption &c., and taking the words of scripture, he knows not holy, thinks to subvert the opinion of those who hold the soul to be immortal, thinking the soul will be cast into the same place and perish in hell as well as the body.

He distinguishes clearly God's immortality and ours. The Gnostic heretics argued that man must not be born if he was immortal, or, if there was a beginning of generation, the soul must die with the body. Now as he says, God alone is without beginning, but all things whatever have been and are made of Him, receive indeed their beginning of generation and in this are inferior to Him who made them, since they are not unborn, but they continue and extend unto the length of ages according to the will of Him who made them (ii. 34). Again God giving them life and perpetual continuance.....and souls which before at the first did not exist—hence continue since God has willed they should be and subsist. The only Father who speaks of the gospel uses language perfectly clear to me; but as one might cavil about the Greek word, I do not quote it.

I attach no authority to these sayings of the Fathers, or to the Fathers themselves. They are all in my judgment grievously in error: not one but the nameless one I have referred to has an idea of the gospel, and many were in grievous error. But these quotations show how much the statements of Mr. Constable are to be trusted (I never knew a person that was following his own mind into heresy who could): it is one of the marks of the source of these things, a very important point—indeed of the highest importance.

As regards the others he mentions, Barnabas (whether genuine or not, pretty surely not) is full of as much nonsense as may well be supposed; but he speaks of the day of the Lord, when the wicked will perish with the wicked one; and he does speak of eternal death, but Mr. Constable omits “with punishment” which the writer adds, α■■νιος θ■νατος μετ■ς τιμωρ■ας, proving, if it means anything, that it is not ceasing to exist. Clemens Romanus says nothing of the death, that I know of or can find. As to Hermes' Pastor, if he ever read it, he ought to be ashamed to quote it. It is not of 107, A.D. but about 160. It is now fully admitted he was the brother of Pope Pius; and such a farrago of error, blasphemy, and wickedness, it would be hard to find; not a particle of Christian faith is in it. Ignatius teaches no such thing; there is nothing said about it; further, five out of eight epistles are by the best critics counted spurious. Their object, as they stood before witnesses, is to make people stick to their worship. Polycarp says nothing about it. I really don't understand what Mr. Constable is about. The most Christian document of the whole lot is express as to it. Polycarp says to the judge, “You threaten me with a fire which is soon extinguished, and are ignorant of coming judgment and eternal punishment (or torment) reserved for the impious” (Smyrneans' account of Polycarp's martyrdom, XI).

As to Theophilus, here are his words, end of Lib. I., “If thou art now unbelieving, thou wilt be one time compelled to believe, made miserable then in eternal punishment, which punishment foretold by the prophets, the poets, and philosophers who came after them have stolen out of the sacred writings, that their dogmas might be more firm.” Again in the second book he borrows the Sibylline verses. “They will be burnt with flames throughout eternity all the day.” And then he returns to poets, &c., as borrowing from prophets. If he was in any way unsound, so far from eternal death, it was toward restoration, referring to heathen authority for it; but his positive statements are of eternal punishment.

It is possible passages in the larger works may have escaped me. I attribute no authority whatever to these Fathers. What is Christian among them is simple and clear on the point, taking scripture as we ought to do. But Mr. Constable's statements are wholly untrustworthy in every respect. I cannot but doubt he looked at the authors he speaks of. Why does he not give the places?

My dear brother, above you have the examination of Mr. Constable's statements. I repeat, I recognize in no way the authority of Fathers: few of them were sound in the faith; none but a nameless one had the doctrine of salvation; the saints at Smyrna show this too.

I chance on the word “Eternal life in hell.” This has no sense. The last Adam is eternal life—He only But this does not touch the question of whether the soul of the first is immortal. I find always the source of it is to satisfy infidel men, not a reference to faith and the word.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

Chapter 183

Waiting for the Son From Heaven

1 Thessalonians 1:10

In the calculations of men, events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But, while this has its truth, to faith it is God who, in His supremacy, holds a seal in His hand to stamp each day with its character or sign.

This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others; but all are in progress, and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era, like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night. Some moments in such progresses may be more strongly marked than others. But all are in advance. Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary while others were full of incident. And so all the present age is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others.

These “signs of the times,” or sealings of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern, because they are always according to the premonitions of Scripture. Indeed, current events are only “signs,” as they are according to, or in fulfillment of, such previous notices.

The words of the prophets made the doings of Jesus in the days of His flesh the signs of those days (Matt. 12:22, 23). And have we not words in the New Testament which, in like manner, make all around us at this moment, or in every century of the dispensation, significant? Have not words, which we find there, abundantly forecast the characters of such dispensation, and given beforehand the forms of those corruptions that were to work in Christendom? They have told us what now our eyes have seen. They told us of the field of wheat and tares; of the mustard seed which became a lodging-place for the fowl of the air; of “the unmerciful servant;” of the Gentile not “continuing in God's goodness;” or of the “great house,” with its vessels onto honor and dishonor; and of other like things. They told us of “the latter times,” and of “the last days;” and they still tell the deadly character which the hour is to bear that is to usher forth “the man of and ripen iniquity for the manifestation and power of the day of the Lord.

All this is so. And let me ask, if every hour be after this manner bearing its character, or wearing its sign, what mark are we individually helping to put upon this our day? Is the purpose and way of the Lord ripening into blessedness at all reflected in us? or are we, in any measure, aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment? If the times were to be known and described according to our way, what character would they bear? what sign would distinguish them?

These are inquiries for the conscience of each of us. We cannot be neuter in this matter. We cannot be idle in this market-place. It may be but in comparative feebleness; but still each of us, within the range of the action of Christendom, is either helping to disclose God's way, or to ripen the vine of the earth for the winepress of wrath.

The Lord tells us that the sign on which our faith must rest is that of a humbled Christ, such a sign as that of Jonah the prophet. Our faith deals with such a sign, because our need as sinners casts us on a Savior or a humbled Christ. But hope may feed on a thousand signs. Our expectations are nourished by a sight of the operations of the divine hand displaying every hour the ripening of the divine counsels and promises, in spite of the world, and in the very face of increasing human energies.

These signs may be watched, but watched by the saint already in the place and attitude assigned him by the Spirit. They are not to determine what is his place, but they may exercise him in it. His place and attitude is beforehand and independently determined for him—waiting for the Son of God from heaven.

This posture the Thessalonian saints assumed on their believing the gospel (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). The apostle seems afterward to strengthen them in that posture, by telling them that from it they were to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). And again afterward he seems to guard them against being disturbed in that attitude, against being tempted to give it up, by further telling them, that that place of expectation should be exchanged for the place of meeting ere the day of the Lord fell with its terrors on the world and the wicked (2 Thess. 2:1). And, still further, this very posture of waiting for the Son from heaven had induced a certain evil. The Thessalonian saints were neglecting present handiworks. The apostle does not in any wise seek to change their posture, but admonishes them to hold it in company with diligence and watchfulness, that, while their eye was gazing, their hand might be working (2 Thessalonians

Other New Testament Scriptures seem also to assume the fact, that faith had given all the saints this same attitude of soul; or, that the things taught them were fitted to do so (See 1 Cor. 1:7; 15:23; Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28).

Admonitions and encouragements of the like tendency (that is, to strengthen us in this place and posture of heart) the Lord Himself seems to me to give, jest at the bright and blessed close of the volume.

“I come quickly” is announced by Him three times in Rev. 22—words directly suited to keep the heart, that listens to them believingly, in the attitude of which I am speaking. But different words of warning and encouragement accompany this voice.

1. “Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (verse 7). This warns us that, while we are waiting for Him, we must do so with watchful, obedient, observant minds, heedful of His words.

2. “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give everyone according as his work shall be” (ver. 12). This encourages to diligence, telling us, that by the occupation of our talents now during His absence, on the promised and expected return He will have honors to impart to us.

3. “Surely, I come quickly,” is again the word (ver 20). This is a simple promise. It is neither a warning nor an encouragement. Nothing accompanies the announcement, as in the other cases. It is, as it were, simply a promise to bring Himself with Him on His coming again. But it is the highest and the dearest thing. The heart may be silent before a warning and before an encouragement: such words may get their audience in secret from the conscience. But this promise of the simple

personal return of Christ gets its answer from the saints. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Thus the Lord, after this various and beautiful manner, does the business of the Spirit in the apostles. His own voice, in these different and striking announcements, encourages the saints to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him.

Great things are a-doing. The church, the Jew, and the Gentile, are all in characteristic activity, each fall of preparation and expectancy. But faith waits for that which comes not with such things. The rapture of the saints is part of the mystery, part of “the hidden wisdom.” The coming of the Son of God from heaven is a fact, as I judge, apart altogether from the history or the condition of the world around. J. G. B.

Chapter 184

Three Letters of the Late Mr. G.V. Wigram

1: My Dear, We naturally look for fruit such as we can present, as it were, on our table before the Lord; but He seeks rather that which can be in His presence on high, and a testimony that will abide through eternity (2 Cor. 2:14-16). Doubtless, it is sweet to see fruits gathered, and, like grapes of Eshcol, fit, when fresh, for man's refreshment; and good when dried good in either case to show the goodness of God in the fruits of the culture of a good land. But besides this, He is pleased to use His word as the savor of death unto death, and to vindicate His own grace in the had use man makes of it. The seed of the sower was used to detect world, flesh, and devil, as well as to bring forth fruit for God and to man's blessing (Matt. 13). The general feeling of Christians who have been in the East Indies is that the new use made of the coolies for free labor was part of a providential acting of God's hand, not unlike that of political persecution, in Italy driving bigoted Romanists into Protestant countries. In both cases, those who would not listen by reason of the prejudices at home find themselves outside of the range of the power of these prejudices, and in many cases where, themselves broken, they find loving Christians to sympathize with them and to present the gospel to them. It is this which I think makes the little work among the coolies round you have its chief interest: and you and I know that the Cretans being always liars, evil to use means rather to rouse the grace and to repress the flesh in any of them. We do not remember sufficiently the effect upon ourselves of Christian education from infancy. I have oft said this, when I have seen the faults and falls of converted Jews, and converted Roman Catholics. Of course a lie is a lie everywhere. God cannot lie. The Adversary was a liar from the beginning. I cannot say a word for lying. But I conceive that to the Divine mind a lie from a child, from youth brought up to dread and abhor a lie, upon Christian moral grounds, would after its conversion, be quite a different sort of sin from a lie of a converted Jew who had been brought up to believe that father Abraham had taught that “a lie was the statement of an untruth, for private gain, to a son of Abraham” —(consequently no untruth to a Gentile, one of the Goyim, was a lie); or the Romanist who was taught from childhood that the end sanction the means. Morality is destroyed by such an education.

May the Lord Jesus, who turned round and looked upon Peter, ere he went out and wept bitterly, turn and look upon just such a look as He looked upon Peter, and give you joy in seeing his soul restored. Poor things are we and hard is it to believe of ourselves that there is no sin named in scripture the seed of which is not in our own flesh and ready to blossom and bud, if we walk in the flesh. You, or I, might go and commit Lot's sin, or David's, or Jonah's, or Peter's—Christians though we be; and we, I, shall do worse unless God keep me and make me crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, right on to the end. The having been kept 35 years in the way is naught unless keeping goes on to the end. More than this, the more kept the worse the fall—if a fall comes. Zeal against sin and tender yearning over the sinner become us; indignation and firm dealing with the sin, but every effort to rescue the fallen one... Brethren are making a small collection in London. May the Lord put it into their hearts to give according to their ability—not to me, nor to yourselves for others, but to the Lord, so that there may be fruit of the seed sown to His

praise. Hoping to write by next post,

I am, most affectionately,

G. V. W.

2. My Dear Brother In The Lord, I was speaking, lately, on “Saul (who also is called Paul)” Acts 13:9. The word Saul, Cruden says, is the same as Sheol “the grave,” —one of the things which ever asking is never satisfied. I admit that “to ask” is the meaning of the root; but then the participle is passive and not active; and so, if the eo active participle may characterize the grave, because it ever is “asking” and never is satisfied, the all is passive and canononly characterize what is catechized. This, if the name be significant, is the meaning of “catechized.” I think it admirably fitted to a ruined creature. The Creator's claims exist over, and may be pressed upon, him; but he has no answer to give either as to righteousness, or temperance, or judgment to come: nor, even if catechized by God, as was Job (see the latter chapters) can he give any answer. A creature slipped from its allegiance to its Creator, has no answer to give to Him, or to itself, or to Satan, or the world. The word Paul means “that which is made” [created in Christ Jesus unto good works. which God prepared before the world was, that we should walk in them], now if “that which is catechized” brings the one catechized into notice, so “that which is made” brings the maker (and not the vessel or person made, so much as the make?) into prominence. Who could take a child of wrath, indwelt by Satan, covered with the spots of the world, and make him fit for God and eternity and heaven? Christ, and Christ alone. Gritty bad clay—fit for nothing in itself; claimed by Satan and driven along the course of this world, Christ the last Adam, life-giving Spirit, could give incorruptible life to such an one as Saul the blasphemer; could set his seal upon the life so given and communicate power to it. He could, having made it to be not of the world as He is not of the world, having washed it from its sins and guilt in His own blood and made kings and priests to God, He could keep the vessel for Himself and use it, as in His own hand, all through its course down here—enabling it to say “to me to live is Christ and to die is gain;” “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be made manifest in us;” “filling up that which remains behind of the sufferings of Christ,” &c., &c. And He will not fail to present the vessel so saved and so preserved unto Himself in glory. The power of God in and by Christ was the freight for which the vessel made was prepared. And, in this view of it, how blessed is it to have been a brand plucked from the burning, if now made a light bearer in an evil and wicked world. How blessed to be weak, if it is that His strength may be made perfect in our weakness. The Lord Jesus Christ wants, as He sits in glory waiting till He take the kingdom, occasions in which to display His grace down here, and He finds occasions in all our weakness and by all our difficulties. Oft have I thought that God knew why He placed the Red Sea and the fields of sandy desert beyond it, and looked upon it from earth's creation until Israel's passage out of Egypt, as the occasion prepared before hand for His displays of His own glory in that coming time. Who planted, or who watered, or what man's thoughts were about the sycamore tree, God and Zacchaeus' faith found in it the occasion of his seeing Jesus. Poor little man, faith's ladder had been planted and prepared for his heart—probably long before he was born 'twas there—but when his heart kindled Jesus-ward, God's sycamore was there ready for him So, in a different way the Red Sea, no road, no water, no pasturage-fields of sand, an ocean of it: Jordan, Philistines, Hivites, &o.; difficulties, impossibilities, had all been prepared before for God's occasions of showing Israel His love. 'Tis always so. 'Twas so with Abram, with Isaac, with Jacob, with David, and with them all. 'Twas so

with Paul and John. And is it not so with us? What we call life here below is a system of difficulties, studiously put together, within and around us, calculated to bring us quickly to our wit's end, if we tried to show our competency, truly, but the rather prepared as the occasion for Christ to show His grace and loving care of, in, and toward us, as we pass along, through them all. He wants the occasion in which to show out that “I am with you;” and “It is I;” and shall we repine or be unwilling to have it so, as that the whole journey down here shall be a history of His triumphant love ever leading us about, and causing us to be, in all things, more than conquerors through Him that loved us? We are poor things indeed—had nothing of our own, but we are His and He is ours; and the heart that is now set upon us cares for us; and He will lead us on until His own presence shall be our hiding place. The Lord enable us more to lay hold of that handle of everything which is the Lord's; and not of that which I, or man, or Satan can say, that is mine, not the Lord's. Stones are hot in the sun, but they often keep what is below them cool and moist. Not “our leanness, our leanness” should be our burden, as we pass along here below, but rather “what a Christ is He who has found and picked me up.” I set my face to Him-ward and would strengthen my soul in Him. Body, soul, and spirit in me belong to Himself alone, and I would have them wholly His until He comes to take me to Himself. May I not say, and you too, say, “Amen and Amen” for ourselves to this. I do presume to think so and to count upon it before the Lord.

Most affectionately,

Yours in Him, V. W.

3. Dear Brother In The Lord, Evil as the days are, and ragged and dirty as the path is through which we are called to pass—a path where false profession has made sloughs and mires, and wherein the high way is broken down—yet there is a bright bit at the end upon the earth, even that terminus wherein shall be heard, ere the Spirit leaves the earth, ere the Bride has gone on high, those blessed precious words, “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” Professors may not know where the Spirit is now; and many may be saying “and where is the church, that assembly which was set up at Pentecost?” But faith can look on high, faith can see, read and know the living thoughts of the risen and ascended Lord, and faith knows how His heart and mind have the assembly, the Bride in them and carry her there; and faith, too, feels and owns the claims which is upon oneself to live and walk here as part of this same Bride which shall be adorned and meet for her Lord—a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, in yet a little while. I want the reality of that, His present love to be more tasted, more enjoyed, more practically lived upon by myself and by those He loves who are here below. And surely now is the time for this. Rebecca on her camel's back, as Rebecca leaving her kindred, and Rebecca journeying through the strange journey, needed to stay herself upon her good fortune and to feed herself with her high calling—when she came to Sarah's tent hope was in measure changed to sight.

And it is not an unreasonable thing, either, to urge this. He who is on high is as much set now on giving forth to us, hourly and daily, as He was set once, in time past, on getting to the cross, where He made an end of our guilt, having borne there the judgment due to us; or, as He will be in the time to come, when He will bid us rise up hence and come away with Him. His face, now unveiled, He shows to us on high; His faithful love He proves now to us down here; and He lets us know too, that to His heart and mind that coming is no secondary thing of little importance. If once He cried, “I have, a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished,” so now He

says, “Surely I come quickly.” One great grief to Him when He was down here, was that none of His own shared with Him His thoughts, were prepared for His self-renunciation. Just so now, I judge that His joy is in those who do think of what is now dear to His own mind, what He is about to bring out to light when He comes to be admired in all those that believe.

I used to think that I had lively faith, communion and hope; but as I get older I find myself more like a babe faithfully watched over by a mother's eye, and seem to get more satisfied to see what His thoughts of to-day are about me and what His plans for the morrow. Less account made of my feelings, more of His. Less notice of my faith, more of the fact that He died in my stead. More consciousness of the worth of His presence in heaven as a fact, than of the feelings which the knowledge of it produces in me—more counting on the certainty of His coming back, in order to put the finishing stroke to what He has wrought than of the flutter of expectancy. Not that the work wrought in us by the Holy Ghost has sunk in value in my thoughts, but that I look more at the outgoings of that work in me. To me to live is Christ. The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved Die and gave Himself for me. Individual attachment of the soul to the person of the Lord seems of growing importance. He bare the wrath in our stead; He has confessed in heaven above, His love to us; He means to come and fetch us home. How can I say such things and not want to see Himself, His own very self? True, when He comes, the scene will be surpassingly grand and blessed—Himself, the Resurrection and the Life, coming out from God to turn the low estate of those who have trusted in Him, to an occasion in which to show forth the glories of His own divine person as the Resurrection and the Life. He will come and will call up out of the grave all that believed in Him—and then, standing on the cloud, will cause the life wherewith He will have quickened those that are alive and remain to His coming, to burst forth; and then, body and spirit shall be as instinct with His life as the souls of His people already are; and He will catch them away to be with Himself forever in the Father's house. Most blessed as this, the doctrine of 1 Thess. 4 is—my soul seems to find its deeper more individual portion in chap. i. I appreciate Him; and do so in the very presence of God: He loves me and I love Him—and I wait for Him to come from heaven. The individuality is so blessedly seen on the one hand, and the contrast between this divinely wrought love to Himself and the poor world all around. It is, too, one's portion for to-day, just where we are now Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, beloved brother, and with those laboring with you in the Lord; and I shall gladly hear of you when time permits and you have opportunity.

Ever yours in Him, the returning Lord,

G. V. W.

26/11/66.

Chapter 185

Wilderness Lessons: 1. Law for Israel at Sinai

Up to Sinai it was a question not of what man was, but of God. Man, that is, Israel, was as much a sinner before the law as after it was given; but, there being no law, God was free to manifest His grace without hindrance. See it first in the Passover where the guilty are sheltered from judgment. This efficacy of the sprinkled blood never left them, carried them through the Red Sea, fed them and gave water in the wilderness. Even when the people murmured, there was no word of reproach from Jehovah, and on the second occasion, after they had left Sinai and were come to Rephidim, when they were ready to stone Moses, no judgment overtakes them, on the contrary there is abundance of water. God was not imputing their sins unto them. They were yet solely under the shelter of the sprinkled blood: God looked at that, and passed over. Such were His ways up to Sinai. There, and still for the purposes of grace, God proposed law to Israel, and obedience as the ground of their possession of Canaan. But Canaan was already promised, and possession could in no wise be conditional upon their obedience. The promise was made four hundred and thirty years before law came in (Gal. 3:17) and could not be disallowed. Why then was law given? To bring out evils which lay hidden in nature, and to display the resources of grace which rose above the evil and put it away. But the evil which broke out under law was necessarily judged, else law would have been dishonored. Judgment was not needed for the display of grace. Hence before Sinai we see nothing but unmingled grace in God's dealings with Israel. Afterward, whatever the yearnings of grace over them, judgment through law was a necessity.

In proposing law to Israel God would enlarge the sphere of His grace: for not only would law provoke the evil which already existed in man, but became both the occasion and the cause of transgression. It added transgression to sin. “Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Therefore we have two series of teachings in Israel's journeyings from Sinai to Canaan. The old nature is incurable, neither mercy nor judgment can change it; and also the wisdom and the riches of grace which brought in and applied the suited remedy for every phase of evil. So if sin be ineradicable, grace accomplishes a wonderful triumph, for at the close of their journey when the atoning efficacy of the sprinkled blood is fully, though typically, manifested, then the enemy is compelled to say “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob.” At the first Jacob had to bar his door and sprinkle blood on the door-post lest the Avenger should enter; now of this same people Balaam is made to express Jehovah's delight in them; “How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel.” This delight in them is the result of the finished work of Christ, not because of their ways.

But one way of learning the riches of grace is to look at the sin which brought it out. For however aggravated the sins of Israel were in character, grace while leaving room for law, was greater than the sin.

I purpose looking briefly at a few of the leading events from Sinai to the Jordan. Every preparation was completed on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year; the cloud rises from the tabernacle, and Israel begin their journey. But now under law, they have refused to take

possession of the land as the gift of grace, they presume to possess it as the reward of obedience. What is to be expected from those who began the path of obedience with such a blot as to worship the golden calf, in which not only the common people joined, but all from Aaron downwards? No wonder that every event recorded of their journey is a record of sin and rebellion against God.

The order of marching is arranged, captains are appointed. The Levites as having to do with the Tabernacle are numbered by the principal families and the special duties of each are assigned. The observance of due order in all that pertains to His worship and service is of great importance: nor less in the church than with Israel. From twenty years old the men of other tribes were numbered for war; but the Levites must be thirty before they were permitted to begin their service; they must at least be beyond the age when the rashness and impulsiveness of youth might influence them.

Though at the command of God they leave Sinai and under His protection and guidance, yet how different from the first steps of their journey when they had just passed through the Red Sea! Then they began with a song, the power of Jehovah was the theme of praise. It was He who had overthrown Pharaoh and his host, it was He who had triumphed gloriously. They were not better then than now; why not sing now? They were then simply objects of grace, they had not then uttered the rash vow. How changed their position! No song now. A man under law has no right to sing, only grace gives that privilege. Law genders bondage, never removes the fear of death. How can there be singing in the heart where the fear of death is?

At the Red Sea God was visibly for them without question of obedience. At Sinai the aspect of God towards them was changed. Law had been proposed to them and was accepted. They had engaged themselves to an obedience which they were incapable of rendering. Most true that grace was ever for them, but according to the letter of the law God must be apparently against them. And when believers now assert that they are under law as a rule of life they seem to forget that on law ground, God must be against them. The law was only a test to prove man, and now that the fullest proof of what he is has appeared, the test is removed, no longer necessary. To take it up now as a rule of life, a purpose never intended by God, is to take all its terrible responsibilities, without the sanction of God, yea contrary to His will. The law has served the purpose for which it was given, and is now laid aside. It was just before the final blow (the destruction of Jerusalem) which shattered the outward observances founded upon the law that Paul wrote to the saints who were mixed up with the old thing, “Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” The believer who voluntarily puts himself under law is worse than the over-confident Israelite boldly promising to do all the commandments; for it is now in presence of fullest grace, of the cross given because life could be had in no other way. Such an one under law hinders his own blessing, and settled peace is unknown to him. He can never sing in his heart ranking melody to God. The more conscientious he is in law-doing, the more will he fear the threatenings of law. And being God's law, it must be against every transgressor. Yet every believer is saved, and God is for him. God cannot be against and for at the same time. Taking law as the rule of a believer's life, puts him in a false position as to his own peace, and is impossible to one in Christ. “If righteousness come by law then Christ is dead in vain.”

While looking at Israel under the trial of law what patience is seen in the dealings of God with their rebellious ways! The eternal counsel of grace underlies all. And what a picture of man appears in

this eventful journey through the wilderness! On one side what perseverance of grace, on the other, what persistency of evil! But it is not Israel only, save historically, that is seen; for here are the moral lineaments of man, and the exhibition of nature in the most favored position. Here is a mirror the faithful reflector of him who looks in it—man in the best position, with every advantage, and in result no Gentile so vile as the Israelite. In later years God said by the prophet, “what could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done” (Isa. 5:4)? It is a solemn but a needed lesson: man is morally ruined, and moral means are used to teach him. Yet not there in that journey is the total ruin learned. The cross alone brought that out fully even as it alone declares the infinite love of God.

Yet God had a “silver line” of witnesses running through the tangled web of murmuring and rebellion. The people often went back into Egypt in their hearts. They remembered and lusted after Egypt's food but forgot Egypt's slavery. How could God bear with them when they had put themselves under law? A most significant fact shows how He could and did bear with them all through the wilderness. The two tables of the law, that law which they had broken, were put within the ark, and upon its lid of gold the blood of atonement was sprinkled. This blood ever met the eye of God. Did the law demand judgment upon the transgressor? There was the blood to meet its righteous demand. The blood-sprinkled mercy-seat covered all. The two tables, the gold and the blood, were together indicative of the mixed system of law—righteousness and grace.

God would be gracious, and under the auspices of Jehovah they began, and went on their journey. The ark of the covenant leading them, the ark that while it contained the law was sprinkled with blood, in itself a pledge that Israel must be brought through the wilderness, and it went first to find out a place of rest for the people; not the rest of Canaan, but a temporary halting place while they were still on journey. The cloud of Jehovah's presence rested upon the ark, and when it rose they went forward. Their following the ark is important but blessed teaching for saints now. There was no pathway through the desert for them, there was no guide through and out of it but the cloud of Jehovah's presence. Nor is there any path for us through this world but that which Jesus has marked; He has gone before and left the print of His footsteps behind that we may not miss the way.

Not exactly the same kind of faith in their following the ark as in saints now following the Lord for they had a visible emblem; we see nothing but we believe the more. Yet in Moses there was confidence in the protection of Jehovah's presence, for when the ark set forward he as representing Israel said, “Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee,” and when the ark rested he said, “Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel.” This was to lead the whole congregation to remember Him who, though hidden in the cloud, was their Guide and Protector notwithstanding their sin. But save in very few, where was the response of gratitude, where the promised obedience, for all this care and watchful guard?

Notwithstanding this wonderful presence they had only gone a three days' journey when they murmur. Jehovah's anger is kindled and. fire consumes the uttermost parts of the camp. They had murmured more than once before they reached Sinai, but there was no consuming fire then. There was no answer, but blessing, and Moses is commanded to smite the rock and the water flows. Now they complain and fire immediately breaks out on the borders of their encampment. Why

such a difference from the scene at Horeb? They are feeling the consequences of being under law. All is indeed changed and God is demanding the payment of their vows, their promised obedience. But what could be expected from people who had only a few days before worshipped a calf? Three thousand fell then; fire consumes the borders of the camp now, and still they are not changed. How invincible the lusts of men! They are no sooner delivered from the fire than they weep at the recollection of the “cucumbers and the melons, the leeks, and the onions and the garlic;” and worse still they say, “Our soul is died away, there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.” But the Word lets us into the secret of their weeping. There was a mixed multitude among them which fell a lusting, and then the children of Israel followed in the same sin and weeping said, “who shall give us flesh to eat?” It was not for water, nor for bread, but for “flesh;” that is, something to gratify the lusting of the heart in common with the mixed multitude. When the heart longs for Egyptian food, the manna from heaven is sure to be despised; and intimacy or even companionship with the world soon brings saints down to the world's level.

One of the first lessons given as to saints is that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” To complain of God's dealings with us is what we are prone to; but lusting after Egypt's food is the sure consequence of mingling with the world. The children of Israel followed the example of the mixed multitude (Num. 11:4); and no Christian mixes with the world without going down to their level and partaking of their lusts.

Chapter 186

Wilderness Lessons: 2. Trial of Saints or Discipline

The trials of saints, as they come from God, are generally if not always intimately connected with the position grace gives. God in His sovereignty calls His saints to fill various places of service, some to rule and authority, some to teaching or preaching, others may only know the place of suffering and weeping; but all are for the carrying out of one great purpose (I speak of saints) the accomplishment of one will, a whole in which each saint however humble has his part. God has a niche in His temple for each, a place assigned by grace. It is there each is tested. But if grace appoints the place, it is always there to maintain saints in it. Often the trial is allowed through our want of faith to hide the grace, and then we complain and murmur. “But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” He always provides the needed grace.

There are other trials which have their root in unfaithfulness. God permits such, but does not directly send them, and surely controls and guides to a gracious result, for His mercy endureth forever. Such trials become rods in His chastening hand; but when God sends trial to a faithful saint it is for the purpose of proving faith, which is more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, and of giving further lessons in the school of faith. The fruitful branch is purged that it may bring forth more fruit. More fruit is God's object. Hidden things may be in the heart of the faithful unknown and therefore unjudged. The trial is sent to disclose the hidden thing that it may be purged away. Not all trials are chastisements. We should gravely err if we judged every suffering saint to be under discipline through failure. Where there is faithfulness we often see what appears to be heaviest trials, but in truth it is for the display of the sustaining power of grace that others may see and learn.

Evidently such is the lesson taught us in Gen. 22. Faith was never put to a severer test whether we look at the affection of the father or the obedience of the saint. God did tempt Abraham—sent him a trial—not because of previous failure, but, as being the father of the faithful he is to stand forth prominently as an example to saints of both dispensations, that he might be a witness of that faith which rises above death: a sort of pledge of the revival of Israel from the dust of death, of the fulfillment of the promises of which Abraham was the depository; and equally a witness of the faith of the church of God now, which in a deeper sense is in its most blessed character, a resurrection faith. Death has nothing to say to faith save as being overcome. The natural man lives in the region of death. Faith enters this region and the scene is changed. Christ has overcome the power of death, and faith in Him gives us to share in His victory. I speak, not of practice where we so often allow the enemy to get an advantage over us, but of our standing as victors in Christ. We see the ravages of death around us, but as a penalty we are beyond its reach. The believer and the natural man are in two distinct spheres which are outside each other. The one bears the stamp of death, the other that of eternal life. No example in the Old Testament more shows the power of faith over death than that of Abraham. But this is true Christian faith.

We take an instance of faith under trial from the New Testament; not the victory of faith over death, but over circumstances. The thorn in the flesh was a heavy trial to Paul. It was not sent because of failure, but because of the abundance of his revelation. There was danger lest the flesh should boast, and God gives him a thorn. He prayed thrice for its removal. God tells him that His grace is sufficient, there is no need to remove it, and moreover his infirmity was but an occasion for the power of Christ to rest upon him. Then he glories in that which he had prayed God to take away. Christ was exalted and Paul was content. Here is the “more fruit,” God's object in sending the thorn: no failure and needed chastening here, but a lesson of grace to an honored servant of Christ.

Scripture gives instances of saints who in their time were as prominent as was Paul in his, but who failed. If Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, Moses was also of Israel in his day. Each had trials specially connected with his position. Some doubted the apostleship of Paul, as Israel before had doubted Moses. In the chapter before us (Num. 11) Moses is exceedingly tried, but his failure under the trial is equally plain. Why does Scripture lay bare the failings of the highest and most honored servants? That we may learn.

In this instance this great and honored man does not rise to the height of the position God gave him. He was the leader of the people to the promised land; but instead of a joyful expectant nation hasting to Canaan he hears them weeping for the things of Egypt, and despising the manna. The circumstances are too much for him. Paul prayed about his thorn and God raised him above it. Moses seems to reproach God for laying such a burden upon him. No doubt he was exceedingly tried when he heard the people weeping, but trials which lead to murmuring do not produce the effect God would have: The repose of faith cannot be with a fretful spirit. “The anger of the Lord was kindled greatly, Moses also was displeased.” Was his displeasure righteous in character? was it because of their sin against Jehovah, or of his own disappointment in them? His very despondent language is not the expression of trust in God. Nay he forgot that Jehovah was leading the people, and went before them to find a resting place; for he says “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand if I have found favor in Thy sight and let me not see my wretchedness.” Strange words from the meek man Moses. The secret root lay in the word I, “I am not able.” No doubt he was not able; but he speaks as if God had appointed him to bear the people alone; and his words to God betray his forgetfulness of the fact that, honored as he was, he was only a servant. He had not begotten them, nor was he their nursing father, nor to find flesh for them. Forgetting that God had promised all that Israel needed in the wilderness, and this in answer to his own prayer (Ex. 33:12-17), he is overwhelmed with the feeling of his utter incompetency, and would take it as a favor if God killed him out of hand, so that he might not see his wretchedness. If he had remembered that it was God's prerogative to provide, he would not have so spoken, nor have been so wretched. Something of the spirit that broke out in Moses we detect now in the words “my people,” “my flock,” as used by some of the Lord's servants now in this present day, and who perhaps feel the same “wretchedness” when “their people” are disobedient. They are shepherds truly and must give account how they feed (not “their” flock but) the flock of God. They forget the Great Shepherd as Moses forgot Jehovah.

How full of grace the way of God with him. If the dignity of his position is touched by others being associated with him, is it not a very gentle rebuke for his want of faith in the resources of God?

Also God meets him on his own ground; he said he was not able, and seventy others are appointed to assist him. The gentle rebuke is seen again in the word of God to him, “I will take of the Spirit that is upon thee and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.” The effect is that they prophesy and did not cease. Proof this that God had endowed him with sufficient wisdom, but it was obscured by the thought of self, and he did not seek power from God. “That thou bear it not thyself alone” is the way God brings before him the root of his failure. Not that he had to bear it, but that he thought so, or at least he forgot that both he and Israel were borne of God through the wilderness as with the tenderness of a nursing father.

Seventy gives no equal number for each tribe. Composed of two factors seven and ten, the first is used to denote perfection, or completeness in spiritual things, outside providential administration. No such completeness is denoted by “ten.” The perfection of earthly government is connected with the number twelve; and when the millennial age is come all that seven and twelve signify will be manifest in the perfection of spiritual power and of earthly administration. That perfection is reserved for the Son of man.

Does not this number contain the latent idea of imperfection? That is, was it not intended to convey it—as belonging to a system that had only a limited time to remain, and, when the whole nation is taken up again, to give place to the authority of Him who has the seven Spirits of God, and whose apostles, they who followed Him as the rejected Man on the earth, shall sit upon the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? But of this we are sure that the number “seventy” is not confined to its mere historical significance. For we do not read that the seventy elders took any part in bearing the burden of the people; they disappear, and Moses alone is the channel of communication between Jehovah and the people. Aaron was sometimes joined with him, but Moses ordinarily the more prominent. It follows that there is an intimation of something future; and that it could not be in any case a display of divine wisdom to meet an unforeseen contingency. It is however a brief glance. The present purpose was a rebuke to Moses; this given, the chosen elders disappear.

Moses forgot the power of God, and looking at himself saw only weakness. It is something to know we are weak, but why not look to God? Was this the first time that he had looked to other than God? All are prone to look to self or to man. If in a work God gives us to do, self in the form of diffidence often appears, and as often when not sent, self is very bold. Before God sent him to deliver Israel, Moses is bold and slays an Egyptian, thinking that Israel would know that they were to be delivered by his hand (Acts 7:25). The consequence was, Moses had to flee. Forty years after, God appears in the burning bush. The boldness of nature is gone and in its place is the diffidence of nature. Diffidence has a very amiable appearance sometimes, but it is sin when it prevents obedience. Here was want of faith in the power of God, the same thing we see in Num. 11. But a similar want of trust in God led him to yield to Jethro's advice (Ex. 18:18 &c). Not by Jehovah's command but by Jethro's counsel he made subordinate judges. Swayed by his father-in-law he left the place of confidence in God, and deputed his own work to others. A still graver feature of this form of self appears in Num. 10:31. He had put others in his own place, now he puts man in God's place; he invites Hobab to remain, “for thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.” What need of Hobab's eyes, if Jehovah is there? This is preferring human wisdom to God's leadings. This is not of faith. When a time of difficulty comes instead of quiet trust in God, as when

he said “stand still and see the salvation of God” he breaks out in complaint against God. “And if Thou deal Thus with me.” How unbelief grows even in a believer when the root is unjudged. At the first a false humility, then deputing to others the work God had given him, next seeking guidance from man, at length despondent and in “wretchedness” asking to be taken out of it altogether.

Jethro told him it was too much for him, and he believes it, and tells God he is not able. It is in effect saying God had put the wrong man to lead Israel. Is not this very near charging God with folly? See what comes of listening to man in the things of God, Jethro would relieve Moses of part of his burden, and no doubt he meant kindly, but he was interfering with God's order. Moses yielded then, and now breaks down entirely, and this great and honored servant of God, having lost confidence, is as other men; he would like to find a refuge in death from his “wretchedness.” So also did Elijah many years after, a servant nearly as prominent in the land as was Moses in the wilderness. But each was tried through the wickedness of the people, and their trust in God was tried in accordance with the relation each bore to Israel. No other could have had their trial which was peculiar to their position. And God used their special circumstances as a trial of faith. In their failure there is a common feature, they both wish for death (1 Kings 19:4). For both forgot the power of God. And “I” is prominent in each. I am not able, said Moses; and, I only am left, said Elijah. To each the power of God is displayed; to Moses in the miraculous supply of quails; to Elijah, in the tempest, the earthquake, and the fire. He who knew the heavy strain that was put upon them, was very gentle to them.

Many a saint tried with much sorrow longs to be away. It is a blessed thing to long to be with Christ. It is far better to depart and be with Christ. But that is the question; is it to be with Christ or away from the world? If only the latter it is different from the prayer of the Lord on our behalf, “I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” To long to be out of the world merely because we are weary is not submission to His will. It was weariness that made Moses wretched and say, “kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand,” and that made Elijah say, “It is enough, take my life, I am not better than my fathers.” That is, notwithstanding his mission as a prophet, he was in no better condition than those who went before him.

This losing sight of the power of God comes out still more when Moses is commanded to say to the people that they shall have flesh for a whole month. He is astonished, and dares even to challenge the power of God, “The people are six hundred thousand footmen, and Thou hast said that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?” Such doubt, in one who had seen the Red Sea divided, and the people pass through dry-shod, who had seen water gush from the dry rock, and bread rained upon them from heaven, would be incredible did we not know that the integrity of faith can only be maintained when all other dependence than that on God is cast aside. The challenging God's power here is just the result of following Jethro's counsel, and is a very natural sequence to inviting Hobab to be eyes for them through. the wilderness. Some one has said that faith is omnipotent, and in the sense that all things are possible to faith, it is true; on the other hand, let but the slightest taint of flesh touch it, and the man of faith becomes as Samson when his Nazarite locks were cut off. Nothing so strong as faith, nothing so weak as a man who has lost faith. It was a far more solemn thing to doubt the power of God than his previous reproaches, to which he had given way through his “wretchedness.” And a more direct rebuke

comes from God. “Is Jehovah's hand waxed short?” What a reminder is here of previous wonders and mighty signs and deliverances, and how it must have overwhelmed the soul of Moses as the past history of the people flashed upon him. But it is accompanied with grace. The self, the despondency, and the unbelief, all disappear in presence of that mighty word of grace, “Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not.” And the grace is in this, that God makes the miracle to have a special bearing upon him. “Thou shalt see,” but he waits not to see before he believes. The word brings him back to his true place before God. The word came for his sake, and it accomplishes that for which it was given. We hear no more desponding words, and doubts of God's ability to supply flesh for the people: he immediately goes to them and tells them the words of Jehovah with all the authority of restored faith.

How sweet it was to him, when confidence is again restored, to dwell upon the condescension of God in making His word come to pass, as lie says, “Unto thee.” Were the people unthought of? Was it not to provide for them? Yea, verily, but to bring Moses to judge his doubts, and to bring him before the people as the faithful servant was of greater moment even than feeding the thousands of Israel. And so God says, “Thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.” He had gone down very far in the depths of unbelief, but God had gone down after him and brought him up out of the mire of doubt and set him again upon faith as a rock. But he has learned a new lesson, as well as re-learned the old one of faith. And the new lesson is brokenness of spirit: he is humble and would have all the Lord's people prophets like himself. Not now “I” a leader, but one of the led. If the thought had not been in his heart that he himself was Israel's nursing father, and had to bear them in his bosom, he would not have uttered such unseemly language to God when he found he was unable. God was the nursing Father, and Moses judges himself and bows; God makes it manifest to him that He has resources outside the flocks and the herds, yea, other than the fish of the sea, and that He alone is able to bear the burden of this people. It is made manifest unto Moses— “unto thee.” That Moses had truly bowed to the rebuke of God's grace, is plain from his words to Joshua who, jealous for the honor of his master, would have Eldad and Medad. silenced. God had taken of his spirit and had put it upon them, but it evokes no feeling of jealousy in the breast of Moses. “Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, and that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them.” That great “I” just before so prominent is gone, and remembering the word of God that He would take of the Spirit that was upon himself and put it upon the seventy, he desires the Spirit of Jehovah to rest upon all the people. Not a few to be nearly equal to himself, but all Israel to be prophets endowed with the Spirit of Jehovah. Where would then be the leadership and prominency of Moses? He would only be as one of them. This is the spirit of his prayer, this makes manifest that the lesson of grace was not in vain to him. True faith and self-abasement always go hand in hand.

What holy teaching for the church of God! A page from the history of the secret life of Moses which God alone had read. No ear but His heard the desponding cry of His servant. Israel knew nothing of it. The process was a secret between God and Moses, and gone through in His presence. Moses learned there something that the law could not teach, the grace of God in spite of his failure. The power of faith in the end overcoming his fear and distress, is beyond those who take their stand on law-doing. Therefore all is hidden from the people who could not have entered into it. But it is written for the admonition of the saints of this dispensation that we may watch against the first risings of unbelief, which if unjudged works like leaven, unseen it may be, till some trial

brings it out bare before us. What a mercy then to find that we can take all to God. What grace that even if filled with murmurs, God listens and answers our hearts' need, not dealing with its according to our foolish words. Moses went into the presence of God murmuring, grieving, and doubting, but he comes out believing, and his burden removed, and carries the message of Jehovah direct to the people. This failure of Moses in patience and trust is one of God's lessons of faith as we journey through the wilderness. As our Lord said, “Watch and pray,” there is no one however exalted in service can cease to watch and to pray without suffering loss.

Wilderness Lessons: 3. Discipline of Moses or His Trial

The result for Moses after the trial, though found wanting during the time, is blessing. He did not despise the manna, but there was righteous judgment for those that did despise it, longing for Egypt's food. Moses, though desponding and unbelieving, carried his trouble to God and was delivered. With the people it was very different; they simply lusted after flesh, and God in His displeasure gave them their desire. Solemn indeed the condition when the granting of our requests becomes a judgment. There was abundance given till they loathed it “Because that ye have despised Jehovah who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?” This loathing was not the mere natural effect of surfeiting, it had a feature which marked it as a special judgment. Nor was that all: direct and immediate wrath fell upon them. There was no delay, for “while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague.” There was both the plague and the wrath.

This is God's righteous way of dealing with people under law. Later on in their history there was more forbearance shown them; but forbearance at this particular time would have compromised the righteousness of God. There was a divine necessity for immediate judgment. The ways of grace had been largely displayed. If they choose law, they must learn God's ways as a Righteous Governor. And where grace is despised, judgment is always heavier.

Saints now may fall into something analogous to Israel's sin. When the heart is drawn away from Christ, and becomes dissatisfied with the portion of grace, that which drew the heart aside soon becomes naught but a disappointment and a loathing. When the pleasant things of this life, its riches, honors, or even its quiet ease become an object of desire, not subject to the will of God, their Egypt character is practically forgotten and in heart like Israel saints go back into Egypt. In such a condition of soul Christ is displaced as the object of our affections; the love of the things of the world grows in the heart which necessarily brings upon the soul chastisement from the Father. A not uncommon form of chastening is disappointment in the things once coveted, then acquired, and afterward loathed. Disappointments like this are found among men, but with them it is simply the reaction of nature. With saints God uses these disappointments to wean them from the love of the world and draw them nearer to Himself. He gives the consciousness that fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ is practically lost. Next He creates a longing in the soul for a renewal of intercourse, and then He leads again to the green pastures and still waters, and the dross character of Egypt's fare appears. Many saints have to go through such disappointments.

We have had a glimpse of the inner life of Moses, and we have seen the gracious way in which God dealt with his native unbelief, so that after the process he appears again as the faithful servant and special messenger of Jehovah to the people. Circumstances, though no excuse, hid from Moses for a moment the power of God to meet all need. The time for faith without sight was not yet come, and God in accordance with His dispensational dealings, says “thou shalt see.” The superior blessedness of believing without seeing is the privilege of saints now. The characteristic

of faith under the law was to see and believe. Moses did believe before he saw, but he waited to see as the confirmation of his faith. Not so with as. We truly wait to see, not confirmation while here below of the absolute certainty of God's promises, but their fulfillment in the glory, when the church in heaven and Israel on the earth shall prove how trim the word of God is. Yea, fulfillment will unveil more onto our eyes than we can now discern in the fullest promise.

Here in Num. 12 we have two different lessons to which we will do well to take heed. The one is to beware of spiritual pride, and to bow to God's will in the order of His house; the other, God's intervention on behalf of His despised servant. “And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.” Moses rejected by Israel (Acts 7:27) and in exile marrying a Gentile was the foreshadowing of the rejection of One greater than he, of One who during the time of His rejection calls His bride from among the Gentiles. It was only a shadow, and the substance was needed to learn its import. The True Light dissolves all shadows. But this marriage affords a specious opportunity for disputing the position of Moses whose meekness, so marked in wishing that all the Lord's people were prophets, does not shelter him from envy and depreciation. Indeed it not infrequently happens that the most meek are the most exposed to the shafts of envy, to the disparaging statements of those who are greatly inferior. And we have an instance here that not even the tie of kindred prevented Miriam and Aaron from speaking against their brother. The pretense is his marriage with the Ethiopian woman. It was only a peg whereon to hang their jealousy. The Pharisees showed a kindred spirit when, in their envy of the Lord and hatred of His grace, they objected to His eating with publicans and sinners. And this spirit is as insidious, as various in its aspects. The Pharisaic brethren in Jerusalem were not free from its influence when they charged Peter with going to men uncircumcised and eating with them.

Miriam and Aaron soon show their real thought, and resent themselves as of equal importance with Moses. Not his marriage but his position offends them. “Hath Jehovah indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?” Whatever the pretext envy may use, how soon it unmasks itself and discovers its naked deformity! If these two gave vent to their jealous feeling in the hearing of the people, they mast have fallen immediately in the estimation of every discerning Israelite. But there is a far more solemn thing than losing the esteem of man. “And Jehovah heard it.” They were not thinking of Jehovah, but of themselves; pride and jealousy swayed them; and when the heart is under the influence of such feelings, it easily finds an excuse for speaking against God's servants. All that is unkind and untrue is unscrupulously used, all that is brotherly is forgotten, under cover of a pretended zeal for God and His truth. But the Lord will soon bring every secret thing into the light, and the hidden, and perhaps in many an instance the unsuspected, spring will appear. Then each will receive according to the things done in the body.

The prominency given to Moses when God miraculously confirmed His word by him in providing flesh for the people seems that which so particularly stirred up the envy of Miriam and Aaron. But such an outbreak was the result of feelings which had been permitted to grow and take form in their heart. It is well to remember that, if we allow and do not judge the root, God will make the fruit manifest, and to our shame. It is evident that the indulgence of evil in their hearts had rendered them both incapable of estimating the true position of Moses. His despondency at the beginning might have been known to them; but they knew not the secret dealing of God with him. And when he with renewed faith in the power of God went to the people with the words of Jehovah, the great change from unbelief to faith, from despondency to confidence, may have surprised them. The

immediate confirmation of the word spoken by Moses in the wrath that fell upon the people only helped to bring out the unholy feeling of jealousy. Why should he be so distinguished? Is he the only one to whom Jehovah gives His word for the people? why should he be so preeminent? “hath He not spoken by us also?”

God confirms Moses in his place, and asserts His own sovereignty as to whom He speaks and the manner of communication. He assigns to each his place in His house. Aaron would intrude into the office God had given to Moses. There was not merely envy and pride, but the spirit of disobedience against God. Therefore the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Aaron and Miriam.

It was a solemn moment when Jehovah said “Come out, ye three, unto the tabernacle of the congregation.” The tabernacle received that name when Moses set it up outside the camp as a witness against an idolatrous people, and against Aaron and his calf (Ex. 33). The question then was between Jehovah and the people. Moses acts at once, in separation, apart from the established order. All that sought the Lord resorted to it. And Moses was most prominent, for it was then no personal slight. The majesty and truth of God were assailed. In meekness he leaves that in the hand of God. What a lesson here for the servants of the Lord in the face of depreciation, or even calumny! And Moses is held up by the word as a pattern. What a testimony the Spirit gives of this man! “Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” Yet afterward he failed in meekness (Num. 20:10). There was but one perfect Man the earth ever saw, who never failed, who with divine truth could say of Himself, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” Moses was only a man, and to have asserted his own meekness would have proved the contrary. If we may so say, he asserted his meekness by saying nothing But the Holy Spirit declares it: none so meek as he. Enough for him that Jehovah heard the injurious words of Miriam and Aaron. The question now apparently is between Moses on the one side, and Miriam and Aaron on the other. He who was prompt to act and be foremost in separation, when the question was between Jehovah and idolatry, is now meek and silent in the presence of his depreciators. But as he formerly stood for God, now God appears for him. God takes the matter up as His own, and calls the three unto the tabernacle of the congregation, and the two guilty ones are made to know that it is not so much against Moses as against God they have spoken. And mark how God puts honor upon His faithful and meek servant. Moses on the former occasion stood boldly for the honor of God; now God appears for him and puts honor upon him. None has such intimacy with God as he. “If there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known unto him in a vision and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth even apparently [visibly] and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”

Miriam is smitten with leprosy and only restored at the intercession of the man she had depreciated. And Aaron also has to bow and acknowledge the superior place of Moses. “Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.” “Moses cried unto Jehovah saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee,” and an immediate proof of his intimacy with God is given. After the necessary seclusion of seven days Miriam was brought in again. And thus Moses necessarily stands higher than he did before. God knows how to bring down pride, and provide for the honor of His servants when they are meek; and not less in this day than when Moses lived. Only let not servants attempt to vindicate

themselves. The right way and the right time are known to God alone. Till then “in patience possess ye your souls.”

The whole congregation feel the consequences of Miriam's position; while she is shut up, the people journey not. She was one of the leaders. “I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” (Mic. 6:4). It was “Miriam the prophetess” (Ex. 15:20) who led the dance with timbrel and song when Jehovah triumphed over the Egyptian foe. But the more prominent, the more responsible; and the more marked is the judgment. This is a principle not peculiar to the dispensation of the law, it is ever seen in God's government. In God's first recorded act of government in the garden, it is most evident. Eve, seduced by the serpent, seduces Adam. Though Eve was the first transgressor, God begins with the man as the more responsible. He points to the woman, and she to the serpent, as the true culprit; but God comes back to the man and finishes with him. And it is to the man that death is pronounced; the woman was included surely, but the solemn word that he should return to dust after a life of sorrow and toil was spoken to him. And I gather that Miriam seduced Aaron as Eve did Adam. Miriam takes the lead in the sin. It was “Miriam and Aaron” that spake against Moses. But when God calls them, it is “Aaron and Miriam” (ver. 5). The word of God is as precise in the order of words as in their choice. The woman is prominent; it is one mark of sin that it always interferes with God's order of things, and where God as Creator enjoined subjection, there to assume the command. Had Aaron maintained his place, he would not have followed his sister in sin against God. But God pits her in her place; and in judgment Aaron, as the more responsible person who should have rebuked his sister, stands first. He is the guiltier before God.

If so, why is it that Miriam, not he, is smitten with leprosy? Is not God showing here—as in other instances—that the woman represents the position, the result of sin, while in the man we see the unfaithfulness which led to the position? Aaron spiritually was as much a leper as Miriam, but she in the wisdom of God becomes the public witness of His judgment. If Aaron had been a leper, the whole service of the sanctuary would have been interrupted. God in judgment remembers mercy. Moses appears in his highest official character—as mediator. Aaron intercedes for Miriam with Moses. But it is Moses who stands between them and God. So it will be again. The prophet like unto Moses will appear. The leaders of the people have spoken against the MEDIATOR of the new covenant, and again the leaders will have to bow to His supremacy, and the typical Moses is only foreshadowing what the Lord will yet do when He brings in the new earthly covenant for Israel. He will stand between God and the guilty leprous people, and in the due time they all shall be healed.

Another consequence of the leprosy of Miriam is that the native energy of God in leading the people through the wilderness is suspended. God would show the people that it was no ordinary failure, nor was she an ordinary person. Such a sin as hers could only have been by one in her position. Neither she nor Aaron were novices, but they fell into the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6). God resented their speaking against His servant; in no other case do we read of God's challenge, “Were ye not afraid?” When a “leader” sins, the consequences for the congregation or for the assembly are far greater than if another fail. The influence of leaders in the assembly of God is a solemn reality, and their position is a weighty factor in the discipline which failure inevitably brings. The body suffers if the least member is injured, much more if it be an important member. Individual members of the church of God may not through a leader's failure lose communion with God, nor cease to grow in grace and in knowledge, even while bearing the

common shame on their heart and humbled on account of it. But the assembly as a whole is hindered in the path of public testimony for Christ; and there cannot be greater hindrances to corporate testimony than the spirit that actuated Miriam and Aaron, a spirit that has dared to intrude into the church of God, the church which is called the pillar and ground of the truth. The world may well say—the witnesses are not agreed: of what value is their testimony (John 17:21) As a witness for Christ the church of God is like Miriam shut up as a leper. Will the leprosy be healed? Yes, I am fully persuaded that God will bring the simple and faithful into closer intimacy with Himself, and that, by a deeper feeling of dependence upon Him. Thus, though it be a narrowed sphere, and more manifest weakness, grace will produce a brighter and a clearer testimony.

The Holy Spirit (ver. 3) bears testimony to the meekness of Moses, in ver. 7 to his faithfulness, and this last is Jehovah's word to Aaron and Miriam. It is a wonderful testimony. Was he faithful when he doubted God's power? But that was not a public failure. It was the secret exercise of a soul that had not yet learned the all-sufficiency of God for every emergency, and when he appeared before the congregation, every trace of the conflict was gone. God had given him victory. His failure here was not public and official. God says, “faithful in all my house.” It is the public testimony that is meant, as “my house” shows. Up to that time Moses by no outward act had been unfaithful. And how did this commendation of Moses fall upon the ear of Aaron? Was it not a rebuke? If there was ever a time when Aaron recalled with shame the memory of his unfaithfulness in the matter of the calf, it must have been when God commended the faithfulness of Moses. God intended Aaron to feel it, for he when speaking against Moses had forgotten it. If we remember our failures, God will forget them; but if we forget, God will bring them painfully to our remembrance.

In a later day Moses forgot both meekness and faithfulness, when he and Aaron together failed (Num. 20), “because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” This was a great public failure, yet in a still later day the Holy Ghost again records that Moses was faithful in all His house (Heb. 3:5). And why in Numbers is it “mine house” and in Hebrews “his house"? Why the change from my, to his? Because the Son was come, and the old “house” is no longer owned. The foundation of the new “house” (Eph. 2:19-22) was laid, and Christ as Son over His own house is not a servant but Lord. And He alone is the Faithful, and His house has put out of sight the old house in which, notwithstanding his eminence, Moses was only a servant. But is it not wonderful, that though Moses failed so that he was not permitted to enter Canaan, yet centuries after the testimony of the Spirit concerning the man is “faithful in all his house?” Such is the reckoning of grace.

Chapter 188

Wilderness Lessons: 4. Israel Under Discipline

In Num. 13-15 Israel is brought to the border the promised land. Up to this point they have seen of wonderful things. The Red Sea divided for them, quails miraculously brought, manna rained down from heaven, water from the smitten rock, in short nothing but mercy and goodness marked God's dealings with them. Though they murmured, God gave them all they needed. They should know that He was Jehovah their God by His goodness. After the giving of the law when judgment necessarily came in, still mercy was the prominent feature. God prepared the way as before, led them, and gave them victory. There could be no obstacle to His power, and, if led by Him, no need for the exercise of their own prudence and wisdom.

At this point (Num. 13) they seem to think it right to judge for themselves, they would be independent of God. On former occasions it was the outbreak of nature discontented with the way and longing for the things of Egypt. Here on the border of the land there is no cry for bread or for water, but human prudence interfering with the path of faith. Prudence surely has its sphere; but when the word of God is given, human prudence and wisdom is sin. Had not God said He would drive out the Canaanites? What need to search? Moses said “Be of good courage.” Good courage would not have gone to spy out the land, but would have acted at once upon the word of God. Vain the exhortation to be courageous when there is no faith in the promise; and the sequel proved there was no good courage. “Bring of the fruit of the land.” Why? Had not God said it was good; they wanted to see for themselves—was the land as good as God said? Yea, it was marvelous; two men were required to bring back a branch with one cluster of grapes. The searchers that brought back an evil report are compelled to say, “surely it floweth with milk and honey.” But there was an insurmountable obstacle to their possessing it: they of the land were strong, the cities walled and great, and the children of Anak were there!

The evil report was not that the spies lied in saying the people were strong and the cities were great (all these would but make more manifest the power of God), but because in effect it was denying God's power and His right to give the land to whomsoever He pleased. For unbelief the land belonged to giants, and they themselves were only grasshoppers: what could they do?

We may ask, if the searching of the land was not of faith, why did God say, “Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan?” Was He about to cease from going before them, to leave them to their own resources? Nay, God remained the same, His power and faithfulness to His own word were unchanged. Why then did God tell Moses to send spies? What was the occasion for this seeming change in His manner with them? Deut. 1:21 furnishes the answer. There we find the word of Jehovah God, “Go up and possess it,” not search it. The people say they will send men to spy out the land. This is disobedience. Moses is pleased with their proposal. Was it of faith to be pleased? Why listen to the people when God had said, “go up and possess it?” It is at least weak to encourage others in a faithless path. Nevertheless God beard their words and proves the people. Now He gives the command, “Send thou men.”

This is not the only instance where God allows man to have his way, fulfilling His own purpose all the same. In Balaam's case God first commanded him not to go to Balak. Balaam betrayed his own will in still seeking God's sanction. Then God said, Go. Yet He met him in the way and would have slain him, only that the ass saw more than the man. Willfulness sometimes appears in the people of God; hindrance of blessing is the sure result. Moses, the honored servant of God, apparently forgets both the promise and the command, yielding to the faithless people. How often saints overlook the path of faith and give way to circumstances, even to the being pleased with what is not according to the word of God!

Israel did not trust in Him who gave the promise, and they fell under the fear of man. They should have remembered that giants and walled cities were but grasshoppers before the word of God: Unbelief reverses the word, and they become the grasshoppers. Faith is powerful to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin and Satan; unbelief builds them up. In righteous judgment God allows them to be what they in unbelief said they were, “We are in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” Even so, what a bright opportunity for the confidence of faith! And how many such like opportunities saints now lose through fear of man! A victory is brought within our reach; we fail, and the opportunity is gone forever. We fail, not in the fight, but in faith to meet the foe. So with Israel, they think not of the fruitful land flowing with milk and honey, but of the walled cities; not of the grapes of Eshcol but of the sons of Anak; not of the promise of God but of the power of the enemy.

Possession of the land was from the beginning the hope set before them. Caleb and Joshua cleave to it, and seek to bring the people to a right mind. They endeavor to stem the torrent of unbelief, and count upon the presence of God. “Jehovah is with us: fear them not.” Faith, when prominent as a witness for the truth of God's word, in every case as here, meets with the murderous enmity of the world. “All the congregation bade stone them with stones.”

If Moses erred in being pleased with the proposal to send spies, it did not touch the root of his faith, or lessen his concern for the honor of Jehovah; it was a momentary forgetfulness. And God gives him the occasion to prove that his care for Jehovah's word is greater than any desire for his own glory. “How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.”

Moses' first thought is, What will the Egyptians say? what the inhabitants of this land? It is Jehovah's word and honor that fills his heart; and to keep Jehovah's name from being dishonored by the people of Israel, he prays that Israel be forgiven. That was God's way with them “from Egypt even until now.”

In presence of such deep sin and the threatening of God to disinherit them, how instructive to have given to us the true ground of appeal for mercy and forgiveness. Not our need, great as it may be, not even repentance heartfelt and true, but the glory of God, the honor of His name, the written pledge of His faithfulness to those who are under The Blood. For this He puts away the sins and failures of His own people. When we pray, after making known our requests and praying for a Father's forgiveness, do we fully enter into the meaning of “for the sake” or “in the name of Jesus Christ?” Is it merely in our minds a concluding formula? Yet God our Father hears it in its full and blessed import, and answers our prayers according to Him. Otherwise no answer could righteously

be given. So in the pleading of Moses who, utterly forgetful of self, of the glory of being the father of a greater nation, urges the honor of Jehovah's Name as a reason why the people should be forgiven; for the nations would say that Jehovah was not able to bring the people into the land. God hears the prayer and passes over the people's sin. Wonderful combination here! God maintains the honor of His Name, and shows mercy to Israel, vindicating His righteousness in judgment. This is the glory which shall fill the earth. Israel is now driven from it, and the ungodly shall never enter it. But mercy is in store for the remnant—the little ones; they shall possess it and become a nation. God is here, and will then show Himself a Righteous Governor. The men who brought up an evil report of it should never see the land; they died by the plague before Jehovah (14:37). The earth is not yet filled with His glory, but the Psalmist in view of it says, “Praise waiteth for Thee, O God.”

But here we see again the consequence of having put themselves under law. They must turn again to the wilderness, and their carcasses should fall in it. They despised their hope, and it is taken away. Not one above twenty should enter the land, save Caleb and Joshua. The little ones, for whom they pretended to care, God would bring in. In forty years that generation should be wasted in the wilderness, and thus should they know God's breach of promise. They had charged God with bringing them unto the land to die by the sword (ver. 3), and their fearful words come home to them in retributive judgment. “Ye shall know my breach of promise.”

How incapable is man of submitting to God! When brought to the land he would not enter by faith, but would ascertain by the light of human wisdom the possibility of possession; not by faith but by sight. The land was promised; but faith, not works, responds to promise. The same rebelliousness of nature appears when commanded to turn again to the wilderness; for then they essayed to take possession. So said Stephen in a later day, “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.” True faith produces obedience, fleshly confidence is ever opposed to God's ways. The result of their presumption is most disastrous. So confident were they in their own powers that they went without the ark, and contrary to God's command. Yet they pleaded the promise (ver. 40). Too late, man is always ready to plead the word as a sanction for his disobedience; that is, having determined his course, he seeks to make it appear to be the will of God. Are we exposed to the danger of undertaking anything without God, or questioning His known will? Let us take heed; for in presence of the world's opposition to Christ, we—unaccompanied by the ark—shall find ourselves to be only grasshoppers and the enemy to be a giant.

Their sin serves to bring out in brightest prominence the faithfulness of God to His word of promise. Israel's sin cannot nullify the purposes of grace. Righteous judgment may cause delay, but the promise unconditionally given must be performed. The forty years in the wilderness was a necessary and righteous judgment. But up to the end, mercy will ever rejoice over judgment, and the promise is reaffirmed. “When ye be come into the land.” Oh! how blessedly does this same unchangeableness of purpose shine for us, how much fuller, yea, with an eternal meaning! “I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.” With failure and unbelief marking our path, though we have better promises, more God-dishonoring than them, how much brighter shines the grace of our Lord! “Nothing shall take you out of my hand.” Here is not only the assurance of final triumph—more than conquerors through Him—but the power for daily victory over self and the world.

The being brought to the land was their special testing, and more momentous than their former trial at Sinai. There it was the corruption of the flesh. They feasted in honor of their idol and then rose up to play. They imitate the idolatrous revelry of the Egyptians even in this less guilty and more honest than Aaron. The people boldly said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,” but Aaron sought to join Jehovah's name to their idol. When he saw it, he built an altar before it and proclaimed, “Tomorrow is a feast unto Jehovah.”

Here at the border of the land, there is nothing riotous, or outwardly unseemly; no idol, no feasting and playing. On the contrary the respectable world which condemns the obscenities of idolatry, approves the wisdom which guided Israel then. Was it not praiseworthy prudence before entering a hostile country to ascertain the probabilities of victory, and the enemy's power of resistance? The sin here is independency of God. They would test the fruitfulness of the land and the strength of the inhabitants. Little did they think that God was testing them, not merely by law—that had been done—but after He had proclaimed Himself “merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” Heb. 3 refers to this very time; it is the day of temptation, “When your fathers tempted me “; and the Holy Spirit employs another word—provocation—to show the exceeding iniquity of their sin. They saw His works forty years and were continually provoking Him. But Heb. 3 has special reference to this time. “So I sware in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest” (cf. Num. 14:23; Heb. 3: 8-11). This despising of the land was the provocation.

But there is more here than the longsuffering of God, or the making bare man's heart, which refuses God's blessings as such, and seeks to obtain them by its own judgment and strength. Man does not submit to be simply a receiver. The fact is, it was not God's purpose to bring them into the land then. The lessons of the wilderness were but beginning, many more were to come. In this, and the following, God had before Him the varied results and efficacy of the work of Christ in its application to the need of saints now passing through this wilderness world. And man had to be in a condition where grace in all its fullness could be displayed, and that to the glory of God, when on man's part everything was forfeited. Israel, driven from the land after having seen it and tasted its fruit, were worse than ever before. They were twice lost, twice ruined; and the first at Sinai not nearly so complete as now. They were not sent to forty years' wandering only for worshipping the calf. God then proclaimed His Name, though even then as One who would by no means clear the guilty. As a prophetic declaration having in view the spared remnant and the guilty unrepentant nation, we apprehend, in measure, its meaning; but as the principle of salvation where all are guilty and lost, impossible of application. For it is the guilty that are cleared, and the lost are saved. Here at the border of the land, where ruin is absolute, there is no word of not clearing the guilty, but “when ye be come into the land.” Thus does mercy triumph over judgment, and grace over law.

What then of those who say that though saved by grace we are under law as a rule of life? Nay, to accept law in any sense is to deny the Spirit's power and guidance; for accepting the law implies my power to keep it—grace, that nothing keeps me but the power of God. We read the lesson of what our power is in Israel acknowledging the goodness of the land but despairing Leviticus possess it. They lost, for the time, the land. And Christians who put themselves under law as a rule of life lose the enjoyment of peace and blessing which are known only through grace.

It was so with Israel at that moment. Law was then not set aside, yet here is an instance, among many, where the grace which was afterward to be revealed, rises above the provocation, and

shines with prophetic light. There are further lessons of how God can meet special sins, where man's nature is more fully displayed. We always find in each page of the people's journeying that the persistency of sin is met by grace still more persistent. Christ also as the Object of faith was to be set forth in more striking and wondrous types, in grace and wisdom assuming that form and aspect suited to meet each phase of sin as it broke out. And the phases of sin we see in the wilderness could not have been in the land. We are in the wilderness and liable to the same sins. The lessons there taught are more for us than for them. Had grace then led them in, we should have lost some of the richest manifestations of Christ as Priest and Intercessor. Not only was the wilderness the necessary scene for the peculiar evil of man, and for the grace to meet it, but our time also. And the forty years of judgment for them became forty years of teaching for us. Again, had they been detained in the wilderness but not through their own sin, grace would not have appeared so sovereign, nor man so hopelessly evil. Truly in all the Lord Jesus was the One before the mind of God, and all is made subservient to His glory. What immense favor to know Him in all this fullness of grace! But the wilderness, not the land, was the right place for its display.

Chapter 189

Wilderness Lessons: 5. Israel's Discipline or Preparation for the Lord

Israel driven away from the land in judgment was the last thing needed in the preparation of the platform whereon God would reveal wonders of grace beyond all seen before. Abundant proof is now given that nothing less than sovereign grace and mercy could ever bring them into the land. Such murmuring, such base ingratitude to Him who provided for all their need, their quasi-refusal to take the land as God's gift, their attempt to possess it as the result of their own valor, and their consequent defeat, all these are the circumstances in which they begin their wanderings. But here it is we learn the hitherto untold riches of grace as displayed in the varied presentation of Christ, the Sacrifice, the Priest and Intercessor. Also the resources of mercy which constantly interposed, and which though mingled with judgment—showing mercy to thousands and by no means clearing the guilty—ever took the form most adapted to their sin and need, proclaimed then, and now to us, how infinite the resources of grace, how marvelous the wisdom of God, how exceedingly great His long-suffering, how unchangeable His purpose. The shining forth of all these in the wilderness is magnificent.

Yet how brighter and simpler all these shine in the plain language of the New Testament where not by type and shadow but in the unmistakable words of our Lord the same grace, wisdom, and purpose of God are declared! “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one” (John 10:28-30). And the apostle, looking at the purpose and power of God, exclaims, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” How slow we are to enter into this blessed position so as to realize it practically! And does not grace still brighter shine, in that, while failing to apprehend its fullness, it still continues, its fullness not abated. Is not this the glory of grace? Unappreciated yet abounding!

In Num. 15 God assures the people that He will bring them into the land of their habitation. This is significant; not merely into the land, but into the land of their habitation. This implies establishment in permanency. God is looking onward to their bright future; not as in the land on trial followed by certain failure, from which sin could and did expel them, but when the land should be their permanent habitation, when, all trial past, the still greater provocation of rejecting the Christ forgiven, clean water sprinkled upon them, a new heart given, and each one sitting under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, then, and not before will they fully realize “the land of your habitation which I give unto you.”

The ordinances of offerings which follow are for the land. There and then not only burnt-offerings, fulfilling a vow, free-will offerings, which are connected with public worship, but also in their daily life, eating the bread of the land they were to offer a heave-offering to Jehovah. The heave-offering was to be eaten by the priest's family at home, the daughters equally with the sons could eat of it (Num. 18:11). Here the whole congregation are to eat of it. They will be a kingdom of priests. In their public worship they were also to offer wine as a drink-offering—typical of the spiritual joys of the church now, but in its higher aspect fulfilled when the Lord drinks it new with His disciples in the kingdom of His Father—here as fulfilled in the land clearly an emblem of the joys and gladness of the renewed earth rejoicing under the reign of Christ, their own Messiah and King. For then the oil-power of the Holy Spirit—will sanctify even earthly joy and make it acceptable to God.

Was it so during their first tenure of the land? Burnt-offerings, free-will offerings and drink-offerings were commanded, but there is no record of the offering of wine. Even at the dedication of the temple by Solomon, when gladness and fullness of blessing seemed greatest, there is no mention of wine being offered. On the contrary, Solomon's prayer and Jehovah's answer look onward prophetically to their being cast out from the land: mercy is invoked and on repentance Jehovah will restore. So that with all the glory then displayed the land was not yet “the land of their habitation.” Wine was brought with corn and oil for the priests in Hezekiah's time, but not said for offering (2 Chron. 31:4, 5, 6). The wine is reserved for the time of future blessing when the curse is removed from the earth which must be delivered from the bondage of Satan ere wine can be by Israel poured out an acceptable offering to God. Then at that time the burnt-offering—pointing to Christ, and the oil—signifying the power of the Holy Spirit—and the wine hallowed by the burnt-offering and the oil shall together be presented to make “a sweet savor unto Jehovah.”

If in the millennial kingdom of the Son of man, Israel restored and the earth blessed can with the wine of their joy present a sweet savor to God, how much sweeter will be the wine of our joy when we in risen bodies drink the new wine with Christ in the Father's kingdom! Pre-eminently this is the wine that “cheereth God and man” (Judg. 9:13). It is Christ in matchless grace bringing us to share in His joys and glory, fruit of His redemption.

The ordinances for the congregation, and for the individual will only have their true fulfillment in the land. Doubtless the responsibility of observing them lay upon all the people from the first, but were they ever in such a state before God as is implied in these ordinances? Whether in the wilderness, or in the land, rebellion and idolatry mark their history. The bright spots here and there are but exceptions to their downward course. But when the whole twelve tribes are restored, then sin will be the exception. All will be taught of God; no need for one to teach his neighbor, saying, “Know the Lord.” This knowledge will not be confined to Israel, though they will be far in advance of any other nation in that day. And with them no sudden miraculous transition from ignorance to perfect knowledge. They will grow in the knowledge of Jehovah, as saints now are exhorted to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel will recognize their Messiah in the person of Jesus. They will learn that He is Jehovah the King of glory, Jehovah of hosts. Saul of Tarsus learned that Jesus was Jehovah. Israel will be the converse of this; they will learn that Jesus—whom they rejected—is Jehovah. But they will be brought to the land at least in partial ignorance. This ordinance provides for that condition. Isa. 65:20 gives further light; for while God provides for mere ignorance according to His mercy, the willful sinner is immediately judged. “There shall be no more thence an infant of days nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a

hundred years old, but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." In that millennial day death will only overtake the presumptuous sinner. The child shall die a hundred years old, i.e. none shall die young, but the sinner dying under the immediate judgment of God, even though a hundred years old, would be but a child compared with the longevity of the righteous; "for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

Judging from the difference in the atonement to be made by the priest, the ignorance of the congregation is a more serious thing than ignorance in the individual. Sin is ever defiling, and interrupts communion. For the congregation there must be burnt-offering—Christ always a sweet savor—the foundation upon which alone communion can be restored. This restoration to communion is indicated by the meat-offering and the drink-offering. There must also be confession of the failure, though it be caused by ignorance, and so we have the sin-offering. For the individual only the sin-offering is appointed, his own confession of sin through ignorance. The other offerings are equally needed for the restorations of one soul, as for a congregation; but they are implied in the restoration of the individual to his place in the congregation, where he takes the place of being accepted through the efficacy of the burnt-offering, and enjoys again the communion—meat-offering, &c.—which the congregation had not lost.

The presumptuous sinner cannot plead ignorance; his sin is the violation of a well-known command. These two sins are the only ones here looked at for the land. The general character of the restored nation, as we have seen, is that all shall know the Lord (comp, Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 35:12). If any man notwithstanding knowledge commit sin, then immediate judgment follows. Thus it is distinguished from mere ignorance. To despise the word of Jehovah is presumptuous, it is sin apart from the nature of the thing done. An instance is given, for God teaches us both by example and precept. The children of Israel found a man that gathered sticks on the sabbath day, and he is put in ward until Jehovah declares His judgment upon him. All the congregation stone him. The same was done to another who had blasphemed the Name (of Jehovah). In the one case the act was sin because it had been forbidden. The other was sin even if there had been no command. The seemingly trivial character of the presumptuous sin recorded in Num. 15 is to show the absolute and perfect obedience to be rendered by Israel in that day, and the swift judgment is also in keeping with Isa. 65. As compared with Lev. 24 human judgment would see great disparity between the two, and while meting out the heaviest penalty to the blasphemer would look upon the gathering of sticks on the sabbath as of trifling import. But in divine things human judgment is always wrong. Each was equal to the other in guilt, despising the authority of God. If we saw nothing more than that the penalty in each case was death, this is sufficient warrant to pronounce them equally guilty, for God is righteous in judgment. But in truth their sin was essentially the same: both were presumptuous sinners; for He who said, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain," said also, "Remember the sabbath to keep it holy." Neither of these sinners could plead ignorance. Each violated the divine majesty, if not a well-known command.

We learn that, while death is meted to the presumptuous sinner, ignorance does not make sin to be no sin: atonement must be made for it.

But another case is provided for, and a far more common one—forgetfulness. It is closely allied to presumptuous sin as implying previous knowledge; the difference being that the presumptuous sinner did not forget but was consciously disobedient. How prevalent is this forgetfulness now

among saints who would shrink from everything like presumptuous sin! Where there are inordinate desires for earthly things, heavenly things are forgotten. Any object before the soul other than Christ is a practical denial of our separation from the world. With Israel God established an ordinance that all might remember, and He gave an outward and visible sign. “Speak unto the children of Israel and bid them that they make them fringes In the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of their borders a ribband of blue; and it shall be unto you for a fringe that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes after which ye use to go a whoring; that ye may remember and do all my commandments and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord your God.” This ordinance was not deferred till they were come into the land. The former ordinances begin with “when ye be come into the land;” this is now omitted. It is an ordinance suited to their pilgrim character, journeying through the wilderness; and therefore has a very special application to Christians passing through the world. For the Israelite whether in the tent or in the field the ribband of blue would always be present. It was a perpetual monitor. How simple the thing, but how momentous the connection! Not merely a memento of the law, but leading their thoughts to God, who not only gave a law but first of all delivered them from Egyptian bondage, and brought them out of that land that He might be their God. God would be their God. Even then He was seeking worshippers: although it was a carnal worship, a mere shadow of what was then still future when the Father would seek worshippers who would worship God in spirit and in truth. Then it was to bring back by means of Israel the forgotten name of God into the world which Satan had filled with idolatry, himself the god of this world worshipped in every idol. Satan had grasped every nation upon the earth; God would have one nation for Himself, and He put forth His power and took them out of Egypt to be their God. “I am Jehovah your God.” What a spring is here for obedience, what an appeal to their gratitude! Here is the mercy that delivered, their obligation to obedience, the holiness and separation from all evil, God's authority, and His purpose to be their God, all tied together with a ribband of blue.

Did any Israelite wear this ribband? It is never again alluded to. This ordinance given without any reference to the land shows that God is looking onward to His church, which alone is called to that place of entire separation from the world taught by this symbol. It was after Christ was rejected that He said, “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” The ribband to Israel was a call to personal godliness, while being used as God's instrument of vengeance upon the world's iniquity. It is different for the church now, which is not called to execute God's judgment upon the world, but which is called as a corporate body to be separate not only from its evil, but from its interest and well-being so called. The world is already condemned; it is folly to seek the temporal well-being of a criminal condemned to be hanged. Our ribband of blue calls to a separation as complete and absolute as this. The world was not crucified to Israel, nor they to the world. Both are true for us. The ordinance as given to Israel made them responsible, but as a nation they failed as in the sign so in its import. The color connected it with the blue covering of the ark, that which specially connected it with heaven. At least it has that significance for us. We have not a material blue ribband on our garment, but the heavenly color before our hearts. To them the blue ribband was a means of remembrance; what are the means for us? We have not merely a means, but the power of remembrance, even the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. “But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to

your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). His words, all that He said, tell us of our deliverance from the world, of our standing before God, of His great salvation, of His coming again, of our responsibility to bear fruit, of our place in the coming glory, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Himself: these and more the Spirit keeps before our hearts; and we look back on the cross and see there the foundation of all, present grace and future glory. We bow in worship before God. The Father sought us for this self-same purpose, that He might be our God. It is the Spirit Himself recalling heaven who is our ribband of blue.

Such is our proneness to forget, that even if there were no world soliciting our affections, if we never came in contact with worldly men and things we should still need the power of remembering what we are delivered from, our heavenly destination, and what we should be meanwhile. The ribband was only a means; the Spirit is both means and power.

Note, that presumptuous sin is not here in connection with the congregation. If the "congregation" be a symbol of the church, the body of true believers, we see the reason, for presumptuous sin entailing death would be the cutting off of the church. The "body" can never be cut off. The church of God will be, must be, maintained as such according to the counsels of grace. Faith even now knows that as to our position we are in the heavenlies in Christ. The epistle to the Ephesians declares it; there the church is brought "into the land" —no cutting off there.

Still the church is actually here in the wilderness and liable to sins of ignorance. The being brought to the land does not mean that the church while here is perfect in knowledge. We have not yet attained to fullness of stature; but the whole body grows, according as it is said, "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." So even the babes have an unction from the Holy One and thus are endowed with a capacity to know all things. Many things may be done through ignorance by the church here below. Failure is not thereby excused, but grace provides for it.

Applying "congregation" to local assembly, not only may it be guilty of ignorance, but of presumption, and then comes under the same discipline as an individual. Strange and evil doctrines, looseness of life and conduct, surround us: a liberality dishonoring to the Lord, as disguising itself under the mask of Christian brotherhood, is one of the greatest snares of the present day, its popularity making it still more dangerous. Not only individuals but assemblies may be drawn aside. Anything that touches in the least the glory of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, answering to Lev. 24, or willful and allowed disobedience in any one of their number to godly practice, answering to Num. 15, makes any such assembly cease to be an assembly of God. Such assemblies must be dissolved. It is past being cleansed by the cutting out of a leprous stone. The whole is tainted. The "death" in the Old Testament is excision, or disowning according to N. T. Presumptuous sin must be dealt with according to the principles of the word.

A local assembly may in ignorance be connected more or less close with another which has failed to judge the evil it knows. But ignorance does not condone sin. If through ignorance an individual becomes a partaker of other men's sins, there remains for him the sin-offering; or if an assembly, grace has still provided though in a more impressive way, beginning with the burnt-offering—confessing Christ in His unassailable purity and holiness, and as such a sacrifice for sins; i.e. the utter and public repudiation of all intercommunion with any assembly which has not so cleared itself.

At no time in the history of the church of God has there been more need than at the present for saints taking heed to these things. Let us beware of presumptuous sin. Nor can we plead ignorance, for the word of God is full and complete. Nor ought we to forget; for the Comforter is here to bring all things of Christ to our remembrance.

Chapter 190

Wilderness Lessons: 6. Definition of Flesh

There is more than one use of the word “flesh” in Scripture. It is used for “men” as “All flesh [= all men] shall see the salvation of God;” also declaring the Lord's assumption of humanity “the Word became flesh.” Again, it expresses the fact that our knowledge of Christ is not after a human sort, “though we have known Christ after the flesh as a man here below], yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” Our peculiar knowledge of Him by faith, is as the risen Lord, the Son of God. The most frequent use in the New Testament is to predicate the fallen nature of man either as a condition in which the unregenerate are, or as a principle which believers are called to judge. Of those who are born again it is said “ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:9.)

Whether we look at man as having natural instincts, or intellectual qualities his whole nature in a moral point of view is called “flesh.” “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as others” (Eph. 2:3). Here the desires of the flesh as distinguished from the mind refer to natural interests, and the desires of the mind to his mental, as distinguished from the brute creation. It takes in all the natural man craves for, his desires—tastes as well as lusts. Whatever the object, all are classed as “the lusts of the flesh;” that is, it is the nature of man to desire these things. For the mind is not independent of the flesh, but as the mind excites the flesh, so does the flesh give tone to the mind. That is, the higher and the lower qualities of nature influence each other, and both are “the flesh.”

“The flesh” can assume a religious aspect, but where there is profession without faith, every desire of the mind is of “the lusts of the flesh.” It may be decent and respectable, yea most commendable in the judgment of the world; but it is not of Christ and therefore sin. A believer may yield to his flesh, seeking pre-eminence in the church, and desiring the praise of men. This is a far more serious thing in him than in a man of the world. It is the “flesh” (which the believer has power to judge) intruding into the holy things of God, taking advantage of the position given through faith, to acquire a place for its own exaltation.

Simon Magus is an instance of a would-be professor in the grossest form. Diotrephes, who may have been a believer, is a far more common case. The former is repeated when a position in the church is obtained by money; the latter, where human systems as unscriptural are disallowed, and “flesh,” presuming on the absence of human arrangement, assumes a position and seeks prominence. It is an aspect of the flesh most offensive to God, and has its sphere in the assembly of God. Nothing in the world brings heavier and swifter judgment.

Is it not sometimes the case, that a brother with no power for edification occupies the time and attention of the assembly, his mind submerged in the idea of his own ability? We gladly receive the truth, “One is your Master, Christ; and all ye are brethren” (Matt. 23:8). But to make our common brotherhood a reason for ignoring God's order is to lose its blessedness and to be disobedient to the Master. There are functes in the church and the Master appoints to them as He pleases. “He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some pastors and

teachers” (Eph. 4:11). In the church of God there are special places of service. “Are all apostles” (1 Cor. 12:29)? Any one supposing that, because he is a “brother,” he is at liberty to assume any function in the assembly, gravely errs. No “brother” nor yet the assembly has a right to assume the call to any place of teaching within the church or of evangelizing without. The assembly has to say to orthodoxy and godliness; but there it is a question of discipline and may result in the excluding of an unruly member. Teaching (or talking) in the assembly may be very unprofitable; but when the general purport is godly, it is a solemn thing to bid a brother be silent, lest we should be touching the prerogative of the Master of assemblies. The instant and real remedy is united prayer that the Lord would interpose and remove the cause of all such interruptions to peace and worship, and rebuke pretentious flesh in any. There is a cause for all such manifestations of “flesh,” which may not be in the one individual, but in the assembly as a whole; coldness of heart, worldliness creeping in, and the tone of the assembly low. In such a condition the complaint is heard, “No power in the meetings.” The lack of power in the whole, and the flesh active in one or two, are but the effects of evil permitted and unjudged. This confessed, the Spirit will enable each gathered saint to realize the Lord's presence. But the fault may be and often is in the complainers who are out of communion when healthy souls enjoy the Lord's presence. In any case complaining is not of faith; and it cannot remedy faults even where they may be real.

The “flesh” is always offensive to God, and is never so evil as when obtruding in the holy things of God; it turns the grace of God into lasciviousness, takes pride in the lessons of humility, and makes the favors of God an occasion of judgment. An instance is given in Num. 16. God had given an outward sign that they might remember, and do His commandments and be holy unto their God. But the intent for which the ribband was appointed was lost in the mere sign. God said, Be ye holy. Korah and his company appear as with the ribband, and at once say, We are holy. They include the congregation; but this is only to hide their presumption. The means grace gives for holiness are taken as being themselves holiness—the invariable mistake that flesh makes, which now constantly meets our eye. God has sent His word that sinners may be saved; sinners hear the word, (i.e. in the common language of the day, go to “a place of worship,") and forthwith profess and call themselves Christians. Alas! for the soul thus self-deceived. The flesh, which made Korah and his company call themselves holy, made also them aspire to the priesthood. If they were “holy,” they were as well fitted as Aaron for the office. “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation are holy, every one of them; and Jehovah is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah?” This charge against Moses and Aaron is really against God. For He had lifted Moses and Aaron to the places of leader and of high priest. Indeed, as to who should draw near as priest was no question of holiness, in the sense of piety, but of God's sovereign choice. Aaron was the holy (= the separated) one for the office. All beside were thus forbidden to draw near. Korah aimed at the priesthood, Moses rebukes him and his followers. It was Jehovah who had appointed Aaron; otherwise, “what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?” The sin of Korah is even greater than that of Aaron when he made the calf, and was bringing the Name of Jehovah down to the level of idolatry. He sanctioned the people's worship of the calf and would cover his guilty connivance by calling it a feast to Jehovah. Alas! his imitators have been found. Some of the earliest sins of Christendom are that the people were permitted to follow the heathenish rites of idolatry to which they had been accustomed, and Christian names given to them. The remains of their idolatrous practices may be seen even now, though the indecencies are gone.

Korah in calling the “flesh” holy, would seek to bring it into the sanctuary. It is not idolatry here, but “flesh” seeking to administer the things of Christ. For what is the service of the tabernacle, what the sacrifices, the incense, yea all within the consecrated place, if not types of the coming Christ? Korah's sin brings down a heavier judgment than the worship of the calf. God was more jealous for the honor of Christ—though it be but dealing with shadows and symbols—than for His own. Name of Jehovah when Aaron joined it with idolatry.

This rebellion originated with the Levites; at least a Levite was the leader, and the Levites more guilty than the others. They persuade two hundred and fifty princes, who do not appear to belong to the tribe of Levi, to join them in the priestly function. Why not, if all the congregation are “holy?” Moses rebukes their presumption and warns them. “Even to-morrow Jehovah will show who are His and who is holy.” And each man takes his censer and dares to meet the judgment of God. Aaron must be there also, that his position as given of God may be publicly confirmed. Solemn was the judgment: they were consumed in a moment by fire.

Korah had his own special aim in the rebellion, though the instigator of it in others. In Dathan and Abiram we see the secular, as in the rebellious Levite the religious, aspect. Accordingly the words of Korah are rather against Aaron, while Dathan and Abiram speak against Moses. Both together typify the uprising of the world against Christ as Priest and King. Even now the prominent sin of Christendom is opposition to the priesthood of Christ, as seen in man pretending to be the channel of communication between God and the soul. All believers are priests for offering sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, yea as intercessors by prayer for the conversion and restoration of any. But there are those who pretend to forgive sins, as it were offering the blood over again. Such are repeating the sin of Korah, a Levite or minister, arrogating to himself the power which belongs to the High Priest alone, i.e. to Christ Himself. And, Korah. like, these always seek the aid of the secular power. The hour is coming when the religious and the secular power will unite in bolder opposition to the rights of Christ, to be followed by unsparing judgment (as in the wilderness upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and all that appertained to them.)

The words of Dathan and Abiram are in keeping with their position. They say nothing about the congregation being holy, but that Moses had not fulfilled his promise. It was a charge against God.

Mark the perversity of men. All God's care to keep them in remembrance of Him is apparently lost. Their rebellion is a greater sin than any before; the ribband was to remind them that Egypt was a land of bondage and that God had brought them out. They call it a land flowing with milk and honey; Egypt was as good as Canaan. They accuse Moses of deceit in not bringing them into the promised land, ignoring the facts that God had brought them to it, and that their own unbelief had shut them out. But Moses wished to be a prince!—the man who said, “Blot me out!” rather than that Israel should be consumed! What a terrible advance in evil! This is no sin of ignorance, and the ribband precluded forgetfulness. Moses, they said, had been deceiving them; but now they were awake to his designs; “Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.” They were willfully blind to the mercy that was leading them through the wilderness; and the mediator they hated.

Again, he whom they so falsely accused of self-seeking intercedes for the people. “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin [evidently alluding to Korah, the prime mover] and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?” God hears his cry, and the congregation are warned

to separate themselves from the “tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.” What a scene now presents itself. There stand Korah and his company with their censers in proud presumption daring the judgment of God; in the door of their tents see Dathan and Abiram with their wives, their sons, and their little children. What a moment of expectation for the assembled thousands of Israel! One word more, not only a warning, a call to separate from the guilty leaders, but the sentence of death; nor common death, but a death unheard of before. “But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up with all that appertain unto them and they go down quick [alive] into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.” Immediately the earth opens, they go down alive into the pit, they perish from among the congregation. And at the same time “there came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.” Wickedly they had spoken against the Lord's anointed, defiantly they stood; suddenly and without remedy came their judgment.

“A new thing” This then was not a mere earthquake. Whatever may be the causes of earthquakes now, there was no natural cause for this; it was the direct act of God in marked and special judgment. There is nothing so appalling as an earthquake; and this bears the mark that it came when men first openly in the person of Moses assailed the rights of Christ as King. It was repeated and more when the rebellions citizens said, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” and had crucified Him—with the same evidence of immediate divine power apart from physical causes. Only not then in judgment upon the guilty; it liberated the bodies of dead saints, and was God's testimony to the glory of the person of Christ, the true King (Matt. 27:51, 52.) The Jew will yet lead the world in opposing the King.

If Dathan and Abiram typify the secular world, Korah no less presents the last phase of the religious world. And of all religious wickedness this is the worst. Balaam's, who wanted to curse Israel to obtain Balak's reward, is not so offensive. For though Balsam appeared long after Korah, yet in the three names by which Jude defines the religions history of the world, Korah comes last. In the Korah stage judgment overtakes: they “perished in the gainsaying of Core.” The world's religion begins with Cain—bad works, not faith. Then comes the error of Balaam for reward, the riches, honor, and pomp of the world. Lastly, denying Christ as the sole High Priest, as God's High Priest, yet boasting of their holiness, like Korah (see Laodicea, Rev. 3:17). This is the climax: religions evil can go no farther, till Christendom be spewed out of His mouth, and the corrupt whore be burnt with fire by the ten kings and the Beast. A brief interval follows in which is not the religions world commanding the power of the secular world as its slave, but the unity of idolatry, Judaism, and infidelity, as a whole embodied in the Antichrist, the arch-rebel against Christ. Then he with the Beast, the antitypes of the leaders of the rebellion in the wilderness, will suddenly be destroyed; not by the earth, or even the pit, opening its mouth and swallowing them up. They will go down alive into the lake of fire.

Chapter 191

Wilderness Lessons: 7. Invincibility of Sin and God's Ways of Mercy

The invincibility of sin is wonderful. No greater proof than Israel, and no greater instance in the wilderness than immediately after the judgment upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They had seen Nadab and Abihu perish by fire from Jehovah; but here are two hundred and fifty princes, men of renown who are consumed in a moment. If those of the priest's family were consumed when bringing false fire to Jehovah, how much more those who were not of this family, nor even of the tribe of Levi! But that judgment was no new thing; the earth opening and swallowing them up was both new and unexpected. For though Moses warned them, saying, “if Jehovah maketh a new thing,” those who stood round about Dathan and his company (who are said to appertain unto Korah, proving him to be the leader of the ecclesiastical party and the instigator of the secular) did not appear to believe it possible any more than those who actually perished. Hence the terror of the surrounding multitude. They fled at the cry of them that went down alive into the pit, saying, Lest the earth swallow us up also. But it wrought no change in them. How solemn the fact that all God does, for man, short of the new birth, provokes sin, and becomes a cause of increasing judgment! The ribband was given that they might be holy: but Korah's rebellion follows. The judgment upon Korah and his followers brings out in its turn from stiff-necked people the charge against Moses and Aaron. “Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” Be it goodness, be it severity, sin abounds and remains unsubdued. No other termination is possible than judgment. Mercy may spare the guilty, righteousness may condemn, there is no change till the guilty soul is born again or anew. Therefore because of the inveterateness of sin the Lord Jesus said, “Ye must be born again.” What a proof that man is not merely sinful, but sin! he is that very thing. To be cleansed from sin is to be cleansed from himself, born of water and the Spirit.

If the ribband was a call to holiness, the broad plates made of the censers of the presuming princes are for a sign, or warning, that no strangers not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense to Jehovah. Neither the call nor the warning do they heed; for on the morrow all the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, that they had killed the people of Jehovah. The people would still, as in defiance of God, maintain the right of the princes to offer incense, and that Moses had slain righteous men. They were willfully ignorant that Jehovah had by direct and immediate judgment destroyed them. Thus the congregation ignored the sin and in reality charged God with unrighteousness. It is a solemn thing to doubt God's mercy; but to say that God is unrighteous in His judgment is the climax of wickedness, and it brings upon them further judgment. Jehovah suddenly appears. While the people gather against Moses and Aaron, the cloud is seen to cover the tabernacle; God indicates His judgment upon the guilty that had perished; and the plague destroys fourteen thousand and seven hundred more of the people. What a gap in their numbers these judgments made!

But oh, what a God is ours! Truly we say, His ways of mercy rise superior to His righteous judgment. For while His goodness and His wrath (as we see here) have brought out still greater sin, God makes the greater sin an occasion for showing still greater mercy. And He, while providing for the then need of Israel, by it reveals to His church now a truth of the highest and most

blessed import. For now appears most prominently the intercessory character and high function of priesthood, and a further display of the resources of grace. Long afterward it was written, “but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound “; surely if not at that time written in God's Book, it is proved in His ways.

Moses had said that Jehovah would show who were holy and who were appointed to draw near; and so it had been by terrible judgment. Now the same is to be declared by His mercy and compassion. What more effectual way than when Aaron ran in among the plague-stricken people? His office had been confirmed to him by the direct acts of God: the sudden death of men who dared to dispute his sole title to it; and now by stepping in and preserving the people from death. The difference is that the former is outside the sphere of priesthood, it is God maintaining His own order in face of rebellious man. The priest stands still, and God takes vengeance. But on the occasion of the plague the priest is allowed, nay commanded, to intervene in mercy so as to stay the ravages of judicial death.

Here are three special judgments in two days, and the last because the people, who had witnessed the two preceding, repented not but in heart were committing the same sin that brought the judgment upon Korah and his company. Jehovah speaks to Moses, “Get you up from among the congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.” Moses knew there was wrath gone out from Jehovah, and his instructed heart knew the right way to avert it. He bids Aaron take the censer and fire from the altar and put incense thereon and go quickly unto the congregation and make an atonement. And Aaron stands between the dead and the living; and the plague is stayed.

“Make an atonement;” but not with fresh blood. This would have been to deny the all-sufficiency in atoning power of the precious blood already typified as accepted by God. In the Mosaic economy where nothing was perfect, there was blood offered every day, not as fresh blood superseding the blood first sprinkled upon the door post, as if laying again the foundation of redemption; but while in various ways showing special applications of the blood, these sacrifices of blood in a way referred back to the blood sprinkled upon the door post in Egypt as that whose efficacy was not forgotten. All other sacrifices had more or less the remembrance attached to them that redemption from Egypt was accomplished. The blood that was shed for individual failure could not set aside the blood outside the shut door for the eye of God alone; not to satisfy or remove the fears of an Israelite, but to meet the righteous requirements of a just and holy God. It is the passover which so strikingly gives the true thought of atonement, which to a certain point is expressed clearly when God said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over." Afterward the offerer saw the blood when he brought his sacrifice, that he might consciously realize in his soul the value of the blood (typically) once shed. I speak not of Israel's intelligence but—as I judge—of God's intention in the blood-sacrifices appointed to Israel, the figures of the communion with the blood which the apostle declares we now have when we take the cup. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16.)

Fire is taken from the altar—this tells of divine judgment, for where there is sin, there must also be judgment. Never one sin committed but judgment followed, measured by the majesty and holiness of God. For the believer, it is, or rather was, borne by Christ. And the incense is the sweet savor of Himself which ascended up to God; it is the preciousness of Him who bore the judgment that God might righteously stay the power of death. Aaron putting incense on the fire is the intercessory act

of the priest pleading the merits of the one sacrifice, as if he would put God in remembrance of it.

Aaron, standing between the dead and the living, staying the plague that it pass not over to the living, is a beautiful prophetic picture of the latter day, when Christ will intervene for the ancient people of God. When He as High Priest will arrest the arm of the Avenger, and the living remnant become a great nation, restored to favor and blessing through a greater than Aaron.

Precious teaching for us, conscious of many failures. For our failures deserve and would surely meet righteous judgment; but we are by faith sprinkled with blood, and the sweet incense of Christ is constant before God. Our High Priest ever burns the incense lit by His death, a sweet smelling savor to God. He is gone within the veil, into the holy place by His own blood; there He makes intercession for us, and does and must prevail. We are on the living side of the Priest, and the angel of death cannot pass. “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand.” (John 10)

There is no ground here for the error that a failing believer must begin again as though his pardon could be canceled. “Make atonement” gives no sanction for a doctrine so contrary to the direct teaching of the word. True undoubtedly “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” But Aaron here shed no blood: there was no atonement in that sense; there was the pleading before God of the value of the offering once made. It is so that “atonement” is made for believers now when they fail. It is the Advocate above, Jesus Christ the righteous, who by His presence there avails for us.

Intercession is the teaching here, and both the incense and Aaron are together a type of Christ; the former of His worth, the latter of His office. Aaron might run among the people: what would it have availed? There was no worth in him; the power that stayed the plague was (typically) in the incense. It needs both the incense and the priest to be a fitting type of Him who is both Offering and Priest.

But impressive as the scene is, beautiful as showing Christ the Conqueror of Death, it does not give the full victory. There is even in this the power that stays the ravages of death; but is there power to recover the captive already held in death's chains? Yea, the next picture of Christ shows Him as One who has life in Himself. He is the living Rod, once dead. If as Aaron standing between the dead and the living He appears as the High Priest, as the living Rod we see more the worth, the glory, of His person, who if He did once lie in the grave, it was that He might forever roll away the stone. It is here that we see the fullest victory of Christ over death and the grave. He like Samson suffered Himself to be bound that He might break the cords, went into the prison-house of death, and then bursting through every barrier carried away the gates. Is not this to tell of His own personal might and glory, not of His official greatness and position as Priest? Oh! who so fitted and worthy to be Priest, to stand between dead and living as He who has life in Himself to give to whomsoever He will; who only went into the grave to prove He had power to come out; who laid down His life that He might take it again, thus breaking the power of death in the only effectual and triumphant way. Truly He went into the strong man's house and bound him, spoiling his goods; now He has the keys of Death and Hades. For the believer all bondage through fear of death is taken away. Before Christ came, it was a thing inevitable for saints to fear death and be in bondage through it. Is it right now that He has been in the grave and come out again? Surely if the sting of death is gone, so also must the victory of the grave. Rising from among the dead is the

divine proof of His fitness to be oar High Priest, “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death.....that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.” (See Heb. 7:25-28.)

Historically, the living rod is still more to confirm Aaron in the office of Priest; but is there one type or shadow which reaches no farther than the then circumstances? Nay, we know that all centers in Christ. The Bible would have been in vain to meet our need if Christ had not come. It would have found us, and left us, without hope, and in despair. But now we have not only the Book of God, but the Christ of God dead and risen. This is salvation.

The deeper truth lay concealed in the type, nor could it be revealed before the Antitype brought it forth when He rose from the dead. Not authority alone, as in Moses, could suffice, nor even intercession as in the priest, in the sense of preventing death. One was needed who could bring again from the dead, and who in His own person is the pledge of it. Such is the Christ of God, and so presented in the living rod. Then it was not possible to apprehend the fullness of teaching contained therein. The revelation of the Son was necessary, who not only shed His true light upon all around Him, but also cast a backward ray upon the old things and brought out from them a new beauty and truth which else had lain hidden in the shadow of their own types.

But if all the brightness was unseen by Israel in the wilderness, did they pay heed to what they did see? It was to them a confirmation of Aaron in His office; it was also, as bearing blossoms and almonds, the assurance of mercy; it was connected with the promise that God would quite take away their murmurings that they die not. This was the mercy side of the rod, and Israel soon gave proof that they did not apprehend it. But the rod had another aspect, for it was laid tip for a token against the rebels (Nam. 17:10). If it declares God's goodness, it also brings to mind their sin. This scripture is remarkably characteristic of the mingled dispensation of law and grace; the rod is a token against the rebels, yet God says He will take away their murmurings that they die not. The people saw the token, but not the grace of God. They knew not the full import of its being laid up in the ark. It was a standing proof that none but Aaron and his sons should come nigh; but it was also the pledge that God would quite take away their murmurings. There in the ark it had a place with the golden pot of manna and the two tables of the law, a wondrous combination of law, grace, and priesthood. And being there, though a token against the rebels, in connection with the manna it became a memorial to God of their deep need of mercy; and the necessity of priesthood, if judgment was to be in any way restrained. Moreover the lid of the ark which enclosed these three symbols of God's dealings with that people was sprinkled with blood: the blood covered all and was the assurance that grace would triumph over all; and no sin of theirs ever removed that memorial from His sight. Unbelief and hardness of heart deprived them of its full blessings; but the ark with its contents and blood-sprinkled lid was, and ever will be; in the remembrance of God.

“Laid up in the ark,” it is Christ abiding for them. Hidden from their view now because they rejected Him, and while the Jew is under judgment for their wickedness, Christ is a token against them. Until the present work of gathering out His church from among the Gentiles be completed, so long is Christ in heaven on the Father's throne a token against the Jew. When the church is taken, then Christ will appear for them and the “token against” be gone forever. He will come forth as the living fruitful Rod, and then they shall bear fruit to God. Then will their murmurings be quite taken away.

Meantime there is conscience of sins which opened their eyes to see the “token.” The rod was there for a testimony, and Israel could not come near without remembering their sin and its judgment. They cry out, “Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of Jehovah shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?” Shall we be consumed by fire or by the earth opening and swallowing us up after the manner we have seen? Blind unbelief! They were not forbidden access to God through the medium of the priest, but only to assume the function of priesthood which was peculiar to Aaron and his sons. They anticipated death if they came near. Their unbelieving misapprehension of God's judgment brings upon them loss of privilege. They connected death with their access to God, not with their sin.

The world says that a man is the hewer of his own fortunes; and there is a sense in which this is true. The Christian knows from a higher source that what a man sows, this shall he also reap. They said that any one drawing near to the tabernacle would die, and the consequence is that their drawing near is forbidden. “Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin and die” (ch. 18:22). Their unbelief and mistrust of God is more serious for their standing before God than their previous presumption. They are brought down to the level of the stranger. “The stranger, that cometh nigh shall be put to death.” Henceforth Israel cannot come nearer than the stranger; that privilege is lost. It is the first step downward to that condition when, every other external privilege lost, the apostle says, “There is no difference.” Before God there never was a real difference as to nature between man and man; between Israel and the nations, there was a dispensational difference, and a privilege conferred upon Israel. But sin annulled all that and deprived them of all outward advantage. They are now altogether as Gentiles; nothing but faith in Christ for the Jew as well as the Gentile. “But we believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they” (Acts 15:11).

The Rod, first dry, then bearing fruit, is the type of Christ in resurrection power, and reminds us of the grain of wheat that, having fallen into the ground and died, afterward bears much fruit. Though not directly pointing to believers now, but to the risen Christ, it surely is not straining scripture to say that in it we have an image of death while unconnected in the dry rod, and no less when bearing buds, blossoms and almonds, the quickening power of God when we having life from God bring forth fruit unto Him. We are ordained to bring forth fruit, and abiding fruit (John 15:16). May it be our care to bring forth much fruit, that we may glorify the Father, and be true disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 192

Wilderness Lessons: 8. Priesthood

As the necessity of priesthood becomes more evident, so fresh details are given to the priests and Levites, and as grace widens in its sphere, so do the requirements of holiness become more precise and stringent, and the position of the priests more defined. “And Jehovah said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood” (Num. 18). Had there been no sanctuary, there could not have been this iniquity, for it is the presence of man in the holy place ere He came Who by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). This perfection is not mere forgiveness, nor justification, but the—whole question of sin met by Christ, so that iniquity is not imputed to us. Christ bore it all. This is foreshadowed in Ex. 28:36-38 (q. v.), where Aaron in his robes of beauty is the type of Christ now in the full exercise of His priesthood, Who alone could put away this iniquity from those who now draw near to God through Him. Here in Num. 18 is the condition of the priests of Israel who, before Christ came and had died to sin, bore their iniquity. Hence they could not pass the veil into the second tabernacle (Heb. 9:7). We enter in because we are purged.

The sanctuary was the symbolic expression of God's holiness. The priest, though strictly observing all the ordinances the ceremonies of law, could not draw near with a purged conscience. His nature was impure—a truth not then declared, but implied in the words now spoken to Aaron. Sins were known, not sin. Indeed the whole history of the wilderness is to prove that sin is man's fallen nature; the constantly recurring sacrifices show not only their intrinsic valuelessness but also the sin inherent in man's nature. This evil of sin being unknown, it was never condemned and therefore a purged conscience, was impossible; for it means the knowledge of good and evil, and the evil judged. An innocent conscience knows neither. Man was such that he could only acquire the knowledge of good when he had fallen under the power of evil, and under that power he could not judge the evil, and it soon ceased to be evil in his eyes. If unknown and unjudged, it was there in him; and the blood of bulls and of goats which might avail for the purifying of the flesh—an outward thing—could never purify the conscience. Such a priest drawing near, and performing his duty, did of necessity defile the sanctuary. For while the “vessels of the sanctuary, and the altar” are holy and express the purity of God, the priest is the representative of the children of Israel, and they were unclean. As unclean in himself and in his representative character, he was a defiling element among the holy things of the sanctuary, and must bear the iniquity of it. To meet his need (typically) sacrifices were offered for him, and blood offered even to purge the things of the sanctuary. The iniquity of the priesthood (not said of the priest) is, the office of priest was defiled by the same nature; for a priest should be holy, harmless, and undefiled. He was unpurged and represented a sinful people. Not his position as priest could purge him; rather it was the occasion of the iniquity, and made more prominent the necessity for ONE who could put away the defilement of nature, and also purge the conscience from all these dead works; for such is the word now applied by the Holy Spirit to all the ritual of the sanctuary (Heb. 9:14).

Christians as priests draw near, but there is more of contrast than of analogy between their position and ours. We stay not at the altar without but enter within the veil. And we have no iniquity of the sanctuary to bear; for, though as to nature no better than they, Christ has met our need; we have with Him died to sin; and the conscience is purged, we enter into the holiest of all. The type was theirs, the reality is ours; they had the patterns of heavenly things, we have the things themselves. This is the normal state of a believer, and is practically enjoyed when walking faithfully before God. But is there not a meaning for us conveyed in the words, “iniquity of the sanctuary,” beyond the primary and special bearing on Aaron and his sons? Was it not intended by the Holy Ghost?

For what is our place? Within the veil. We groan under the burden of the flesh, but we mortify it. We deny its lusts; and sin has no more dominion over us, its iniquity is not imputed. Its power is annulled to faith, but there it is, the flesh is in us. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” But being “perfected forever” by the one offering we are before God in all the acceptability of Christ; and to bear as priests the “iniquity of the sanctuary” would be a denial of the infinite efficacy of the death of Christ. How if not “perfected forever” could we be at home within the veil in the presence of light?

Now when a saint forgets the holiness which becomes the house of God—which house are we—then he must bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; that is, his sin is not gauged by its own guilt, but by the position which grace has given. It may not be flagrant, but what is alas! far more common and so frequently unjudged—love of the things of the world; a sad inconsistency with our place within the veil. Because he is a priest, that which would not be noticed in an unconverted man becomes, through his position, iniquity. In this sense he bears the iniquity of the sanctuary. A worldling not having that place cannot have that iniquity. Oh! let us while rejoicing in the privileges of grace remember the responsibilities of holiness, which is now measured by the position conferred, and by the call to complete separation from the world. How is this to be attained? Only by watching and praying, and having the heart filled with the Lord.

There is another contrast between us and the Levites who were joined to the priests and servants to them. They were not allowed to come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar. This was enforced by the penalty of death, and this not only upon the presuming Levite, but also upon the careless priest, “that neither they, nor ye also, die.” In the church of God there is a distinction between priesthood and Levitical service, but not after the same pattern. In Israel the Levite was not a priest, in the church none but a priest can be a true Levite. The function of the church is prayer, thanksgiving and worship, of which the highest act is the Lord's supper, and every saint is there as a priest, and every act by the church is a priestly act; neither of these is Levitical service.

The Levites now as then are to minister to the priests, i.e. the church. Who are the Levites? Those who by teaching, exposition of the word, and pastoral work, by rebuke and admonition, warning against surrounding evil, watch over the saints and care for the, flock of God. And as there were different orders of Levites in Israel, each with its assigned duties, so they also who had to serve tables (Acts 6:1-4) were doing true Levitical service. All, whether teachers, or simply caring for the wants of the poor, ministered to the saints of God. These servants are called of the Master, and take this service upon them not by constraint but willingly. “He gave gifts.” The Lord distributes to each according to his ability. These are the true Levites, and were first priests

worshippers—before the call to any service. Teaching and preaching are not functions of the church, but of those whom the Master appoints. United prayer, thanksgiving, worship, are assuredly the privileges of all saints. The restricting of these privileges, the real and inalienable functions of the church, to the ministering servants of God, gave rise to the “clergy,” a separate class within the church, by which the order given in Num. 18 is inverted. Then the Levites were joined to the priests to serve them; now the ministers i.e. the Levites, take precedence of the church the priests. Not like Paul who said, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” Levitical service in this day is placed higher than priesthood; unless it be with those who claim to be priests (not in the true New Testament meaning) to the exclusion of all others. God's order in the types or His teaching through them is unknown. This use of God's gift, to exalt self, has created a sphere where even the world intrudes: to be a “minister” is one of the world's prizes; ministry is a profession. How great the evil! yet the germ was small, and looked not so bad at the beginning. But a minister (or gifted man) now going to the Table to break bread, because of having a gift for teaching or preaching, and not because he is a priest led by the Spirit of God, would be as a Levite drawing near to the sanctuary to offer, the thing that all truth forbids.

This one great characteristic meeting of the church of God is to show the Lord's death in the breaking of bread. All other meetings, though right, necessary and even imperative, are only auxiliary to this. And I may add that the joy of the Lord's-day morning meeting, the blessedness of remembering the Lord in His death, is never so fully realized by those who habitually neglect the auxiliary meetings (lectures and readings notwithstanding, helpful as these are to our growing in the knowledge of Christ our Lord). The one object of this meeting for the gathered saints is the Lord's supper and not for exposition, or exhortation. After the remembrance of the Lord as He appointed, and if circumstances allow, the Levite may minister to the priests—seek to edify the saints. But where the Lord's supper is hurried over at the beginning, or thrust into a corner at the close, the object of the gathering together is virtually lost sight of; the Lord dishonored and His love slighted!

Chapter 193

Wilderness Lessons: 9. Red Heifer

The ordinance of the red heifer was not peculiar to the priests nor the Levites; it was for the congregation; and the instruction for saints now is, not as a company of priests, nor as knit together by one Spirit, but as pilgrims journeying through the wilderness. The sprinkled blood as on the Passover night secures us from judgment; the great day of atonement sets forth the full answer of the cross—a perfect redemption—to meet the need of guilty sinners, and to establish new relationships between God and the redeemed. In a word both these ordinances contemplate the sinner; the red heifer is rather a provision for the believers, that they may be cleansed from all defilement by the way, no less necessary for the saint than the shed blood is for the sinner. The truth taught by the red heifer is distinct from that conveyed by the day of atonement, but not so readily apprehended. The blood was sprinkled completely before the tabernacle, to remind us of our access to God by the one perfect sacrifice, and that all needed blessing by the way is founded upon the death or precious blood of Christ. Thus our cleansing is in virtue of it, just as much as forgiveness of sins when we first believed; for whether for saint or for sinner, it is ever “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” But the blood of the red heifer is not applied to the defiled saint. It is Christ once offered to God, the perfect sacrifice which is never repeated, nor the blood sprinkled again before the tabernacle. Then all is burnt and the ashes remain, ever abiding in its purifying efficacy for every defilement. As often as defilement occurs, there are the ashes; not another red heifer, to sprinkle blood again before the tabernacle, or again to be burnt under the judgment of God. Christ bore it all once, and it is done forever. The cleansing of the believer is not with blood, but by ashes mingled with running water. It is the ashes that typify the ground of blessing, the water is only the medium. So the apostle in Heb. 9:13 speaks of the ashes as sprinkled, not of the water. It is the power of Christ's death bearing our judgment, wholly consumed—ashes—and applied by the Holy Spirit using the word—water—to cleanse us from our defilement.

The red heifer following the living rod shows the divine order of these types. The rod laid up in the ark before God was the witness of the intercession of Christ dead and risen, our Advocate; so the red heifer is the result of His Advocacy, the provision of grace for pilgrims defiled on their journey. It was fitting that Christ should be seen as High Priest above before that which is surely the effect of His intercession was typified by the red heifer. If we may so say, this type is the complement of the living rod; both are founded upon the atoning blood, and neither meets the first need of the soul; for without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. When that need is met, other needs are felt: we need One to appear in heaven for us, Who has conquered sin and death, ever living to make intercession for us; and we have this in the beautiful fruit-bearing rod. Then we need that His intercession above should be made good in our souls while here below; and so following upon His Advocacy, this need is also supplied in the red heifer. It is the Spirit of God working in us when we have strayed, as the fruit of His advocacy above. And\ so, as in all cases where the Spirit works, there is a moral process in the soul, by which it is effectually restored, first, by self-judgment, hating the sin and judging oneself. This is the purification on the third day. The word has been applied—ashes mingled with running water; humiliation and confession before God. “If

we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Without this there cannot be purification on the seventh day. But, on that day, for the purified Israelite there was re-admission to the congregation. Not only was the defilement morally purged away, but the brand of exclusion was removed, and he could join again in the worship of Jehovah. The Psalmist shows the same order in a soul's restoration; he first confesses his sin, then he prays that his sin may be blotted out, and, after that, the joys of salvation may be restored (Psa. 51), whatever the dispensation. God's ways of grace and of discipline are the same; the third day, and the seventh, illustrate the unchanging moral dealing of God with souls, the same really in the church of God as with Israel of old. And it cannot be too often or too plainly asserted that the advocacy of Christ, the application of the word by the Holy Ghost, and the restoration of the soul are all consequent upon the blood of Christ, which has been shed, and sprinkled seven times and not again, before the tabernacle of God.

Christ washing the feet of His disciples (John 13) answers somewhat to the sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer in Num. 19. Only the cleansing in Numbers is connected with the Spirit's work in the soul; in John 13 it is the Lord as Advocate and we in our measure following His example. “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.” We do well also to mark the defiling nature of sin; for even a clean person, who had to do with the restoration of an unclean, was himself unclean till the even. It bespeaks the care and fear with which we should seek the restoration of another, lest the flesh should make us fail in hatred of the evil, or in grace to the unclean. None but the Lord could touch a leper and be Himself without a taint.

While God is thus bringing out the resources of grace, laying up stores of truth for the people that come after, Israel are also developing more evil. They are more daring and, perverse. Going back into Egypt in their hearts was constant. Now (Num. 20) they add the wish that they had died with their brethren before Jehovah. Had they forgotten that the death of their brethren was special judgment, and so awful that they had fled at the cry of them that were swallowed up? Because water is lacking, the congregation gather again against Moses and Aaron and chide them and say in effect they would rather have died under the fearful judgment of God than suffer thirst. Had they cried to God, He would have given them water as before. How true it is that neither judgment nor blessing changes man's nature! But grace appears and water is once more brought from the solid rock. It is not the same truth as at the rock Horeb, but a like absence of reproof for their murmuring. In Ex. 17:5 the rock is smitten with the rod of authority, that of Moses. When judgment fell upon the Egyptians, when the Red Sea was divided for Israel, and closed again for the host of Pharaoh, when the rock (that Rock was Christ) was smitten, the rod of government was the fitting one. While it was the symbol of judgment upon Egypt, it brought blessing (water) to Israel. Then it could be used in dispensing grace, for Israel had not then put themselves under law, so that the rod of government imparted blessing, their sinful murmurings notwithstanding. Here in Numbers it is a very different thing. Moses is told to take “the rod,” that particular rod bearing fruit; for the rod of authority and power will not, ought not, to give water to a murmuring people under law. In such a condition, where man can only be a transgressor, government can but condemn and put to death. But He who can have mercy upon whom He will, commands the fruit-bearing rod of Aaron to be taken, the emblem of the abiding efficacy of priesthood, of Christ as alive from the dead. This was the rod suited for the occasion. The people were not without law, but they were the objects of

grace then, that we might learn the value of Christ's priesthood. Nothing more was needed than to “speak” to the rock. Christ was smitten once, He cannot be smitten again. By that one smiting He is still the source of living water for thirsty souls in the wilderness. Then it was typically to be taught. Now we know it by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But Moses and Aaron at this moment stand apart from the congregation; not in faithfulness as on previous occasions. They do not apprehend the sovereign grace of God. It is now their testing time; and they both fail, for neither had learned the import of “the” rod. In anger Moses took his own rod, but what right had he to be angry when God would show only mercy? Both he and Aaron must die in the wilderness. “Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” How did they fail to sanctify God? Not doing as commanded. The truth of priesthood as taught by the rod was set aside as if of no avail for the people, and with no more significance than confirming Aaron in his office, or in fact merely of use as a “token” against the rebels. But God is most jealous of all and everything that interferes with His grace. God remembered mercy, Moses thought of their sin. God looked at the rod as a pledge of grace, Moses saw only the “token.” Not seeing the mercy side of the rod, what wonder that he took his own rod, symbol of the righteous government of God and said “Hear now, ye rebels “a word that Jehovah did not put into His mouth?

No doubt, it was a fresh lesson of mercy and forbearance, and deeper than Moses had yet seen, for his rod must give place to the intercessory power of the priest. He was told to “speak” to the rock; but he “smote” the rock and in his anger smote twice. Moreover, so jealous was he for authority that he for the moment forgot his own place as servant. “Must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Where was the honor due to God in his saying “WE?” None so meek as Moses; but here he failed and did not sanctify God in the people's eyes. His own place and authority filled his mind: there was no room at that moment for the thought of grace; yet had he not learned enough of the people and their sin, that nothing but grace could bring them through the wilderness? His indignation might be righteous but his words were hasty, and the gravamen of his sin was interfering with God's grace. God would be sanctified according to His grace, not then by judgment. Therefore Moses could not enter the land. He mourned over this exclusion to his last days. “I must die in this land.” Did he fully judge his own failure as the righteous reason why he should not pass the Jordan? “The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter” (Deut. 3:26; 4:22). But God lays it upon him and Aaron, “Because ye trespassed against me.” The people no doubt were the occasion, but the trespass was their own; Moses and Aaron, in a certain sense, we would say it with submission, disobeyed too (Num. 20:24; Deut. 32:51).

If the servants fail to sanctify God, He will sanctify Himself. Their failure cannot change the character of grace, which indeed shines all the more through their failure. Though he smote the rock twice, and contrary to the word of Jehovah, yet the water flows. Such is grace rising above every hindrance, supplying every need. When was it otherwise? In our own lives how many times we have proved and rejoiced in similar goodness of God! We daily learn, and, as we learn, wonder and adore. Our daily lessons are grace; the manner of God's teaching is grace. Yea, grace expresses in a word the full process of the Holy Spirit by which we as believers are brought into communion with His thoughts and ways, and thus become intelligent worshippers of our God.

This is what the whole church of God is not but should be. Israel are not yet brought to apprehend the mercy of God, but their day is coming. But intelligent worship is now the privilege of the church. What will it be when grace is crowned with glory?

Chapter 194

Wilderness Lessons: 10. Israel's Wanderings Ended

Israel's wanderings in the wilderness are drawing to a close, and Edom lies between them and the land of promise. How touching the request of Moses that Israel might pass through. But neither their sufferings, nor the intervention of God on their behalf, move Edom to grant their request. It is a fresh phase of the power of Satan against those who are led of God through the world. He opposed the purpose of God from the first when he used Pharaoh who knew not Joseph and oppressed Israel. After the Red Sea he disputed their progress by the Amalekites; and failing in these he stirred up their innate evil in the depths of the wilderness, that if possible they might be destroyed in the righteous anger of Jehovah. There was far more satanic wisdom in this than in raising up external enemies. Yet in all Satan was only furnishing occasions for the display of grace which rose above Israel's murmurings and rebellions, and gave lessons of faith for the church of God now.

Satan's opposition is seen at this stage of the progress (Num. 20:14), not in the enmity of aliens, nor in their own rebellion, but in the open hostility of brethren after the flesh. And here as in the gospel we find that natural relationships are no guarantee against enmity when it is a question between God and the world. “A man's foes shall be they of his own household” (Matt. 10:36). Moses sent to the king of Edom saying, “thy brother Israel,” and Edom's answer is a threat. Once before they came in contact in the persons of their fathers. Then as now Jacob was a suppliant, but God turned aside the hatred of Esau, and Jacob pursued his way. The hatred remained and breaks out in. Edom's refusal to let Israel pass through his land, and in later years is again seen when Babylon triumphed over Jerusalem (Psa. 137:7). Here Israel turned away, for Edom's land was no part of Israel's possession. Nor was it God's purpose to lead them through it; their stay in the wilderness was not yet completed.

A few more lessons had to be taught, and the work of Christ fully set forth. There was truth yet needed for our journey through the world, and Israel must wait for us. In them was to be seen typically what is now without a veil made known to us. The word too that condemned them to forty years' wandering, nor permitted Aaron and Moses to enter the land, could not be revoked; so that both the government and the grace of God were implicated in their further stay outside the land. What then have we to learn? For to us the grace has special reference. We learn that the ties of nature are but as tow touched with fire when in collision with the call of God. We are warned not to look for sympathy in matters of faith to the men of the world, even if they be our nearest relatives. We are journeying to our promised land, the heavenly Canaan, and our experience is that unconverted relatives are as great opposers if not greater than the world. As the tie of faith is in the believer stronger than any natural bond, for it is eternal; so in the unbeliever hatred against the things of God dominates every natural affection, and is active against those who are found faithful to God and their calling.

Aaron dies, nor far distant the time when Moses also must die. Solemn thought that these two honored servants of God must die in the wilderness like the generation that God said should not

enter into His rest. God is righteous, and maintains government according to His righteousness. “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28).

The priestly robes are put on Eleazar, but he is never presented like Aaron as a type of Christ's priesthood. Another was soon to take the place of both Moses and Aaron as leader of the people. But in this is further truth for the church of God (see Num. 27:15).

Israel sends no request to the Canaanite king of Arad. He hears of their approach and goes out to oppose them. Whether it be Edom or the Canaanite, Israel meets with the same treatment. The called of God and the world have ever been contrary, and will continue so until Christ reigns in power. Arad's king fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners. This is not the first disaster suffered from the foe. The land will surely be given and all enemies subdued; but it must be in God's own time. Any departure from His way entails loss, not victory. How had they departed so as to be smitten and some taken prisoners, as in this instance? As before when first brought to the land, they put human foresight in the place of dependence upon God. Spies had been sent, perhaps occasioned by depression through Edom's unbrotherly conduct; and they would ascertain what kind of foe, or danger, awaited them. But it was not faith. The presence of spies alarms the king, and he prepares to fight. Not going in faith Israel has no vantage ground against Arad, and suffers a repulse. As is generally the result when the people of God use human means where the way of faith is distinctly marked, the means thus used being the very contrary to their hopes. Had they gone in simple faith, they had not been so disgraced. It is a sharp lesson, but they are brought to their right position. They cry unto Jehovah, “If thou wilt deliver this people into my hand.” Not much faith in the promise yet. To say “if,” after God had so repeatedly said that He would drive out the Canaanite before them, is not faith. But if no faith, or but little (for the Calebs and the Joshuas were very few), they cast aside prudence and say, “If Thou wilt deliver.” Jehovah hearkened to their voice, and the cities of Arad are utterly destroyed.

But mercies however great are lost upon those who have no faith, or just enough to cry to Jehovah when they feel their helplessness. They had cried unto Jehovah Who had answered, but it did not produce confidence. In compassing the land of Edom they are much discouraged because of the way. A wilderness path is always beset with difficulties, not necessarily with discouragements. Was not the victory over Arad sufficient ground, beside their own history, to assure them that God would not let them die in the wilderness? The flesh never trusts God, is always willing to receive benefits, but has never any return for the Giver but ingratitude. Notwithstanding the manifest interposition of God, and that in answer to their prayer which ought the more to have bound them in trustful obedience to Him, they again murmur, and now more openly against God. They had often murmured against Moses (it was really against God); now it is avowedly against God. The Holy Spirit marks it, putting God's name first. “The people spake against God and against Moses.” It is the first time their murmuring assumes this bold character. Often had they complained of lack of water, and in a spirit of rebellion. From the first they preferred the fleshpots of Egypt to the manna of God. Their soul, they said, was dried away because there was nothing at all beside this manna before their eyes (Num. 11:6). To be discontented with what the Psalmist calls angels' food (Psa. 78:25) was base and ungrateful; but never before had the flesh shown itself in so true colors as when they said “our soul loatheth this light bread.” There might be discontent while admitting it

was good, but to add loathing to discontentment is the extreme of the dislike of man to the things of God. This bread that God rained down from heaven is only “light bread,” and they loathed it. This is the root-sin of nature; their transgressions were but symptomatic, this is the disease itself. Faithful and awful picture of man's dislike of Christ! He is the true Bread that came down from heaven of Whom the manna that fell in the wilderness is a faint type. For the fathers did eat of that bread and are dead; but he who eateth of this bread shall never die. And the hatred of the Jew to Christ was more intense and pronounced than the loathing of the manna by Israel. They did loathe and despise, and called it “light bread.” The Jew despised, blasphemed, and crucified Him who came down from heaven. Yet it is the same nature, and only came out in blacker colors in the Jew because the Lord Jesus was not a mere type but the blessed reality. It was His presence that brought out this greater wickedness. For the clearer and brighter the Light, the deeper the surrounding darkness.

How constant the desire for Egypt's food! With every difficulty in the way, whenever their soul was discouraged, there was always coupled with it regret for leaving Egypt. This is the sure fruit of the flesh, for which no sacrifice, nor ordinance, has yet been given to meet its deep evil. Transgression, various defilements by the way, all provided for; blood for transgressions, ashes to be sprinkled with running water for the defiled. But nature, the flesh, the root-sin of all, has not yet been the object of any ordinance. It has broken out now in its worst form, an evil that admits of no remedy; it must be destroyed. Sprinkling with the ashes of the red heifer, or even blood, does not meet the evil (though well we know that all God's ways of grace from first to last are founded upon the blood of Christ). A pure thing may become defiled, and then cleansed; but death is the only thing for the flesh. Wash it as you may, it is still flesh, and must be put “off.” It cannot be improved, and may be covered to a certain extent by a decent exterior; but there it is, as vile as ever under the covering. To cover is man's remedy for the evil he knows; it is the religion of the world in its best form. God would not have His saints go through the world, as it were under false pretenses, but teaches us to count it dead, on the ground of our old man crucified with Christ; and, when we take His word simply and truthfully, He gives the needed power to live in accordance with the standing given to faith working experience in us.

How suited to the truth taught is the manner of teaching! Sin, tainted nature, nature as it is now in man, is sin. There cannot be greater condemnation of man. Murmuring against God is but the complement of loathing His bread. In judgment they are bitten by fiery serpents, and dying. Fitting symbol of the venom of the old serpent who instilled his poison into the heart and nature of Adam in the garden; which made him not a mere transgressor of a known command, but changed his whole being morally before God. Adam truly became another man. Death inevitably followed, and the whole world consequently bears its impress. “Sin entered into the world and death by sin.” The connection between sin and death has never been dissolved. If man be sin, how is death to be severed from the believer? Not the blood on the great day of atonement, nor the ashes of the heifer; for the one puts away the sins of the flesh, the other cleansed the pilgrim from defilement contracted by the way. But “the flesh” —nature—remains unchanged, and the righteousness of God demands that that flesh should die. How then is a believer saved? To meet this righteous necessity, Christ was made sin and died, and thus becomes our deliverance from its power. “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The believer knows no other way of deliverance than death. It is surely by the death of Christ, but it

must be morally as well as judicially accomplished. Sin and death are never dissevered. It is a wondrous way in which God maintains His word, and, instead of being mere judgment, it becomes one of our greatest blessings. But being God's way, it must therefore be the way of faith to us. “Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin.” Look at Him made sin on the cross, fully answering for flesh of sin; then in the power of that look turn to self and with Job after he had seen. God, say, Wherefore I hate and abhor myself. As truly as death is the result of sin, so also is life eternal, life beyond the reach of death, the blessed effect of looking at Christ made sin for us. God's judgment joined death to sin, His grace has joined life to the look of faith.

The manner of Israel's healing is the foreshadowing of this. Then it was simply to look at a serpent upon a pole. A look in itself had been nothing; but God now joined healing and life to it: therefore to look is everything. What a lesson of faith is here! All is referred to the power and grace of God of Him Who said, that every one that is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live. Precious testimony of the efficacy of faith, and of Christ, Who, lifted up like the brazen serpent, had said “that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Here is a type of Christ, not simply of blood, but of death. It is a question of sin in the flesh, not of sins by flesh active. Blood purges, purges the conscience, purges us from our sins. The flesh is never purged. The old man—the flesh—is condemned. Christ was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin; and so sin in the flesh God condemned. This is not a process in the soul always going on; but it is made experimentally true. The old man has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6). The body of sin is thus annulled. An immense fact for us; effected on the cross. Only neither this nor any other blessing is known without faith. Realizing by faith that the flesh was condemned and put to death by the crucifixion of Christ, and practically putting on the new man, is both the privilege and the responsibility of believers. Death to the flesh, not atonement by blood, nor mere cleansing, is the lesson here. It is Christ our Substitute, and seems to proclaim a deeper truth than that typified on the great day of atonement. On that day we saw the blood that washed away all our sins. It is propitiation. Here in the brazen serpent it is life through death. Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on the cross, made sin, and then dying under the judgment of God. That is, He takes our place, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him That righteousness which we are made is the standing we have in Him; is it not also practically that which believers are when they judge their own flesh with the judgment of God? Condemning it root and branch? I am persuaded we shall never know the blessedness of becoming God's righteousness in Him till we pass sentence of death upon self. A nature which was not inherently sin, but might have some good element, would need blood-washing if it transgressed; but you cannot cleanse sin. Our souls are forgiven their sins; that is another thing. Fallen nature is still nature, and must be condemned. The flesh is never cleansed. Christ, our Substitute, has fully borne the judgment of flesh. He was lifted up for that purpose, that we, beholding the judgment of our nature resting upon Him, might be able to say that we died with Him. As the bitten Israelite looked upon the serpent of brass, and lived, so we look upon Christ and in a new life live to God. The question of sin is settled forever. Of course it is but a hint here: the full truth can only come out in Christ dead and risen.

Chapter 195

Wilderness Lessons: 11. Serpent of Brass

Israel now set forward under the full efficacy of grace (Num. 21:10). God had said that He would quite take away their murmuring, and Aaron's rod, bearing buds, blossoms, and almonds, was the pledge of it, as well as the occasion of the promise. The rod completed the types of the priesthood of Christ, as One who is alive again from the dead, and so has power over death. Then it was God said He would make their murmurings to cease. Once after this the people murmured, because there was yet another lesson of the flesh, and judgment upon it; not one more needful. Also Christ is seen as Sin-bearer; else the others would be incomplete. For this is the truth of the serpent of brass—death to the flesh and Christ made sin. This last outburst of murmuring in the wilderness God dealt with in such a way that we might know how the incurable evil of the flesh must be overcome. That lesson given, the efficacy of the living rod is at once seen, for the murmurs cease, not through judgment, but by the fullness of blessing. Then the promise is fulfilled. A few stages bring them to the brooks of Arnon. Some wonderful act of power and grace was done there, for it is coupled with the Red Sea as marvelous scenes of God's intervention: so it is written in the book of the wars of Jehovah, “what He did in the Red Sea and in the brooks of Arnon.” Though not revealed what He did, we know it was the beginning of blessing; for from the stream of brooks they came to Beer, that is the name that Jehovah spake of. He had spoken beforehand of the well. Was it at the brooks of Arnon that He foretold Moses of the well? Princes and people come prepared, Israel sings, and the princes and the nobles dig with their staves, and the water flows.

The apparent change in God's dealing with the people is as marked as when they put themselves under law at Sinai. Then they exchanged the safe place of being simply objects of mercy and of grace for the fatal position of law—responsibilities where in righteousness God must judge them as being transgressors as well as sinners by nature. Presumption and ignorance of their utter incapacity for obedience led them to their ruin. Nay, rather through the grace that was still active on their behalf, though hidden under cover of the law, God's way to bring them to the only place where the unconditional promises made to the fathers could be fulfilled according to the full purpose of God. Now, at the close of their wanderings, grace shines out fuller and more prominently than before they came to Sinai. They murmured at Horeb. God does not chide though He heard them, but bids Moses smite the rock, and the waters flow. Here God does not wait to be asked; He promises beforehand and tells Moses that the well is at Beer. And God is still before them, He is ready before they are, waiting to be gracious. They are scattered, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

Was it the breaking forth of water from a fresh fountain that man had never known before? It was truly a well of grace which Israel had willingly stopped up, for they chose the law. There was no outward mark, no human sign that water, blessed water as being the special gift of the living God, was ready for them. Is it not so? Therefore God said when the people came to Beer, “This is the well that I spake to you of.” Had it been a well evident to man's eye, why should the princes and the nobles dig with their staves? why should Israel sing, “Spring up, O well?” As it were, the water is brought to the surface by the power of God, and only needed the touch of the staves upon the

ground for the streams to gush forth as from a fountain till then pent up. The heart of Israel is for once touched with joy, and for a brief moment they forget their discouragements and their murmurings. They sing “Spring up, O well.”

Why this abundant display of grace, immediately after they had openly spoken against God (ver. 5)? Truly the flesh had never before so shown itself, had never before been so bold; but there was another and still greater fact which stood oat before God, so immense in its efficacy as to turn aside the judgment and bring in healing, yea positive blessing. Christ had been set forth as bearing the full condemnation of sin, and God well pleased turns in upon Israel the full tide of grace. In the serpent of brass is seen the finished work of Christ, the completion of redemption toil. Fullness of blessing, symbolized by abundance of water, is the blessed and necessary result.

This is a passing glimpse of Israel's future, though the veil was not lifted for them. The intended effect, and immediate, was that they might rejoice in Jehovah their God. As Moses was taken up to the top of Pisgah where God showed him all the land, so to the church is made known the future glory, both that for which she is hoping (Rom. 5:2) and that which Israel will possess in the age to coma. Israel's joy in the wilderness was soon forgotten, their song very brief. How soon they fell into the snare of Moab; and what a solemn instance that the lips may utter praise while the heart is unchanged! They rejoiced in the gift, and nature can appreciate the temporal gifts of God; but they rejoiced not in the Giver. Let their subsequent history answer, the only answer that man has ever given to God. But man's ingratitude does not prevent the fulfilling of the promises. Israel shall yet enjoy their land; for they will all have clean water sprinkled upon them, hearts of flesh given (Ezek. 36). Then God will pour floods upon the thirsty ground, and Israel shall draw water with joy from the wells of salvation (Isa 12).

The deeper meaning of this display of grace is for the church of God, which enjoys the present reality of all that Israel had only in type. The abundance of water foreshows their special privileges as God's chosen nation for the earth when the right time is come. Till then they must wait for their full blessing. Another and greater work is going on now, wherein all the varied aspects of Christ and His work and His death, given to them in detail—if we may so say—is for us, the called and chosen of God for heaven, centered in the cross. For there we see the blood that stands between us and the Avenger, there the blood that washes us from our sins, takes away all guilt, and by which we are justified freely. There the cleansing power from every defilement, as by the ashes of Him who was on the cross wholly consumed in the fire of God's judgment; there also the power of death upon the old man which was crucified with Christ when He was made sin, so that according to the new man we might live a new life unto God. Therefore all is ready for the believer to enter into the possession of the whole land, the enjoyment of every spiritual blessing.

For salvation, the realizing by faith that we have died to sin in the flesh is the last thing learned. Until this is known, there is much fluctuation in the joy of knowing our sins forgiven. Sometimes seasons of great happiness, at others, doubts and fears arise through the activity of the flesh, which has not been yet reckoned dead, or rather that we have died to it. For the flesh is not dead; but we, reckoning ourselves dead to it, receive power through Christ to live to God according to the new “I,” and thus realize our new condition, as alive to God in Christ Jesus; and so are enabled to mortify our members which are upon the earth.

The soul that is not grounded and settled in this great truth is obliged to be constantly looking at the cross as that which keeps God outside, i.e. the only aspect it can have to a soul yet in Egypt. Nor is forgiveness clearly realized until we have learned that Christ has done more for us than merely giving us remission. Hence souls go back to the cross as a fresh starting-point to get re-assurance of forgiveness. There is no advance, no growth, in this going backward and forward. Until we take the stand of faith that we in Christ did die to sin, we cannot know the meaning of resurrection-life, and therefore we are as to faith still living in the old life. No wonder if the question of sins is constantly present; and to quiet conscience there is a necessity to sprinkle the doorposts again. For it is a poor condition to go on with an active unjudged flesh, content to think it is all right. In such cases there may be reason to fear that all is wrong.

As a matter of fact before God the question of sins and forgiveness is settled once and forever; but the enjoyment of the assurance of forgiveness is according to our faith. This is never known as a settled thing until we know that in Christ we really died unto sin. Thence not only peace but power over the flesh; for how shall we that thus died to sin live any longer therein? Does God our Father leave us to make good our position by our own efforts, or by an otiose faith? Nay; when He gives faith to rest implicitly on His word, He also gives the power. He makes our standing good, not in imagination, but by His Spirit given to us. It is our privilege through grace to say with Paul, “I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.” Wondrous divine power, looking not at the mere serpent of brass—not at our thoughts about it—but at Christ Himself, Who was made sin and died for us; faith in the heart, not the mere mind or intellect, looking at Him. If we are content with mere doctrine, we are only looking at the serpent of brass. God would have us in faith look at Christ, and know His power.

So looking, we have abundance of water. The Lord Jesus speaks of water as a symbol of the word in John 3, “born of water and of the Spirit;” in John 4 as power of worship in souls, and again in John 7 it is used to signify the outflow of the Holy Spirit. So we see in the smitten rock at Horeb; in. the running water with the ashes; and here in abundance of water, as in John 7, so abundant, that from the believer run rivers of living water. And, note, the water in Num. 21 and in John 7 is not to souls dying from thirst—this we see at Horeb, and the well of Sychar—nor is it to cleanse from defilement, but the joy of God giving abundance to those who know the full and finished work of Christ as typified by the serpent of brass. Divine love now flows down to us, every barrier removed; for Truth and Righteousness are not set aside but exalted. May we not say that in this beautiful scene of the up-springing well God is not so much satisfying the thirst of the people as His own thirst for their blessing, and how He longs to bless us in the same, yet more abundant manner! He was straitened till the whole work of Christ was (in type, as in fact) complete. Then He calls to blessing the very same people whom forty years before He bade them shut their doors lest He came in to destroy them. This is the wonder of redemption, and proclaims how infinite the value of the blood shed for us, the power that brings God, Who must be against us as born in sin, to be for us when redeemed.

This type in the wilderness will have its true significance in the last days for Israel, when the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and the desert shall be like the garden of the Lord. But if it was God's delight to make the well spring up in the wilderness, how much more when Israel's fullness comes in! Then truly all their murmurings will cease, for they will know and rejoice in Jehovah. But there is a more blessed realization of this type already; whatever the blessedness of Israel,

however richly the Spirit may be poured upon them, it will not, cannot, equal the blessing when the Holy Ghost came down upon the gathered disciples on the day of Pentecost. God had been waiting for that event, one of the results of the finished work of Christ. In the wilderness God said, Gather the people," all were to be present, and to share in the blessing. And on the day of Pentecost the disciples were all with one accord in one place. On both occasions all for whom the blessing is prepared are brought together. And it is God's joy to have a people here on whom He can bestow the fullness of His blessing. He gathered Israel on that day that He might have the joy of giving them water; and He gathered the disciples that He might have the delight of an assembly formed to receive the Holy Ghost. The Lord Jesus said, "I will send the Comforter "; this answers to the word to Israel, "I will give them water." Israel sang to the well; we rejoice in the presence of the Comforter by whose power we sing praise to God our Father. In the great day that is coming blessing will flow through Israel to the Gentile; but of the church, rather of every believer, it is said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Our blessing, and power of blessing goes beyond theirs. Channels of living water! Immediately the rivers of living waters began to flow, and thousands drank thence at Peter's first preaching. And as Israel sang to the well, so these new disciples continued daily in the temple praising God. The water still flows, the well is still springing up, the Holy Ghost has not left the church—never will (even in the eternal glory the church will be the habitation of God by the Spirit); and though we are yet in the world, a wilderness, the water flows abundantly for us.

Alas! how we have failed in that the living waters have not flowed from us according to the mind of God. The professing church has rather dammed up the outflow, and in its representative character has so failed that the world denies the truth, of which the church is or ought to be the pillar and ground. The church has sunk to the condition of a mere confederation intent upon maintaining an earthly position. And the world so esteems it, seeing in it an intruder aiming at secular power. The world's judgment is sadly and unwittingly, in accord with the word of the Lord; for it has become a great tree. The two powers have struggled, and do still. Where the secular power is supreme, as in Protestant lands, the nominal church seeks to influence, and in most instances secretly to dominate the secular. Where the world has failed to oust the ecclesiastical power from the usurped throne, there the church openly takes the lead in all, and is more tenacious of worldly things than the world itself.

The day is coming when the world will re-assert itself, and wrest from the false church its acquired power, wreaking their vengeance upon it, "and shall burn her with fire."

But there are, spite of this wickedness, the true saints of God—all believers—who enjoy the blessing of the Holy Ghost's abiding presence. As to this the church is unknown to the world; as to testimony it ought to be well known. The hidden joys of communion, sitting at a table invisible to man, is not for the world; just as the well was not for the Edomite nor the Moabite, though in the border of their land, but for Israel alone.

"I will give them water." Has the water ever failed? For more than 1800 years the Holy Spirit of God has dwelt down here with the church. Little companies here and there are witnesses of His presence. Persecutions, contempt, and reproach have not hindered, nay, all these have only made His presence more manifest. The corruption that has resulted from evil men creeping in has only made the poor of the flock cleave more to the Name of Jesus. And this was never more

visible than in the present day when not persecution from without but divisions within betray the untiring aim of the enemy to scatter what he cannot destroy. God, our God, is faithful to His word, “I will give them water.” For the church is His delight. Now that Christ is in heaven, the church of God is called to be the representative of Christ during His absence, and therefore the only object here below acceptable and pleasing before Him. Acceptable! yea, but only as the result of the finished work of Christ. There could be no such thing as the church of God till Christ had died, risen and ascended. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” The church was wholly dependent for its formation upon the descent of the Holy Ghost. And when redemption is complete, He forms the church. Jehovah was waiting for the last type of the work of Christ to give water, and God waited till the reel redemption was accomplished to send down the Spirit. It is “the well” that Christ spoke of before He went away.

It is the water of life; through the church (out of his belly) it reaches dead souls and quickens them. The Lord Jesus said the dead should hear His voice, and should live. But Who applies the word and gives life? The Spirit. Who raises the first cry in the soul, “give me this water that I thirst not?” The Holy Spirit. By what power is it that this water is a well of water whence the living stream flows to others? The Holy Spirit. It is He revealing Christ, therein using God's servants as channels of salvation. This is God's joy. He says to His servants now, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

Wilderness Lessons: 12. Victory

Victory now rests upon Israel. Their song at the “well” is as a fresh starting-point, and marks a change of wilderness history. At the first, they sang Jehovah's triumph over the Egyptian foe. Their song now is the fitting sequence to the latest type of the death of Christ. At the Red Sea God was for them, the enemy was overthrown; the serpent of brass shows how the “flesh” is to be overcome. The flesh which had shown itself in such varied forms during the journey is now judged before God in the death of Christ. The soul that realizes this by faith rises above the circumstances of the wilderness, and finds springs of living water. The wilderness does not change, it is still a dreary waste; but God has provided grace and communion, and the rain filleth the pools. At the Red Sea they did nothing; here the princes and the nobles dig with their staves. It is the activity of faith laying hold of the blessings brought within reach by grace. This is the work of faith, no toil, no labor, no opposing influence to set aside, but grasping the blessing brought nigh. And just as the princes must dig with their staves, so must we take hold of the blessings now given to us in the gospel. In contending with the world, in bearing the daily burden, there is the labor of faith; in putting forth the hand to take what God gives, is the intelligent obedience of faith. It brings communion and joy; and (in knowing that we have the victory over flesh, over sin in us, through death) sets the believer above the present condition, and puts the song in his mouth, “Spring up, O well.” And this is the “well” that God has told us of in the revelation of Christ. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11); see also 1 Peter 4:1, 2. Only those who in the obedience of faith reckon themselves to have died to sin, to the flesh, can fully sing this song. A believer may, even while the “flesh” is yet unjudged, sing the song of the Red Sea; but while the flesh is active, unjudged in its nature, and bringing discipline upon him, there cannot be this true singing of the soul to God. Reckoning ourselves dead to sin is not to reckon the flesh dead; he who reckons thus will soon find his mistake, for “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us;” but to reckon that we have died to it, is God's divine way of giving us victory over it. It is of faith, not of works lest any should boast.

Israel did not rise to the height of the blessing, nor was it God's purpose they should. It was reserved till Christ should come; and the fullness of its meaning, like the good wine at the marriage of Cana, was kept for the church now. They rejoiced in the gift; it is ours to joy in God the Giver as revealed in Christ.

They soon prove that they had not full confidence in God. In a little while they come to the possessions of the Amorites, and messengers are sent to Sihon the king. The land of the Amorite was included in the original gift of God to Israel, and the question arises, Why send messengers asking permission to pass through it, as they did to Edom? The land of Edom and of Moab formed no part of Israel's promised possession, it was God's command that they should not be dispossessed. The land of the Amorite was given; was it of faith to ask merely to pass through it? The request did bring out their hatred, and their attempt to hinder Israel. Their destruction was the consequence. But the question remains, ought not Israel to have taken possession at once? To

ask permission to pass quietly through a land given to them of God, was it the obedience of faith? Upon the Amorite there was righteous retribution, for they had taken that land from Moab; and now Israel by the will of God takes it from them.

The Amorite boasted against Moab. Israel now boasts over the Amorite, and in derision turns their boasting against them. They had a national song commemorating the capture of Heshbon, and Israel takes it up as a proverb against them. “Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared; for there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it hath consumed Ar of Moab and the lords of the high places of Arnon.” Sihon seems to have made the captured city the point whence, in his boasting song, fire issued and consumed Ar of Moab. Whether the following verse (29th) be the continuation of the Amorite's boast, or Israel's lament over Moab, the impotence of their god Chemosh is declared. In irony they say that Chemosh had played them false, and had given his sons and daughters (the Moabites) captives to the Amorite. If this be the language of Israel, it is but a proof of the deceitfulness of the heart, for Israel afterward worshipped the god they here despise. The 30th verse seems the triumph of Israel over the Amorite. “We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba.” If fire came from Heshbon and destroyed Ar of Moab, fire came from Israel and Heshbon perished.

Again the old want of confidence in God appears; “And Moses sent to spy out Jaazar” Had not a sufficient lesson been given as to the employment of spies? Here however no disaster follows. Is it not that the fullness of grace as seen in the “well” covers as it were the want of faith in the promise of God? This is not a solitary instance of the sovereignty and grace rising above failure (have we not daily proofs?) and setting it aside that the goodness of God might triumph over the untrustful heart of man. In all their history grace is the rule, as real after law if not so prominent as before. It was the same grace that told Moses to speak to the rock in Num. 20:8 as bade him smite the rock in Ex. 17:6. And in this comparatively late day, when their journeyings are closing, grace shines out with equal brightness as before. Alas! there is also the breaking out of the old human prudence. How offensive this mast be to God whose word was pledged to them that they should have the land! It is the opposite of faith; for faith resting upon His word never sends spies, looks not at obstacles with the eye of doubt and fear, refuses to meet unfavorable or opposing circumstances in a human way, but counts on God and His unfailing word, and thus overcomes. Was Moses again pleased to send spies (Deut. 1:23)? He had before asked Hobab to be eyes for them; failing him, they use their own. But we are here in the full efficacy of the grace that made the dead rod to bloom, and the well to spring up in the desert. It is peculiar to grace to rise above the lack of faith, accomplishing its own purposes. Thus Israel dwells in the cities of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, like Sihon, is delivered into their hand, and they possess his land.

In the following scene (Num. 22) no greater confirmation of the word in Rom. 8:31 can be given. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Principalities and powers are here, the powers of the unseen world are invoked, man unites with Satan to curse the people of God. How intensely interesting to the believer to watch the continuous attempts of evil on the one side, and on the other the marked intervention of God, baffling and bringing to naught the aims of Satan. For he it is, though hiding himself behind Balak and Balaam. It is a question of God's care for His people, and of His power. He has given Israel victory over their fleshly enemies: can He turn aside the malice and power of Satan? God permits Satan to try, that we may have as it were a

pre-confirmation of the word of the Lord. Nothing shall take us out of His hand. And may we not say that God emphasizes His love and care for us? For in this scene He uses no mere human instrument but contends personally with the enemy who is shrouded in the person of Balaam. If this tells how precious Israel was to Him, does it not speak with yet more power to the church of God now? If so much to them who had only the shadows of the good things to come, how much more to believers now who know and have the reality? Behold how God condescends personally to enter the arena of the contest, meeting the foe upon his own ground. If Balaam goes to meet enchantments, it is God that meets him; if he will go to Balak, it is Jehovah with His drawn sword that withstands him in the way; if he will speak against Jehovah, God compels him to utter blessings and not curses; and at last Balaam broken under the power of God is forced to otter judgment against the man from whom he would joyfully have received his house full of silver. For his heart was with Balak, and his desire to curse Israel no less. When no longer held in the hand of God, his will is seen; where he cannot curse, he would seduce; and, having more Satanic wisdom than Balak, he succeeded later by wiles (Num. 31:16), where in a question of direct power against God he could only be crushed.

The two prominent factors in Satan's attempt are the dismay that filled Balak's mind when he saw the hosts of Israel, and the covetousness that ruled Balaam's soul. Balak sends for Balaam. In this early day we see the power of the world uniting with the religion of the world against that which is of God. The most terrible instance of this union is not yet come, when the Beast and the false prophet will unite to make war with the Lamb. Here we have the secular soliciting the aid of the ecclesiastical, as since the ecclesiastical has oft called upon the secular. But whichever solicited, the other always responded; and every difference or jealousy between the two was set aside to make common cause against the people of God.

Israel is now pitched in the plains of Moab, and brought thither by the power of God. They are there as victors bringing their trophies with them, fresh from the conquest of Sihon and Og, and in possession of their cities. A glorious but terror-striking scene met the eyes of Balak, as from the mountains of Moab he gazed upon the broad plains. Here were the people whose report had long before made the heart of the Canaanite to quake, whose miraculous path through the Red Sea, nor less wonderful through the desert, attested the mighty power of Him who led them. Balak saw, feared, and hated this people; and conscious that a power above his own led them, he lost all confidence in his own might. He seemed to be aware that no mere human arm could destroy this people, and he goes not forth as Amalek, Sihon, and Og, with their armies. The power that guards them is not flesh and blood, but one that is mysterious and to him unknown. But is there not a power on his side? Yea, and he invokes Baal-Peor by the intervention of Balaam his prophet. And thus the power of Satan hitherto masked by the idolatry of Moab is brought out in open conflict with the power of God.

Satan had been trying to ruin Israel ever since they passed through the Red Sea; and, now (seeing that in spite of his endeavors to make them disowned of God, they are on the contrary the objects of God's favor, which seems to increase as they become more unworthy), he brings his two servants, his king and his prophet, as he will do again ere long, in a futile attempt to curse them. What an instance of impotent rage and malice! Terror fills Balak, covetousness brings Balaam, but the rage and malice are deepest in Satan; yet is he not less impotent than his two agents who are in this scene his mere puppets, while God for a time wrests Balsam out of Satan's

hand, and makes him utter the blessings and greatness of Israel. Satan as well as man must bow to God's will; he, the prime instigator, is here pitting his hatred and cunning against the might and purpose of God. The devil's wish to curse is the occasion for God to pronounce blessing.

Morally, Israel was not a whit better than on the passover night in Egypt when God put a barrier of blood between Himself and them, lest He destroyed them. How surprising then the testimony God brings out of the enemy! How could such words be the testimony of such a people? Only through, the finished work of Christ, in virtue of which God had looked upon them, as He now looks upon us who believe in Christ, and sees us now as He saw Israel then before Him in the acceptability of Christ. And how blessedly and truly is the overshadowing worth of Christ in His person and work manifested when the reluctant Balaam is made to say, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.” Was not perverseness a most prominent feature in their history of the desert-way? Bidden to possess the land they refuse, alleging their fears of the sons of Anal; and when consequently told to turn towards the desert, they essay to enter the land. They cried in their hunger for bread, and God gave them bread from heaven; afterward they loathed it and preferred the fleshpots of Egypt, and even said that Egypt was better than Canaan! Is not this the extreme of perversity? God's mercies misconstrued, His blessings denied, His forbearance abused.

In presence of this what otherwise could be said than what Moses said, “Thou art a stiff-necked people” (Deut. 9:6)? But the infinite value of Christ covers all their perverseness and their iniquity, and God will not behold it. The word does not say that there was no iniquity among them, but that God will not look at it; He will look at Christ. He will not look at the debt, but at Him who paid it; not at the sin, but at Him who bore the judgment. Nor will He allow the enemy to say one word against His people. Moses as the servant of Jehovah might tell them that they had been rebellious ever since the day they came out of Egypt; but not Balaam. He was Balak's willing mouth-piece to utter curses, but no reproach can pass his lips against Jehovah. Leprosy might break out in the camp, and their habitations become defiled; but he, the hater of Israel, is forced to say, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.” Again we say, how could such a testimony be borne of such a people, save as the result of that grace which we cannot measure; of that precious blood whose preciousness God alone can estimate?

It was through, and in virtue of, the cross (though not then accomplished, but only shadowed forth in characters that God could read) that He looked down upon Israel, and made the wretched but impotent Balaam thus speak. Satan's eyes were on them, and malediction in his heart; but he is powerless. If he made such efforts to get Israel cast off by God (for that was his aim) need we wonder that the church of God is the constant object of his attacks; and even if he knows how impossible it is to take the church out of the hand of God are we surprised that he uses all his power to hinder our being what we should be before God? Nay, but are we not amazed that there is so little of watchfulness on our part? Nevertheless, we can still say, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Chapter 197

Wilderness Lessons: 13. Moses and Balaam—Their Witness As to Israel

Both Moses and Balaam bear witness concerning Israel: the former to their moral condition; the latter to God's estimation of them, now what Christ is for them having been (typically) set forth. That the first witness is true, their whole history proves. Balsam's testimony is no less true, for it really testifies of Christ. According to Moses, not one bright spot in their whole course as a nation unless we except the song of the Red Sea. And among the few individuals who stood faithful to God, scarce one without a recorded failure. The congregation are marked by persistent disobedience, constant complaints. It was at the well that sovereign grace silenced their complaining, and God fulfilled His own promise that He would quite take away their murmurings. A fuller accomplishment yet remains when their iniquity is all purged away. Instead of murmuring they sing. Yet their singing is more the testimony to God's grace than the evidence of thankful hearts. Not long after their song they proved how unchanged were their hearts. Balaam's view of Israel is altogether from a different stand-point; he speaks not of what they were practically as Moses did, but how grace could think of them as redeemed by Christ. Moses testifies what Israel is toward God, Balaam what God is for them. Moses speaks of them as responsible and constantly rebelling, Balaam utters the purpose of grace. Moses accordingly proposes their blessing as contingent upon their obedience, Balaam, the settled and fixed purpose of God dependent only upon His will and power; yea, even present blessing, and the hiding of sin and iniquity.

There is the same kind of double testimony concerning us; for that of Moses is analogous to the testimony of the Spirit in us as to our ways and nature. Nay we ourselves are witnesses to ourselves that there is nothing good in the flesh, that the old nature is unrenewed, and incapable of it. All the characteristic evils of the flesh whether in its religious or more corrupt aspect have been developed by the circumstances of the way. And if we in the light of God judge ourselves, will our judgment of self be different from that of Moses concerning Israel? Many an evil root has sprung up, owing to circumstances. But it is not the will of God that we should be the creatures of circumstances; it is ours to live above them. But the same Spirit testifies to us the perfectness of Christ, and to our perfectness in Him. It would be an impeachment of the cleansing power of His blood if, as in Him, there was a spot or stain to be seen.

Satan made strenuous efforts to curse Israel. But the very way in which God was pleased to frustrate them shows how completely God held in His hand both him and his wretched servant, Balaam, so that not a movement against Israel was possible till the words of God were all spoken; yea, Balaam himself made to say them. If Jehovah was more visibly for His people at the Red Sea, not more gloriously than here at the close of their wilderness journey. But Balaam's natural character comes out too; for by this Satan works. I doubt if he initiates any evil; he brings it to the surface, energizes it, leads it and makes corrupt nature his instrument for all evil. Man is made wise with Satanic wisdom, and the common desires of the mind are combined with those which are clearly more Satanic in character. Thus in this man covetousness is combined with enmity

against God and against His people, which might not have so clearly appeared, had he been kept from accompanying the messengers of Balak. The truth is, Balaam was in accord with Satan, willing to curse Israel. He was held in by bit and bridle, and compelled to utter the words of God, not the desire of his own heart.

The messengers in result came with the rewards of divination or witchcraft; but the power of God immediately appears, for at the first call Balaam says, “I will bring you word again, as Jehovah shall speak to me.” It was not his wont to seek counsel of God; his intercourse was with the powers of darkness. He says he will bring the word of Jehovah, but he knew not the import of that Name, though compelled to use it. We surely see in this that it was God as the Jehovah of Israel Who met him, at once proclaiming Israel's relationship to Him and Himself as their God. He was for them. But He was not “Jehovah” to Balaam, it was “God” that met him. Balaam's constant use of that Name only makes him, the unwitting witness that God was for Israel and against Moab. Constrained to refuse at first, and again seeking to know what God would say to him, it shows how determined his will was, how great his desire to get the reward that Balak promised. It, also, in result brings out more clearly the intervention of God on behalf of His people, for we should not have had these wonderful prophecies if he had not gone. God is making the power and malice of the enemy to praise Him, and to manifest this, to make Satan's discomfiture more complete, God on the second occasion bids him go (i.e. allows him to follow his own will, yet telling him he is powerless and can only speak the word God gives him). This permission to go did not lessen his sin in going. The thought, the desire to curse Israel was still uppermost in his mind; therefore the angel of Jehovah met him in the way and would have slain him. We know how he escaped; the dumb ass rebuked the madness of the prophet.

Balaam feigns obedience and offers to return. He says, “I have sinned.” Where was his conscience that he had sinned in persisting to go after God had told him not to go? His thought was merely that he had failed to discern the presence of the angel in the way. This was not in itself a sin, but it was the consequence of sin, and as such illustrated the moral blindness that sin always produces; in an unbeliever it is fatal. But even in a saint following, in any degree, however small, the impulse of his own will, how can he discern the mind of the Lord? The blind unbeliever rushes upon the sword of the Lord, and is destroyed; the saint is preserved, spite of himself, but when his eyes are opened it is to find that the Lord has been withstanding him. We may take warning even from a wicked Balaam. The peculiar tendencies of our own hearts are often turned into a thick veil by Satan, so that we fail to discern the Lord's mind. Covetousness was the human element of this man's opposition to God; it was the blind through which he found himself rushing to destruction. So it was with Judas, who not for a house full of silver, but for only thirty pieces betrayed his Master. I have said “human element” to distinguish it from the deeper wickedness—enmity against God, though this, even as the other, has its seat in the human heart.

His heart is unchanged. Therefore he is again bidden to go, and again reminded of his inability to say aught but what God gave him to say. Had his confession of sin been real, would he not have found mercy? Not being real, he is allowed to follow the bent of his own will, the willing servant of Satan. But, while filling up the measure of his iniquity, God all the while uses him to accomplish His will, and to declare for our profit and joy the unchangeable counsels of God.

It is a wonderful scene; was there ever any other occasion (save the cross) where the wickedness of man and the rage of Satan were so evidently against God and yet used to make known His power and blessing for His own?

“And God's anger was kindled because he went and the angel of Jehovah stood in the way for an adversary against him.” There was an appearance, which is always indicated when it is said “the angel of Jehovah,” though not always of a person. Not necessarily when it is simply “Jehovah spake,” as so frequently to Moses. The appearance may be a flame a of fire out of the midst of bush, but it is the angel of Jehovah (Ex. 3:2). So also the cloud that went between Israel and the Egyptians was “the angel of God” (Ex. 14:19). The man that appeared to the wife of Manoah was “the angel of Jehovah.” There is no necessity to suppose an appearance to Balaam before this, when on his journey the angel of Jehovah met him in the way; for God can make His power and presence felt without assuming an appearance. Evidently there was an opposition now, for the ass saw, though Balsam was not at first permitted to see. But his blindness made his will more manifest.

It would seem that not only the name “Jehovah” but the use of the number “seven” was borrowed from Israel by the nations outside. For on the high places Balaam caused seven altars to be prepared, and a bullock and a ram on each; and by way of making himself acceptable to God says, “I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.” Thus would man—the flesh—endeavor to propitiate God; is there anything more offensive to Him? From these high places he sees the utmost of the people; the whole camp is spread out before his astonished eyes. He pronounces them blessed, and confesses his own impotence. “How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, or how shall I defy whom Jehovah hath not defied?” Balak reproaches him, and the unwilling Balaam owns the power that controlled him. Another place is selected whence only the outskirts of the camp can be seen. As if Balaam's limited view could tarn the blessing into a curse, or thwart the purpose of God!

In Balak we see how utterly lost was the knowledge of God. The world by wisdom knew Him not; nor was the ignorance of Balak darker than the world's wisdom. Indeed its wisdom and its ignorance are both alike here. God is known only by revelation, and Balak's ignorance is less astonishing than that of the wise world. The wisdom of the world searched for God not in creation where His eternal power and Godhead were surely displayed, but in the dark and filthy caverns of a filthy and corrupt imagination. What that produced is graven on every page of the world's history. What Balak's idea of God was is evident from his words to Balsam. He thought God was altogether such as himself, or such as he conceived his own god to be. For he in his highest thoughts could not conceive anything beyond nature; he might imagine a monster possessing every conceivable attribute that nature could suggest; and his god Baal was but the expression of his own imagination. He might think that Jehovah was a more powerful God than Baal, and so did not direct Balaam to consult the god of Moab. But to him gods and men were not beyond the influence of circumstances and place. And so he says, judging Jehovah as he would Baal, “thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all; and curse me them from thence.” But God is not man that He should lie, or the Son of man that He should repent; He had spoken, and would make it good. Balaam, had received commandment to bless and he could not reverse it; as if he said, I would but I cannot. In effect a fuller blessing is pronounced; and Balak, despairing of cursing them, would fain content himself with hindering blessing. There was no enchantment,

no divination, able to bring a curse upon Israel: on the contrary the enchanter himself had been blessing—had even uttered the wish that he could share in their lot at the end, and die the death of the righteous. And the miserable king, beginning to feel how hopeless it was to strive against the God of Israel, says, “Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all;” as if he would say, Let them and me be equal, and then I may overcome them. But Jehovah's interposition for His people is never merely to frustrate the aims of the enemy and turn aside evil; there is always the positive side of blessing. And here how great the blessing is, how comprehensive yet not circumstantial in its details; each step rising in fullness, until God in the person of the coming Star of Jacob triumphs gloriously over the power and malice of Satan. What a marvelous sort of conflict between the power of God and the power of evil!

Yet again another place is chosen (ver. 27). The God of heaven and of earth is unknown. To his dark idolatrous soul, what was the Jehovah of Israel more than the tutelary deity of a particular people, or of a limited locality where indeed He might be supreme, while in another place another god would prevail? Such was evidently the thought of Balak. The idolatry of every clime and age never went beyond this; each nation had its own god: Elysium and Tartarus, earth and sea, each its own deity. Or if the philosophic mind went farther, it was but a fruitless attempt to grasp at an indefinable intangible something, of which the name they gave, Chaos, only declared their ignorance. The common people did not rise even to this. Long afterward the Syrians said the God of Israel was the god of the hills, and not of the valleys. Even the wicked Balsam somehow learned better. Perhaps even before, he was like the Roman augurs who, as Cicero surmised, winked to each other when they beheld the superstitious folly of the common people. But though he might have been as much as others the slave of superstition, and as firm a believer in his own enchantments, when, for the third time, Balak prepares his altars and his sacrifices at another place, Balaam meets not his thought implied in change of place; he feels the folly of seeking enchantments as at other—the former—times, and sets his face toward the wilderness.

Notwithstanding this apparent giving up of his divinations, in yielding again to Balak's importunity he gives further evidence of his own will, unbroken yet powerless. And is it not that God would wake His power still more manifest? Balaam seeks not enchantments; his own “familiar spirit” is driven from the battlefield, and now it is said “the Spirit of God came upon him.” He is now only as a captive chained to the chariot of the Conqueror. He was no better than his ass, which spoke when God opened his mouth. And so must Balaam.

The Spirit of God came upon him, but not in saving power. This is not the only instance of the Spirit using an unconverted man, and here an enemy, as a mere instrument for His purpose. God works by whomsoever He will, but His instruments are always chosen according to His infinite wisdom. No prophet from among Israel could so well have proved the truth of God's power, and that the God of Israel was the true God of heaven and earth. This was of the highest importance as a testimony to the heathen world, and declared to them that their gods were no gods. In Balaam, unwilling, resisting to the last, the unmistakable testimony is wrung out of him, to the supreme power and sovereignty of the God of Israel. No doubt the prophecies of Balaam with the attendant circumstances were known to the nations, as well as the miraculous passing of Israel through the Red Sea (Josh. 2:10). Thus beyond the special point of Israel's blessing here is a witness of the Being and Power of God over and above the testimony of creation. Judgment was imminent over the Canaanite; ere it falls, a fresh and altogether new witness of the One true God

is given, and through them to all nations. To continue in idolatry after such proof increased their sin. The world is willingly ignorant. “So that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

The word affords other instances of the Spirit coming upon a man as quite distinct from His presence where there is a broken spirit resting on redemption. When the conscience is in the presence of God, and bows to His judgment, then the Spirit of God acts in saving grace, not using the matt as a mere instrument, but blessing his soul: in a word, it is salvation. But even where there is no conscience-work, and consequently no salvation, the power of the Spirit may be so great that for the time he who is under it becomes another man. After Saul was anointed, the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, and he became another man (1 Sam. 10:6). The Spirit of God came again upon him (1 Sam. 19:23), and he prophesied as on the former occasion; but at neither time was there any work in the conscience, or change of heart. Indeed on the second of these two occasions his behavior was such as to be evidence to the contrary. Yet on both he was so unlike himself (-became another man) that the people amazed said “Is Saul also among the prophets?” So also another instance of this same power of the Spirit of God is seen in that the lying and seducing prophet is made to pronounce judgment upon the disobedient prophet (1 Kings 13). In all these the prophesying is the manifestation of the Spirit's power, not in saving efficacy, but as sovereign and selecting His instruments according to divine wisdom.

Surely there is contained in these facts a very solemn consideration for those who are now used in the service of God. To be a prominent servant and a useful one in the greatest of all works is no proof even of conversion. No zeal, no success, in preaching can compensate for the absence of life. There are those who will say, “Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works?” The Lord's answer to such reveals the sad and solemn fact, that their activity in such labor and zeal was without the knowledge of the Lord; and, as without, this saving knowledge, all their labor and zeal was nothing else than the work of iniquity. “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7). There is only one ground of salvation (and indeed for acceptable service), that as lost sinners we are saved only by Christ—by faith in Him. The great apostle himself had no other plea but this the common ground of all. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

Three times the enemy has tried and thrice failed in his attempt. Now Satan in the person of Balak appears in more open opposition, and seeks as if he would be revenged upon his helpless servant. For Balak here is but the mouthpiece of Satan. He had his rewards for the prophet, but they were offered in vain. In anger and disappointment he tells Balaam to flee to his place. “I thought to promote thee unto great honor; but lo, Jehovah hath kept thee back from honor.” It is against Jehovah that Balak speaks, it was against His will that the king now openly declares himself.

It was a question between righteousness and grace. Satan was not ignorant of the demands of righteousness, he knew that Israel deserved to lose the promised inheritance; but he knew nothing of the purposes of grace, or how these purposes could be fulfilled without setting aside the demands of righteousness. He is as it were challenging God, whether He can bless a people hitherto rebellious. And wondrously have the Wisdom and the Power (1 Cor. 1) met the challenge. The great question is settled before God, though the time was not then come for the public setting

forth of Christ Himself as the propitiatory for sin (Rom. 3:25). It is in view of the cross that God can declare Israel blessed. The book of types and shadows had been unrolled before Israel, but unread by them; the true Light had not to them illuminated the page; but all was before God, and the people who most deserved to be cut off are those to whom the highest and greatest (earthly) blessings are assured. Nor could Satan read the record more than man, he never knew it till the great fact of atonement was accomplished. God did not make Satan the depositary of His counsels. But on the cross where Christ was lifted up as the answer to all Satan's charges, as well as to assure every believer, then Satan knew how God could be just and the Justifier of the ungodly.

Now though Satan was the prime mover in the attempt to curse Israel, stirring up the evil in the hearts of these two men to accomplish his purpose, yet after all it was not so much the people, as the fearing and hating Him who was to come from them. Satan knew the meaning of the first word given in Eden. The Lord who was to come should bruise his head. The word was renewed to Abraham: Satan saw it was connected somehow with Israel. If he could destroy Israel, the promised Seed could not come. But the counsel of God as to Hip Christ is eternal; and “hath Jehovah spoken, and shall He not make it good?” Satan, vanquished, disappears. His two servants may each go their way. Nay, not yet; God has not done with Balak; this great controversy is not to be left so. God as it were now takes the initiative, and the curse Balak sought for Israel is pronounced upon himself. “Come, I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.” And now it is not Israel, but the STAR out of Jacob that is before the eye of God. It is in Him and by Him that the future victories and greatness of Israel will be achieved. Moab and every other power of the world that has stood up against Christ and His people shall be subdued under His mighty power. The ships of the west may afflict Asshur and Eber; but their leader shall perish. It is the judgment of the quick at the end of the age, even then and thus pronounced.

The scene closes, the curtain drops upon this wonderful drama: Satan for the time is vanquished, and the everlasting counsels of grace stand firm in the power of God, which is yet to make all good for Israel.

Did Israel know how wondrously God, their Jehovah was maintaining their cause, yea, His own sovereign right of grace against the enemy? Nay, they, unconscious, dwelt at ease in their tents, while the battle was fought and won upon the high places of Moab.

Chapter 198

Wilderness Lessons: 14. Balaam's Prophecies

The prophecies uttered by Balaam are unsurpassed in their magnificence. In scope like Isaiah they take in the complete circle of God's dealings and purposes concerning Israel. Isaiah is fuller and richer in height, depth, and breadth; but the brevity of those adds not a little to their grandeur. They begin with the counsel of God: He blest Israel; and the four utterances give the characteristics, the salient features, of their position and relationship to God and man. In the beginning of their national existence they felt the iron yoke of slavery, and God interposed and brought them out of the land of bondage. He separated them from the nations unto Himself, and made His abode with them, and will yet raise them to power and greatness over every other nation. Their glory at the end through Him Who shall come out of Jacob shall never be equaled.

Yet running through this glory and splendor, there is the wail of a soul consciously outside, looking on but not nigh; whose first longing desire to share in Israel's lot, at least to die their death, ends in a cry of despair, “Alas! who shall stand when God doeth this?” The condition of his soul, entwined as it is with the declared blessings of Israel, is like a dark thread in a skein of the brightest colors, but which by contrast enhances the beauty and brightness of Israel.

The first word declares the people blessed, not as then beginning but as an existing fact. Separation from the nations was a necessary result. God instituted for them a special and peculiar government which effectually placed a thick fence between them and the nation. This was preparatory to the second blessing—sin not imputed. And this must be before the King can dwell among them and find His pleasure there, as the third evidently declares. The fourth is Messiah's reign, and the putting forth of His power.

At this time they do not appear to be so numerous but that he who looked from the hills could see them all as they spread out on the plain. Their number is given (Num. 26): 601730 males above the age of twenty “able to go to war;” and these do not include the Levites. Moses does say (Deut. 10:22) they are as the stars of heaven for multitude. But only in the millennium will it also be said, “as the sand upon the sea shore.” And the next place selected by Balak where only the uttermost part could be seen implies that all Israel could be seen from where the first prophecy was given. Be this as it may, “dwelling alone” is the first salient feature of their blessing; in itself a blessing, but a means also for higher and greater. They were a vineyard hedged about, a tower and a winepress within the enclosure. God gave all that was needed for maintaining separation, and enforced it by command. This was the external aspect of their blessing; and if a Gentile became a proselyte, he too must sever all previous connections. For this is the key of their position before God, and their special privileges hung upon their “dwelling alone.”

And this mark which God put upon them from the first has never been lost. They have rebelled and in hardness of heart sought intercourse with idolatrous nations. Yet, mingle with others as they might, their identity was never lost. During the kingdom they would easily be distinguished; but they were as distinct from their neighbors in Babylon, visibly maintained for seventy years, more than two generations (according to modern computation). Nor were they less visibly maintained in

the city of Ahasuerus, and in all the provinces of his empire when Satan for the second time sought to destroy them all through the counsel of Haman the Agagite. But, whether it be Pharaoh or Ahasuerus, God watched over them and kept them in safety. The ease with which the Jew could have been distinguished from his neighbor, when the first decree was issued for their slaughter, is proof bow unmingled they were in reality with the Gentile. The same power now keeps the Jews from being lost among the nations where they are scattered.

Naturally the nationality of immigrants soon becomes indiscernible; it is blended with that of the native, or both together evolve a new character. Our own land where are welded Saxon, Dane, and Norman, with aborigines is an instance of a nation different from any one of the various elements. Perhaps each nation in Europe can point to similar facts in its own history. But the Jew, notwithstanding his association with Gentiles and sharing their pursuits, has ever remained distinct and discernible. It is the mark of God. Recent legislation would obliterate this mark and the world's policy approves. But the word “shall dwell alone” abides, and man cannot reverse it. It may be said that the ten tribes are so mingled with other peoples that their nationality is quite gone. They are truly lost to the eye of man, in the dust of the earth. Is that a proof that their identity is lost to God? In His time they will come forth in the light, and then they will be recognized by all. This should at least lead professed believers not to speculate as to this or that nation being the lost tribes. All such guesses are the merest folly. Nor do I doubt that this bold inquisitiveness of the human mind prying into the hidden things of God is mainly controlled by Satan who knows no more than man where the ten tribes are. It is God's secret, and He has hidden them from the malice and persecuting power both of Satan and of the world. The Jew not hidden has suffered. But whether hidden as the ten tribes, or persecuted as the Jew, the word stands out in prominent truth, “they shall dwell alone.” It was true in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the land, in captivity, and will be in their future greatness and glory. “Lo, the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.”

There is a reckoning time coming for all nations, a reckoning of judgment. Israel's chastisement will then be past. As they stand alone under a judgment that distinguishes them from all other nations, so when these nations are visited neither will Israel then be reckoned among them.

At the time of this prophecy they were a comparatively small nation (Deut. 4:38), but a glance at the future is given, when the primal word (Gen. 13:16) will be literally fulfilled through the line of Israel whose seed shall be like the dust of the earth, and as the sand on the sea shore for multitude (Gen. 28:14; 32:12). Balaam “the man whose eyes are open” sees their mighty numbers and exclaims “Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?”

The next word confirms the first which declared Israel to be blessed. God stamps it with the seal of His own unchangeable nature. “God is not man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said and shall He not do it, or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?” The commandment to bless had gone forth, and none could reverse it. And now the blessing advances and takes a moral character. The first has given their relationship to the world, and it is one of distance, not nearness; here in the second prophecy it is their position before God, their relationship to Him as the people, in whom He will not behold iniquity nor see perverseness. The word does not say that Israel was free from iniquity, but that God would not see it. If He looked upon their perverseness, how could they inherit the land? God Himself hides their sin and

rebellious ways from His own eye. Christ, whose atoning work has been displaying its wondrous efficacy all through the wilderness, covers all. He leads them in under the shelter of His wing. God's delight is in Him, and His work. And this so fills His eye that naught else is seen, and He can only bless. What a divine proof of the infinite worth of Him Whose precious blood has made atonement for sin; may we not say, divine evidence of the overwhelming power of redemption! As the rising tide effaces every character written on the sand, so does the full flow of grace blot out the handwriting against Israel. “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel.” Nor is this marvelous declaration limited to the then circumstances which were only a brief foreshadowing of the grace which still awaits them. All Israel will again take possession of their land with a more glorious display of the power of grace, when victories will be won by a mightier hand over greater foes. In the past we see a sinful people, but God will not behold their iniquity; in the future clean water shall be sprinkled upon them, all shall be taught of God. Ennobled by grace, each house of Israel shall inscribe upon its escutcheon “Holiness to Jehovah” (Zech. 14:20). Practical “righteousness shall characterize them; for the word is prophetic and awaits its perfect accomplishment. In the past we see God's estimation of the blood of Christ, it makes atonement; in the future for Israel, its further cleansing power. “They shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced.” “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zech. 12:10; 13:1) “Hath He said and shall He not do it, or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?” “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Psa. 87:3).

Mark the glory immediately resulting from God's not seeing perverseness. “Jehovah his God is with him and the shout of a King is among them.” Not to see sin is the negative side of their blessing; there is no judgment. Now we have the positive side; Jehovah is there, and the shout of a King To this the prophets long after testify. Zephaniah joins the presence of the King among them with joyous songs, “Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Israel, be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Jehovah hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel even Jehovah is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more” (Zeph. 3:14-15). The Psalmist celebrates the same glory when the Son of David reigns and shall be acclaimed the King of glory Psa. 24).

Mark too how this greatness and joy is referred to God as the source of all. What were they, this renowned people, what was their origin? “Thy father was an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite” &c. (Ezek. 16) And later, what were they? A nation of slaves! Their first steps from Egypt were a flight, and fear marked them till their enemies were drowned in the sea. “God brought them out of Egypt.” But now they have the strength of a unicorn. This also awaits a fuller accomplishment; but a sample of their strength was given in their triumph over Og and Sihon. In the beginning they fought with Amalek, and to human eyes the fight was dubious. Sometimes Amalek seemed to prevail. Israel had not then the strength of a unicorn. But God will have them enter the land as conquerors, and He has clothed them with power. The nations may be greater and mightier, nevertheless the nations flee before them. And this power with which they are endowed is to be yet more displayed in Joshua; and he is but the type of a greater Joshua. But if our hearts are attracted by the magnificence unfolded in these prophecies what will their accomplishment be! The man who has seen these visions of the Almighty, having his eyes open, beholds the future and exclaims in wonder but not in joy, “What hath God wrought!”

There are two parts in Num. 23:22. The former presents Israel as the objects of God's care; the latter, as the instruments of God's vengeance upon the nations. The 23rd verse answers to the former part, the 24th to the latter. “God brought them out of Egypt.” It is the pledge of His unceasing watchfulness. When God begins to bless, He never ceases; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. It is the assurance of His power ever active on their behalf; a power that would preserve them from the world as such, and from the malice and occult machination of Satan. “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither any divination against Israel.” This was verified at that time, for Balaam and his “familiar spirit” sought in vain to curse them. The seduction of Moab might and did ensnare them; but the direct power of Satan, apart from the world, as a means of temptation, is met by the immediate power of God. And so it ever is. Never did any evil overtake them but the cause was found in their own yielding to the world outside them. No enchantment or divination of Satan ever prevailed save when they broke through the barrier God had made, and served other gods. How soon they joined themselves to Baal-Peor, and then became enchanted with the daughters of Moab; how oft repeated up to the captivity! But the defeat of Satan in all his attempts (now seemingly successful) will be gloriously complete when Israel established in righteousness in the land will shout in praise, “What hath God wrought?” And the nations in amazement shall with responsive shouts acknowledge the power of God.

The first part however looks chiefly at their defensive strength, and how God would have preserved them: a care so graciously seen in the wilderness (Deut. 11:1-7). The second part is their aggressive power; it is in view of conflict and of ultimate victory. “He hath as it were the strength of a unicorn.” The King in their midst is their strength. We have had their numbers, “Who can count the dust of Jacob?” Now it is their might, “Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift himself up as a young lion; he shall not lie down till he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain.” The metaphor is bold and striking; the majesty of might in the rising up of a great lion, the vigorous bound of a young lion. So sang Isaiah, “They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them.” Israel's triumph is complete, as the lion will not lie down till he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain. So again, with different but not less forcible imagery— “Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 11:14, and 41:15-16). Thus will God be avenged upon the enemies of Israel, and by their hand.

Chapter 199

The Word of God: Part 1

2 Timothy 3:14-17

When God made man, He did not make him as he is, any more than the world as it is. He made everything good, but He was not pleased to put forth His power to keep everything good. He was pleased to put the creature to the proof. He tried the creature in two great spheres—above and below. The angels fell before man; and the chief of those that fell above is the great tempter. No man can account for sin, for the ruin of the world, in any other way than Scripture reveals. Many a man has essayed to do so. The brightest wits and the greatest minds have attempted it; but they have never conceived anything that was not rubbish when they have not followed the word of God. Some have endeavored to account for sin by supposing that there are two Gods—a good one and a bad one; because there are evidences of goodness all around us, and there are too plainly the evidences of badness. This hypothesis, I need not stay to show, is sheer folly. There is but one who is Almighty; and man cannot get rid of the consciousness of One—not merely one thing but One Being—One who has power and will and purpose, One who has affections no less than mind, but who, nevertheless, subjects the creatures that He made to a moral probation. If He kept everything from falling, there could be no such trial at all. All would be mechanical or chemical; and the wonderful scene of the conflict of good and evil—of good wrought by His grace in the heart of man, and rising above Satan's power and wiles of evil—would be quite lost. What is still more important, the active display of love and righteousness on God's part, of moral qualities reproduced in repentant believing man, would be completely destroyed, if it were merely divine power so keeping the creature that there could be no failure.

But evil never came from God—only from the creature once innocent, now fallen, that kept not his first estate, but chose to do his own will and have his own way. An angel did this first. Man was misled by him who, straying and exalting himself, beguiled others both in heaven and on earth. That creature is called Satan—the Devil. All efforts to get rid of this fact have proved utterly vain, so much so that the boasted lights of antiquity fell consequently into one or other of these notions: either that God is everything, which denies sin; or, secondly, that there is no such being as God at all; while both cases led to worshipping ever so many false gods. Witness now the two greatest philosophers of Greece who have exercised perhaps the largest and most enduring influence over civilized men outside the Bible—the one the head of Pantheism, the other of Atheism. There is what man's thought ends in when it is logically carried out. Man in his fallen estate may reason God away; yet he excludes God, not from his conscience, but in his reason; for at the bottom of the man's heart who does so there is the uneasy feeling that what he sees around him did not grow like a potato—least of all, he himself and his fellows. He feels that, though fallen, he is a moral being who will have to give an account of his action; and to whom but to God—the One who made him and all things?

The creature, having fallen from God, has lost the truth. No longer innocent, he has God as his Judge. Satan lost Him first, forever and his angels. Man and his race have lost Him; but O what

mercy now shines on us! Yet you, dear friends, every one of you, like myself, once had Him not. Have you found Him? Do you know Him? Do not tell me you cannot. You cannot of yourselves: man cannot by searching find oat God. But God can reveal Himself. It is true, a keen infidel who is still living said the contrary—said it was impossible for God to make a revelation of Himself; but the book in which he, a Deist, said this proved the folly of it. If an infidel can make a revelation of his mind to do people mischief, I suppose God can make a revelation of His mind to do men good. Is not this reasoning a sound and sufficient answer? Can any man save an atheist deny the force or the reality of it? If a bad being can reveal his mind to ruin, cannot the All-wise and All-good reveal His mind to save? Of course He can. The notion, therefore, that God cannot reveal His mind is not only false but denies that He is light and love—a falsehood that is contradicted by the very effort to argue in its support. The writer makes a revelation of his mind, such as it is; and we reply, If man can make a revelation of his mind, surely God can of His: otherwise you are reduced to the absurdity, that what is possible to man is impossible to God. Is this reasonable, or is it folly? Can any man in this room maintain that, what a man can do in his feeble way, God cannot do in His blessed and almighty way?

Now the Bible lets us see from the first—and it is worthy of God—that no sooner had man turned against God through the instigation of a mightier rebel than himself, than a way of escape for man on God's part was opened up in hope. Man succumbed to Satan working upon the will of the woman. Ah! how natural it is, as most know quite well—how true to the heart of both. The woman's feelings get entangled, and she is deceived. A man, if God were not concerned, properly loves his wife, and can not bear to leave her alone. His affections engage him; everything as a man and a husband combines to make him go along with her, although here alas! it was rebellion against God. This is exactly what Scripture lets us see in Adam and Eve. The Devil knew what he was about. Eve was deceived—Adam was not. She was drawn into sin, and through her Satan misled Adam into sin boldly; and such has been the history of many a man and woman since then. This does not throw blame on the woman only. They must divide the sin between them; and he is a base man who would try, as Adam did afterward, to throw the whole on his wife. But it is the effect of sin. He, who ought to have been her shelter and protector, first followed the bad example and then betrayed her—as it were, an informer against her. How degrading is sin! So it was from the first, and is to the last.

Now, let us look at God. We have seen enough of Satan and enough of man for the moment; let us turn to Him who here comes on the scene, and close first word shows the havoc that the devil had made. “Adam, where art thou?” No readiness to meet God now—no candor, confidence, or truthfulness; man hides himself, in despair, behind the trees in the garden, with a bad conscience. “Adam, where art thou?” Man was gone from God. This is the state of man still, of all mankind, of every one of us naturally. I do not say that we all abide there now. Thanks be to God, He is a Savior God. But He judges sin. In Himself He is light and He is love. Our sins make Him a Judge: His grace made Him a Savior. We all naturally think of God as a Judge, because we all naturally more or less have a sense of sin; and guilt always dreads a moral account, the retribution, the judgment of God. Conscience erects a judgment-seat, even before man must rise from the grave to stand before the great white throne and give in his account. A man may try to get rid of it, and he may do so while pre-occupied. He may drag himself with ample material in this poor stupefying world, with its varied and intoxicating pleasures; but the moment of sobriety, the anguish of

self-judgment, comes, and God is on the judgment-seat of conscience.

Scripture says that God did then deal with man—fallen man—to lay his sin upon his conscience, and to trace its root to the evil personage that had brought it in, and to announce the glorious truth of grace meeting the evil and rain, of grace providing a righteous way of escape. If ever there was a worthy purpose for revelation, this must be one. And this is exactly what Scripture reveals. It is not the dream of the gods coming down to indulge themselves in wickedness, as some of the greatest Wits in this world have believed. They had sunk low enough to receive that their deities were drunkards, fornicators, thieves and liars. Such were they whom the heathen adored, and amongst the heathen were some of the brightest men that ever lived. It was not for want of intellect or refined culture, nor for want of learning any more than logical power, that they fell into such gross deceits. No one can say this who knows the history of the world, and of the men upon it.

Apart from the Bible, there is sin, misery, ruin, and death. Scripture lets in the light of God, and that light assuredly is far from being the lurid menace of punishment merely. It reveals incomparably more and brighter things than the awful scene where sinners are judged for their sins. This there is and ought to be for those who defy and reject grace—for those who in the face of the Savior's cross deny God coming down to man, deeply pitying him, and fully providing for his salvation. The Bible accounts for sin but never justifies or slights it. Man, under Satan, wrought that evil thing. The Bible shows the way out of sin, and that the only way to the Father is by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming into this world, and that, too, given and sent by God, not implored by man. Not man devised the plan or even sought that God would of His mercy carry it out. Man never thought of it; for he with a bad conscience never expects good from God. For his soul to be saved, and his sins to be blotted out, for God to love him, and to put the best robe upon the poor ragged prodigal, for the father at the very start to embrace him, and then to bring him into such a place of joy as he never knew before—man never had so much as an inkling of grace like this.

Yet this the Bible shows is God's love to sinners, especially in the New Testament. But the man that does not believe the Old Testament is not to be trusted about the New. If a soul cavils about Genesis, I should not trust him about Romans. I know there are men who say that the New Testament is a grand book, and will confess that the first chapter of John is more sublime than anything Plato or Aristotle ever wrote. To be sure it is, infinitely so. But the man that pretends to exalt John and depreciate Moses I would not trust for a moment, because that which Moses was the instrument of revealing lays the foundation for all that John gives us. You cannot understand the blessing of the Second Man—the last Adam—unless you have seen the creation and fall of the first man, Adam. There is, therefore, between the Old and New Testaments an organic unity. Nothing more remarkable than this, however much one may differ from the other.

When you see a tree, you do not require a philosopher to tell you that, when it is complete, it has all its parts with striking appropriateness—that the deep root, which penetrates the soil and gathers the materials of nourishment for the trunk and its offshoots, is as necessary for its growth as the branches and the leaves—that what is unseen is as thoroughly ordered by One who perfectly knew, as that which is visible; and that from the tree man reaps benefit, and even the cattle, for God takes in everything. Not a little tiny insect, not the greatest of quadrupeds, not a human being, that does not in some way or another reap all suited good from God; and even those things that might seem to be obnoxious in themselves form part of a vast scheme of God's

contrivance, of His forethought, of His abundant provision for the wants of men or beasts here below. There is no stinginess, if I may say so, about God. He does not merely give us the things we absolutely need. This is not the way God treats man or any creature. You have only to look when the sun shines, you have but to think of the rich beauty of the earth around you—though it be a groaning creation—to see what pleasure God takes in goodness abounding. He did not make things to die, but to live in endless variety. He declares that He is not the God of the dead but of the living—this no doubt said in the highest sense is in every other way true. You see a blighted earth now; but even the blighted earth everywhere bears its testimony to the beneficent wisdom of its Maker.

But earth and sea and sky just as plainly afford traces of some dreadful evil that has passed over all—of an enemy's hand that has been there and sown evil. There is not a tempest that rages, there is not a volcano that pours out its destructive lava, there is not a blast of lightning, but tells that there is, above, below, around, disorder in this once untainted universe. And how much more, when you come down to the moral evil under which groans every town, and every hamlet; ay, perhaps every home, even the happiest hearth, has had its blight. And whence comes this? From God? Never. A being of perfect goodness and power, who would make the world and man as they are, is morally an impossible thought. But God never made the world as it now is; He did make it, but He made it good. God did not create anything unworthy of Himself.

And just here is where the value of the word of God comes in. The Bible bears witness of the grace of God meeting the ruin that man and Satan have wrought between them. It is not merely goodness in natural things, but in holy love, which, recognizing and judging the evil fully, nevertheless comes down to get rid of it, and this at His own expense, and, let me add, by suffering beyond all measure. What is all that the men who ever lived have had to endure compared to the sufferings of Christ? I do not speak of what man did against Christ, but above all of what God did in His cross. You do not believe it! Then you must settle this with Christ Himself. What was there so bitter or awful in the cup He had to drink as God's making Him sin for us, when He forsook Him? How do we know? He who is the Truth declares it—said so on the cross—said so with His dying lips, when even false men will sometimes speak the truth: how much more He who never said aught else but the truth, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life!” Yet for our sins He died, and tasted death as none other ever did. He tasted not merely death upon the cross, but therein the judgment of God. And there is the ground on which God can be a God of all grace, the basis of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. For He Who thus died is risen—risen to be the Savior, as He is if rejected the Judge.

Accordingly the foundation principle of this—the first germ of this weightiest of truths in the given in the same chapter which shows us man departing from God—man forsaking God, and not God forsaking man. God forsook His Son on the cross, that He might not forsake the poorest of sinners that looks to Him. In that chapter (Gen. 3) you have a Savior revealed to hope; and such is the allusion of the “everlasting gospel” in the Revelation. Does not this show you what a wonderful book the Bible is? It stretches over many centuries. It was written, parts of it, by kings, and by shepherd-boys, by priests, by soldiers, by civilians; by what one might call comprehensively men of every class, from the fishers of the Galilean Sea to the learned Jew of Tarsus, one of the most famous seats of philosophers at that time in the world, the rival of Athens. And yet in all the vast scope of its variety, Scripture stretching in its penmen from the days of Moses to those of the last

apostle, in its themes from eternity to eternity, there is under all honest tests the most perfect harmony.

(To be continued, D. V.)

Chapter 200

The Word of God: Part 2

Beware, then, of those who would have you give up Moses. Listen not to the siren voices that would seek to charm you away from the truth of God, and more if they dare to tell you that they are not undermining the Bible, but only denying Moses. Alas! my good friends, to deny Moses is to undermine Christ; for Christ says that Moses wrote of Him. Christ had no question; and this is what satisfies a plain man that believes in Him. People may talk about evidences; and, of course, it is all very fine to do so with those who are not familiar with the subject, and have scanty knowledge of the original tongues. Of one thing let me remind all—whether knowing these languages or not—and it is this Many a one knows a little Greek and some less Hebrew; but what of that? You know English; but it does not follow that you have at all a mastery of the language. Remember then that most of the young men who learn Hebrew and Greek at college are very far from having a mastery of these languages. Most have a smattering, and this is all. They are then turned off to their parishes and pulpits, where they have no time to become real scholars, as they ought not to pretend to it. This is not said out of the slightest disrespect; but simply to show you the folly of supposing that merely running through a grammar and a few works in a foreign tongue makes it really known. Not at all. Most graduates (no matter what the degree, or where) would find it hard to translate unseen Hebrew or Greek. They do not know either of these languages in the least as you all know English; and yet for all that would any of you set up to be great English scholars? Even ordinarily fair and easy translation (to which few are equal without effort and preparation) is but a small step in learning. Enough however on that point.

But I press this upon you—that God has in Christ's testimony given the believer incomparably better proof than all evidences put together. Do you believe in Him the Son of God? I am now speaking to such. Some might appeal to persons who have no living faith but a mere creed, to those who talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, as others would of Socrates or Gautama Buddha, who are yet perfectly certain that the facts are true, and that His recorded words are substantially authentic. This is coming down low enough. Yet on the lowest of all grounds, on that of creed, men have still some respect for the authority of the Word made flesh—of Him who is perfect Man and true God. Now, not only is He spoken of in this word, but He speaks of God's word authoritatively and unmistakably.

There is no use to try and shirk the truth by mustering difficulties and saying, “Ah! we don't know that.” Here is a book unlike all other books, bearing the stamp of truth and holiness upon it as no other book ever written. Here you have testimony borne to the blessed One, by His apostles, whose lives and works, miraculous or not, were a bright evidence of His Divine truth, grace, and power. What totally different men they became, from what they were! They used to be prejudiced narrow-minded Jews, utterly indifferent to souls, wholly wrapt up in their own dry traditions. See how in a short time, amazingly short indeed, all was changed, and changed in virtue of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ applied to their souls by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. They gave it as their testimony—sealed not merely by blood but by a course of such lowly yet faithful devotedness as the world had never seen—that the Lord Jesus uniformly treated the

Bible (that is, of course, the Old Testament) as beyond question the word of God; that Moses wrote the law; that it was not Moses' talk, which later authors wrote—not merely traditions and legends strung together partly by himself, partly by people who lived after him: the Pentateuch was written by himself. And thus in all sorts of questions you find not only His authority coming in, but the man Moses himself, as the inspired servant of God, appealed to by the Lord. “He [Moses] wrote of me.”

How happy it is that a plain man or woman, or even a child, can feel the force of this testimony! Every one of you will stand before the Lord Jesus, who is the Judge both of the dead and of the living; and He has pronounced judgment upon this question. Ought it not to be fairly faced? Do you believe men—perhaps young daring men who have studied Hebrew, but with the most superficial knowledge of the Bible? or do you believe the Lord God in the person of Christ?

Look at the position of the world when the Son of God came down and gave this testimony. He stands between the two Testaments, as it were—at the end of the Old, at the beginning of the New. He pronounces upon the Old. He divides it into its parts—the three divisions, with which every Jew was acquainted—the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets: the Psalms taking in the poetical books, the Prophets comprehending more than we call prophetical, the Law embracing the books of Moses. There you have substantially the Scriptures called the Old Testament. The Lord, when risen from the dead bore testimony to the authority of these books (Luke 24). Surely you do not think that even an ordinary man carries his prejudices into the life beyond the grave!

In this world men may make mistakes, but not in the next: all illusion is then over. Just think of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. You find the rich man there waking up to the reality of things. Then he cries “Father Abraham!” Then he feels what sin is, and its immediate torment, although there be not the final sentence, but the separate state. That rich man then feels how blessed is the once wretched beggar—wretched in this world—but blessed in the next, where angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. Blessed picture of God's goodness at length to a long despised sufferer, who clung in faith to His truth. In vain the rich man prays for his five brethren, that some one would go and warn them lest they should have his portion in torment. What does scripture say? “They have Moses and the prophets.” Moses—not some prophet in the days of King Josiah who wrote a religious romance for the Bible in Moses' name. Do you ask, Who speaks so wickedly? Possibly the voice of a faithless Jew or a blaspheming Gentile? I grieve to say it is too common a voice in Christendom, echoed in Scotland.

Is it not a portentous thing that men should come to such a pass? To deny the genuineness of the books of Moses is a daring insult, not only to the Scriptures, but to the Son of God Himself It is giving the lie to the Savior, and the Judge of all. Yet men are to be found who deny to Moses the Books of the Law—most audaciously of all, the last one that professes to come most directly from his mouth. Nevertheless if there is the least trustworthiness in Deuteronomy, it is what Moses said himself. It is not merely what he collected, or what he caused to be written, but what he uttered also.

Of course by this nobody means—except Jews perhaps—that Moses wrote the last chapter about his death and burial. I do not say it is impossible, and that, God might not have revealed these things to him. But there is no need to assume any such anticipation. There is an evident break after the closing and crowning song of Moses; and the last chapter is clearly, in my judgment,

added by an inspired person who took up and thus continued the record of the enlarging and developing purposes of God. No need therefore, for any bit of superstition—as I conceive it is—in supposing that Moses necessarily wrote the account of his own death. There are in Scripture evident traces of the hand of an inspired editor—of one raised up by God to put the books of the Bible together. You must remember they came out separately. Not only have they been combined since, but there are, here and there, what one may call inspired insertions. God can give an inspired editor as well as an inspired writer. Every Scripture is inspired, and so was the person who edited it and added these joints and bands when the time came to close the canon of Scripture. It is only unbelief that makes difficulties out of that which is plain enough.

But what shocks every spiritual and even moral sensibility is that any person bearing the name of a Christian—nay, of a Christian minister—should couple fiction with the books of Moses, as if they were only a religious novel founded on traditional facts and documents—on what it was conceived Moses might have said—put together ever so many hundreds of years after the legislator died. Divine wisdom has taken particular pains on this point. Christ says, Moses wrote so and so; it is not somebody else imputing it to him, but Himself vouching for Moses in a way that He does rarely for any other. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. And so it has been. Those who hear not Christ in the Gospels, reject His resurrection.

We ought to feel thankful that Scripture is so written; because it is the fatality of unbelief to degrade man as well as God—not really to exalt either. Unbelief, too, is blind enough to attack the very thing that is strongest, requiring therefore no support by arguments drawn from some other passages. Take a quite different illustration. There are those that idolize the virgin Mary to the depression of the. Lord Jesus; yet how remarkably Scripture contradicts the notion, and protests against it by anticipation! It is left for our instruction in the Gospels that the virgin Mary never asked the Lord anything but what the Lord, instead of granting at once, modified at the least. Again see how God guards against unduly exalting Peter as the head (practically as a foundation-stone if you please) of the Christian church. In the very chapter from which men deduce the idea that he is the rock of the church, the Lord calls him Satan. Strange rock he to be sure! Peter was a very honored servant of God, but even such an one may at times say or do something utterly reprehensible. Therefore it is we cannot trust ourselves. The Christian is a fool who trusts himself; and therefore the Lord rebuked Peter for our profit, as well as for his own. The very God who was going to use and to honor Peter still proves what Peter was in himself. The moment he looked away from the Lord, he was as liable as any other to be turned aside into some evil snare of the devil. Apart from the Lord, you are nothing and can do nothing.

But again observe God from the very earliest bringing in what the book of Revelation calls the “everlasting gospel.” How remarkable a phrase is this! Many a man has read and cited these words in chap. 14 of the Revelation; many have thought of thorn; and not a few have explained the thought unwisely, no doubt. The phrase never occurs except in this one place. Why is it called the “everlasting gospel?” There is always a propriety and a force in every word of Scripture. Let me tell you, as far as the Lord enables me. In the last book of the New Testament the Spirit of God recalls the first revelation of Christ in the Old Testament. In the garden of Eden, in the paradise that was blighted and lost by sin, God did not fail to point to the Seed of the woman—the bruised Seed of the woman, remark—that was to bruise the serpent's head. Is not this gospel? Has it not been

blessed gospel from the very first? Is it not also gospel to the very last— “everlasting gospel?” There is as yet no allusion to His being sacrificed for us. This could not be until offering or sacrifices distinctly came in. Nor was there yet a revelation of Him as Savior of His people from their sins. His people, of course, had to be called first, and their ruin shown first and last, salvation fitly being explained afterward. It is not the notion of priesthood. It is not the figure of a captain. Still less is it the truth of the head of the church. All these things were revealed in their due season. But the last book in the New Testament sends you back to the first book of the Old; and thus you hear the blessed voice of Christ, as it were, reverberating through all Scriptures an “everlasting gospel.” And why so? Because God ever takes pleasure in saving souls, and, in order to save sinners, there must ever be an “everlasting gospel.”

I speak at present of those that hear the truth—of those that listen to the word of God. Infants are not now in our view. Not that there is the least doubt that God's grace does save little children, but there is a somewhat different way of course. It is wholly unscriptural that God punishes babes if they are not christened. There is not the slightest ground for a thought so unworthy of God, so harsh to man in one way, so self-exalting to him in another. You may ask how one can know. Do you know it? How do you know anything? Through Jesus—the same One brought in to prove the Bible. Jesus the Lord shows us very clearly that the God who gave the law is greater than the law itself, and that God was showing Himself in Divine grace to be much greater than in judgment. The judgment of God is a solemn certainty; but the grace of God a still deeper truth. God manifest in the flesh, God present upon earth in the person of His own Son, shows us what God feels about little children. The disciples did not like to be troubled with them. They thought it was too bad to take up their great Master's time with mere children. How did the Lord answer it? He took them up in His arms and blessed them—a good lesson for the disciples. How often they want the Lord to correct their inadequate notions! If the Lord took up and blessed little children, does it not tell me what God feels about them. He does not bless little children on earth to send them dying to hell. But if they lived to rebel against His word and against His Son the Lord Jesus, if the children when grown up dare to despise Him that died on the cross, if they refuse to accept the Savior proclaimed in their ears, is there anything God resents more strongly? It is bad enough for one man to lift his hand against another; and we justly abhor the man that would lift his hand against his father or his mother. But when we think of what Father sent His Son to be a Savior how awful the wickedness of despising both, and therein of rejecting the gospel of salvation!

People pretend that they do not mean evil when they say man is but a developed monkey. But such ideas originate from the desire in man to get rid of responsibility and of God. None of that folly! You are moral beings; you have souls, you have consciences. You know very well that you are not brute beasts. You consciously have in your souls, in spite of all efforts, a dread of God, a fear of punishment for sins. A hare does not sin, nor a horse or cow; and you would be shocked at the philosopher who tried to prove that a horse, cow, or hare, had a sense of right or wrong, no less than a man. You might not be able to answer the sophistry, but you would feel that he was deceiving you.

Man is conscious of sin, and fears God; but God sent His only-begotten Son to save sinners. Hence all is changed for those that believe, and for more too. Look at the blessed change that has come over us in these very lands. Time was when our ancestors ran wild in woods, when our forefathers were stained blue, when they sacrificed their fellow-creatures, and when the most

shocking immorality prevailed. Elsewhere a man might marry several wives; but in this very land several men lived with one woman; and in this very land children, and even men and women, were burned in honor of their gods who were not God. What has changed all that? The name of Jesus. Even those that are not won to the True, but try to prove there is no God at all, reap incalculable benefit from the purging away of all that detestable filth and cruelty. What swept it away? Was there no cause for it? Leave that irrationalism to the infidel. But one cause adequately accounts for such effects: only the name of Jesus—indisputably His name. Before His name was known these abominations flourished. Even the Romans, with all their power, only sinned after another manner—perhaps more decently; yet were they idolatrous and unclean. Is this the case where men really believe in Jesus? Nay, is this the case outwardly where men, even without living faith in the Lord Jesus, still respect the Bible?

I was speaking to a particularly wicked skeptic the other day in London, when he said to me deliberately, “I do not believe the Bible; but if I had the power, I should have the Bible read by every one.” How strange such homage to the Bible! He acknowledged the moral power of the word, and that there was nothing like it. Frankly however I do not believe he he would thus use power if he possessed it: you can never trust men of this stamp; yet is his remark an unmistakable and unwilling testimony to the power of Christ and His word.

On the other hand, people who hold the Bible only in the intellect are in danger of letting it slip altogether, and of becoming downright infidels. A tendency of that kind is at work among young men now. They begin more than ever to talk disrespectfully of those who are ministers. Now, it is not my business in any way to uphold the clergy; but still I have a horror of pulling down religion that is a reality, and I have the greatest love for many clergymen. Everything that is real, righteous or good—whether it be in what people call a state-church, or in a non-established Christian society—whatever is of God I would honor and love. And every one who is of God—every man who is a minister of Christ, not merely in word but in deed and in truth—is surely to be honored and loved. I may not agree with him; and of course he may not agree with me. You cannot expect one to uphold another if they differ rather seriously. But, then, you must remember that all other things are small compared with the word and Spirit of God, with Christ Himself and with Christ's redemption. What ecclesiastical difference is to be compared with the revelation in Christ, or of God in the Bible? Of course those differences have their due importance: and let me say that I felt them important enough to leave all that was dear to me in this way on earth. Still, we surely ought to rank the Christ's person and God's word unhesitatingly above ecclesiastical questions.

And see how simple it is. The only possible means for men to know God is through His making Himself known to men. I admit that for a long time the word of God was not written. For more than two thousand years the word of God was not yet written. Men had no more than the word of God spoken, and that little word uttered in the garden of Eden—supplemented by the promises that came afterward, as well as by manifestations that God gave from time to time—was quite enough, when God had not added more, for men to live and die and go to heaven upon.

Nor is it absolutely necessary that a man should read. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” How many had only “heard” that word, and truly looked for the coming Savior! A man's whole life is affected by this, not by deep study, but whether he rests entirely on Christ or he is trying to save himself. What a change faith in Christ effects! Receiving Him as the Son of God

with my heart, and my conscience bowing to the truth which convicts me, I love Him because He first loved me. Is not this the gospel? And there in germ at least it was in Eden— “the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.” It is the everlasting gospel.

Long afterward—and there was wisdom in the arrangement—when man's age began to be shortened to its present limit, God made a written revelation. Some make merry at the idea; but the time will come when they must weep. Faith sees Divine wisdom where incredulity mocks. Do you not see that when man's age is expressly said to be shortened to threescore years and ten (Psa. 90), Moses, the man of God, was first used to write down this word? Scripture, therefore, is more than the word. It was the word before Scripture, but now Scripture is God's word written by inspired men. So all Scripture teaches. Any one who is familiar with the New Testament will admit this. “Every scripture [is] given by inspiration of God.” This is an important statement, because it shows that the Holy Spirit was providing for what was not yet written—for the Gospel and the Revelation of John, as examples, not yet written. Every scripture—whether what was written or what was going to be written—every scripture is given by inspiration of God.

I am perfectly aware that some learned persons translate it thus— “Every scripture, being inspired of God, [is] profitable.” What difference is there? A shade in the form—nothing in the substance. The difference is that the one rendering is the assertion that it is inspired of God; the other admits or assumes that it is inspired of God. Whether it be an admission or an assertion makes no difference for anything at present before us. The point is that it is inspired of God, if you believe the apostle Paul.

The entire subject is opened out remarkably in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians where is she wn the part the Holy Ghost takes in three ways. It is by the Holy Ghost that the things are given (ver. 12); and the Holy Ghost it is by whom we receive, what is by Him revealed and communicated (ver. 4-16). Supposing you had a revelation of the mind of God, if it be not communicated in fit words, others would not be able to apprehend it. The truth would be seen but dimly; just as light passing through a colored medium seems to alter the color of the thing it falls upon. But the Spirit of God cares for duly communicating in words the truth of God. Then, again, your minds are not capable of taking in the truth: but the Spirit of God deigns to work in man. In what believers? The apostles or the early disciples only? God forbid we should be so unbelieving! The very thing that has preserved the church of God all through the ages has been the possession of the Spirit. This is a cardinal truth of Scripture. Every godly Presbyterian or Independent or Wesleyan Methodist or Anglican has the Holy Ghost, just as much as the people whom they call—I do not call them—Plymouth Brethren.

It is not at all a question of setting up any one class, of course one's own: to my mind a low, bad, and perilous conceit. Were a man to rise with the cry, “You cannot get the Holy Ghost unless you join us,” I might well reply, “My friend, has the Lord not shown you that it is never a mark of the truth for people to draw others into their ranks by promising the Holy Ghost to such as join themselves?” Such pretensions ought rather to warn off. The Spirit is received by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:2), by believing the gospel; and, thank God, the gospel of salvation, if preached fully by but few, is confined to none. It is no doubt an excellent thing to have the gospel preached; not alone simply and freely but fully; and I have a judgment where it is simply, freely, and fully preached, though it might be unbecoming to say where. Of this it is for other people to judge in

their consciences, examining the word of God. But this I do say—every real child of God who is resting faith on the work of Christ has the Holy Ghost. Consequently he has the Spirit of power, and not life only. The new nature or life is not the same thing as the Spirit of God, because the new birth is called a new creation, and the Holy Ghost is not a creature, but a divine person. How few know they have the Spirit of God!

I remember being much struck with an instance of this some years ago. A poor Christian friend had been a bad man in his early days, a smuggler; so that, as you may suppose, he was a very rough sort of man before God brought him to a knowledge of himself; but he was a genuine saint of God in the after-part of his life. A physician, who was also a friend of mine and a Christian, attended him when very ill, and ordered certain things. The man looked up simply, and said, “Well, Sir, I must be careful what I do and what I take; for you know, my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” The physician thought the man utterly deranged; so little are people used to such language in daily walk. It is all very well, they think, to have all that in the Bible; but they never think of hearing it in common things. Yet the aim of faith is to bring the things that are in the Bible into every-day work; and it is from want of this that so many Christians do not know, walk, and worship, better than we see. They think the Bible is something, to be kept quite apart from ordinary life. On the contrary, scripture is given to be in-woven and to interpenetrate with every duty and joy and sorrow of every day. Would to God that we lived, and so reflected, it better! Would to God that our worship, wherever we might be, and all our conversation, were more simply a savor of Christ to God!

People sometimes give religious conversation a bad name, because they know that, when a rogue wants to get money, he is apt to come with a grave face and talks “Dear brother,” and all that kind of thing, in order to accomplish covetous ends. But can this justify others who are afraid that it is downright hypocrisy to be brimfull of the Savior and the things of God? There can be no question, indeed, that the Savior meant, and the apostles also, as inspired by the Holy Ghost, that we should really be every day waiting for Christ—that we should be in all things great or small serving the Lord Jesus—bearing shame and trial, insult and injury, with patience, yet joy, as pleasing the Savior. Take for instance, a Christian with a capricious master. If the servant does not think of Christ, he may be always murmuring and complaining at his lot; whereas if he does or bears all to Christ, he accepts each burden gladly in His name. Faith in Christ changes the whole race of things where it is a present living reality. How is this made good? In the power of the Spirit who directs the eyes to Christ.

The Spirit of God is, however, given to every man—not in the world, but in the church, to the believer only (1 Cor. 12). There is no such thing as the Holy Ghost sealing an unbeliever. The Society of Friends consists largely of morally respectable persons; but herein their doctrine is fundamentally wrong, in that they hold that the Spirit of God is given to every one absolutely. This is a total mistake. For the grand difference between the church and the world is that the world has not the Spirit—seeing not nor knowing Him; but the church possesses the Spirit, and, what is more, the Christian also. That gift is true both individually and collectively; and the consequence is that both the church and the individual are bound to walk and worship in the Spirit. A solemn responsibility indeed! And the way it works is this; the Holy Spirit does not glorify Himself Still less will He glorify man in his natural state. Nay, He does not even glorify the church. He is here to glorify Jesus. This is the test, the chief and best— “He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto

you” (John 16:13-15).

I have not gone into any great detail. I would rejoice to enter into all the books of the Bible, as I have been doing, indeed, of late in more than one place; and therefore the subject is fresh in my mind. But I have endeavored to speak to you in the plainest simplest manner as to that which is most important for your souls; and I do entreat of the Lord that He may awaken in your heart more firmness of faith in these days when so many are departing from the truth.

A short time ago, a certain dignitary in the land that border this on the south published a sermon to the Jews, urging them to abandon their faith and to accept the Messiah. To this a Jew replied that he thought it would be imprudent and unreasonable for him to give up a religion which even his lordship admitted to be of divine authority, for a further revelation of which he was not sure; more particularly as so many bearing the name of Christians were now abandoning Christianity. It was a humbling rejoinder; and all too true: not that it will avail him for a moment when he stands before the Lord Jesus Christ for judgment.

Still it is a solemn fact that men are becoming skeptical: and the reason partly is this—the unreality of much profession, not to say of many who are really Christians. We ought all to take it to heart. I believe that, just so far as we do not walk according to Christ, we are hardening the hearts of unbelievers. What profanity to use the gospel to make people decent men and women without being Christians at all!! For, if it is merely a creed—faith, men think there is not very much to choose between a Christian and an infidel. Though I have referred to the putting down of open immorality and downright wickedness of all kinds as the effect of Christianity even outwardly received, still the one thing for the Christian is this, that at all times he should be able to say, “For me to live is Christ” —not merely to belong to Him, but, “For me to live is Christ.” How is this done? By the Holy Ghost giving the word power in the soul, with self so judged that Christ may be all. God grant that He may work so in us all! Amen.

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